Developing and Sustaining Organizational Systems That Honor the Dignity Needs of Stakeholders

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DEVELOPING AND SUSTAINING ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEMS THAT HONOR THE
DIGNITY NEEDS OF STAKEHOLDERS

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DEVELOPING AND SUSTAINING ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEMS THAT HONOR THE
DIGNITY NEEDS OF STAKEHOLDERS

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in
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with a focus in
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For Scott whose unconditional love and enthusiasm made this work joyful
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I would like to thank Professor Daniel Rainey, J.D. for introducing me to John Burton’s Basic Human Needs Theory. My heart buzzed with joy as I became acquainted with this work. My academic work and professional work have been significantly enhanced by the work of
Donna Hicks, Ph.D. My deepest gratitude to Dr. Hicks for her tremendous contribution to the dispute resolution and peace-building fields. And, thank you to my student Therese Ross for introducing me to Dr. Hicks’ work. Thank you to Kenneth Cloke, J.D., Ph.D. for thought-partnering with me as this work evolved. Our conversations and your myriad scholarly contributions to our field have shaped my thinking, writing, teaching, and how I choose to show up in this world personally and professionally.
At the time of the study, organizations were missing opportunities for innovation and bottom-line growth by failing to align performance management systems with basic human needs and dignity needs. Consequently, employees were missing opportunities for accessing their potential, and were, therefore, failing to thrive in the individual and collective human experience. Organizational leaders needed to understand the importance of integrating basic human needs and the essentials of dignity as attributes of organizational systems design in order to maximize employee engagement, attract and retain top talent, increase innovation, and optimize bottom-line growth.

The primary concern of this research was to explore the role of dignity in organizational systems design. To achieve this, a qualitative research approach, specifically case study methodology, was implemented in order to examine the impact of how organizations create a culture that perpetuates dignity in workplace culture. Data collection was conducted with employees of a nonprofit located in an urban area in the Southwest portion of the United States that focused on access and equity in education. The study included fourteen participants, which represented 100 percent of the employees of the organization. At the time of the study, the organization had been in existence for less than ten years and operated similarly to a startup
company with a founder CEO that was heavily involved in the day-to-day operations of the organization.

Results of this study indicate that a core requirement of experiencing dignity in the workplace is having one’s voice genuinely heard and the experience of having one’s authentic self fully embraced and honored. Having one’s voice heard cultivates the necessary trust to develop and sustain employee engagement. In order to show up authentically and amplify one’s voice, there must be psychological safety in the workplace and employees, especially people of color and LGBTQAI employees, must experience their identity being fully embraced. The experience of having one’s voice heard empowers employees to act independently and autonomously. When this behavior is acknowledged and affirmed, employees experience motivation and engagement is self-perpetuating.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

According to the 2017 Gallup report, “The State of the Global Workplace,” 32 percent of working-age adults across 155 countries were employed full-time.1 Of that percentage, only 15 percent of people polled reported being highly involved and enthusiastic about the workplace. In the United States, the percentage was 33 percent.2 From an organizational perspective, this lack of engagement implies an extraordinary waste of organizational productivity. From a human perspective, this implies a stunning waste of human potential.3

Gallup found that when organizations orient performance management systems around basic human needs, including psychological needs such as acceptance, acknowledgment, recognition, fairness, and emotional safety, employees experience more engagement and contribute to the organization at higher levels. This translates directly to increased productivity and improved bottom line profit.4 With a 33 percent employee engagement rate at the time of the Gallup study, U.S. organizations were missing opportunities for innovation, organizational growth, and profitability. Individuals were missing opportunities for accessing their potential, and were, therefore, failing to thrive in the individual and collective human experience.


3 Ibid.

Designing organizational systems that incorporate dignity as a key attribute is essential to addressing the basic human needs and dignity needs inherent to a highly motivated and engaged workforce. At the time of this study, there existed a gap in research that addressed dignity as an attribute of systems design.5,6

The goal of this research was to gain an understanding of the complexity of dignity as an attribute of systems design and its impact on workplace culture in the most complete way possible in order to inform businesses on how to develop organizational systems that increase employee engagement and productivity by addressing the dignity needs of its stakeholders.7,8

1.1 Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to explore how organizations can develop and sustain systems that address the basic human needs and dignity needs of all stakeholders. The main area of concern this research addressed was dignity as an attribute of organizational systems design. Interviews were conducted with employees of a nonprofit located in an urban area in the Southwest portion of the United States that focused on access and equity in education. At the time of the study, the organization had been in existence for less than ten years and operated similarly to a startup company with a founder CEO that was heavily involved in the day-to-day operations of the organization. This study sought to gain a greater understanding of how the employees


experience dignity in the workplace and the impact that experience had on employee
ingagement, individual and collective performance, organizational innovation, and growth. The
results of this study can assist for-profit and nonprofit organizations in designing and
implementing a business model in which the organization and its employees thrive and achieve
their individual and collective potential.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

At the time of the study, organizations were missing opportunities for innovation and
bottom-line growth by failing to align performance management systems with basic human
needs and dignity needs. Consequently, employees were missing opportunities for accessing
their potential, and were, therefore, failing to thrive in the individual and collective human
experience. Organizational leaders needed to understand the importance of integrating basic
human needs and the essentials of dignity as attributes of organizational systems design in order
to maximize employee engagement, attract and retain top talent, increase innovation, and
optimize bottom-line growth.

1.3 Research Questions

In order to fully explore dignity as an attribute of organizational systems design, the
following research questions were addressed by the study:

1. What are the mechanisms organizations could develop in order to sustain an
   organizational system that honors the dignity needs of stakeholders?
2. What elements are necessary at the organizational system level to cultivate and
   sustain a culture of dignity as perceived by employees?
3. What elements are necessary from a process perspective to cultivate and sustain a
culture of dignity as perceived by employees?
1.4 Case Study Qualitative Tradition

The primary concern of this research was to explore the role of dignity in organizational systems design. To achieve this, a qualitative research approach, specifically single site case study methodology, was implemented in order to examine the impact of how organizations create a culture that perpetuates dignity in workplace culture. A nonprofit organization that focuses on access and equity in education served as the organization to be studied. At the time of the study, the organization had been in operation for less than ten years and operated similarly to a startup company with the majority of day-to-day decision-making concentrated with the founding CEO. The organization had a strong focus on equity, specifically racial equity, and situated diversity and inclusion as a central component of its culture. The organization was hierarchical with all operational decisions and decisions about the development and delivery of work product made at the leadership level and most often with the founding CEO. This organization was chosen because of its commitment to social justice and the socially progressive nature of its company culture. While acknowledging, honoring, and preserving dignity is especially critical to achieving an equitable workplace in a nonprofit business model that is focused on addressing social issues, it is also necessary in any workplace culture.

1.5 Data Sources

The study included data sources such as: face-to-face interviews, participant results of the Friendly Style Profile™ ... a guide through calm and storm™ ... for people at work conflict style inventory; review and study of corporate documents, including but not limited to the employee handbook, company mission, vision, values, beliefs, and behaviors, and onboarding documents; and employee feedback and review documents.
1.6 Criteria and Access of Subjects

The research was qualitative in nature, specifically, it implemented a case study approach, and utilized interviews as a means of data collection. Research participants were employees of a nonprofit organization in which participants had clearly defined roles and responsibilities but were also encouraged to provide support cross-functionally and bring innovative and creative ideas to their individual and collective work. Participants of the research study came from all organizational functions within the organization and ranged from less than five years of professional experience to more than fifteen years.

1.7 Interview Process

Face-to-face interviews were deployed with a group of twelve to fourteen participants utilizing facilitated semi-structured interviews as the primary form of data collection. The researcher utilized the interview guide approach where the interviewees had the opportunity to share their worldview on how an organization with an intentional focus on social justice and equity promoted dignity in the workplace. The semi-structured interview included four types of questions including: introductory (neutral and nonintrusive), transition (link to key questions to be asked), key (related to the purpose of the study), and closing (summary). The researcher created an interview protocol to guide the interviews.


1.8 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework consists of the “systems of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs and theories” that support and inform a research study. It is visual and/or written material that explains the main concepts to be studied and the researcher’s assumptions regarding the relationships among those concepts, factors, or variables. The conceptual framework should be a key part of any research study because it provides a model of existing theories the research intends to expand upon or contribute to. It demonstrates how existing theories, factors, or variables may relate to one another and to the main area of concern of the research. The conceptual framework functions as the theory that informs the research design. The conceptual framework refines the research goals, helps the researcher to develop relevant and realistic research questions, helps the researcher to develop appropriate methods, as well as identifies potential threats to the validity of the researcher’s conclusions.

The conceptual framework presented in Figure 1 visually demonstrates and narrows the research of John Burton, Bernard Mayer, and Donna Hicks, and serves as the theoretical foundation of the research design. At the center of the framework are eight of Hicks’ Ten


Essentials of Dignity. Because identity and safety are so important to basic human needs as well as key to the Essentials of Dignity, these two have been incorporated with the Basic Human Needs element. The framework demonstrates how basic human needs and dignity are non-hierarchical and simultaneously sought by the individual. The Essentials of Dignity serve as the nucleus of the framework because when dignity is honored the preservation of basic human needs comes more naturally. It demonstrates the way in which basic human needs flow out of the preservation of dignity. The Essential Elements of Dignity and the Basic Human Needs are framed in the context of Dignity Consciousness as a way of demonstrating Hicks’ three Cs of dignity — connection to one’s own dignity needs, connection to the dignity needs of others, and connection with something greater than one’s self — as the connective tissue to the entire framework.


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework
1.9 Theoretical Framework

Donna Hicks’ Dignity Model, which was released in 2011 in her book *Dignity: the Essential Role in Resolving Conflict*,18 and John Burton’s Basic Human Needs Theory, which was developed in the 1960s,19 served as the theoretical framework for this research study. Both Burton and Hicks utilized their theories to assist in conflict management through an interpersonal perspective, using the models as a means of resolving protracted conflicts through an interpersonal lens. This research used Basic Human Needs Theory and the Dignity Model as a theoretical framework for examining organizational systems design, specifically as it relates to dignity as an attribute of systems design.

1.10 Delimitations of the Study

This study focused on the experiences of individuals working in a nonprofit organization that focuses on access and equity in education with professional working experiences that range from five years to more than fifteen years in educational work environments. Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were used to collect data that focused on how basic human needs and essentials of dignity affected the individual’s ability to thrive and achieve his/her/their potential.

1.11 Operational Terms

The following operational terms are provided to explain their use in this study:

1. *Trust*: The belief that the words and actions of one’s leadership and coworkers will reliably align and that workplace processes will produce results that are in the best interest of the organization’s members, mission and purpose

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2. *Creativity:* A process that begins with a genuine encounter with a business need that involves an intense absorption into an idea, thought, and/or desire.\(^\text{20}\)

3. *Contribute:* The ability to share one’s intellectual and emotional resources, skills, and talents in support of an organization’s mission and purpose.

4. *Environmental Needs:* The external criteria necessary to most effectively connect an organization’s members to their work and to one another in such a way that brings forth their greatest potential.

5. *Experiencing Individual Value and Worth:* The feedback mechanisms established by an organization that convey to its members that their individual contributions are valued and that the organization supports the individual in his/her/zher personal and professional growth.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

While the concept of dignity is not new, the role of dignity in the workplace is new. Many conflict resolution practitioners, human rights scholars, psychologists, organizational development practitioners, and leadership consultants have contributed to the field of dignity in the workplace indirectly, but it is Donna Hicks, international peace-building facilitator, mediator, and negotiator turned corporate consultant who formally introduced the concept of dignity and workplace leadership into the body of scholarly literature and its professional application. In order to create a broad picture of the myriad factors that influence and shape the relationship of dignity and its importance to workplace culture, an exploration of human rights, conflict resolution theory, human needs theory, belonging theory, emotional intelligence, and new sciences such as neuroscience and quantum physics is necessary. This review of the existing scholarly literature paints a broad picture in which to comprehend the contributions Donna Hicks has made as it relates to dignity and its role in workplace culture.

2.1 Dignity and Human Rights

Understanding dignity as a human right is foundational to the study of dignity and its role in workplace culture. In his book, Dignity, George Kateb defines dignity as, “the worth of human beings or their high rank, or even their special place in nature.”\(^\text{21}\) He also refers to dignity as “the

equal status of all persons.” Kateb proposes two basic propositions that encompass the concept of dignity: *All individuals are equal.* For Kateb, human dignity is “an existential, not a moral value.” Value or worthiness is attributed to the identity of the person or the species. “When the truth of identity is at stake, existence is at stake; the matter is existential. The idea of human dignity insists on recognizing the proper identity of an individual or species; recognizing what a person is in relation to all other persons and what the species is in relation to all other species.” Kateb explains that truth or personal identity is threatened any time an individual is treated as anything less than a unique and irreplaceable human being.

The writers of the United Nations’ *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR) shared this same conceptualization of dignity. Believing dignity to be inalienable to the human experience, they incorporated dignity as the very foundation of human rights. The writers recognized that dignity has a unique role in the workplace and dedicated Article 23 of the UDHR specifically to human rights and employment:

- Everyone has the right to work, to free choice of employment, to just and favourable conditions of work and to protection against unemployment.

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25 Ibid.
26 Ibid.
• Everyone, without any discrimination, has the right to equal pay for equal work.

• Everyone who works has the right to just and favourable remuneration ensuring for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity, and supplemented, if necessary, by other means of social protection.

• Everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.

Human rights offer an examination of what the preservation of dignity looks like in action and offer a detailed, thorough, and explicit understanding of how governments, organizations, and people should regard one another and what the outcome of the high regard might look like. Where human rights fall short is in providing a framework for how dignity might be activated within the collective human experience. Humans are not naturally inclined to honor dignity. The whole of the human experience is ripe with example after example of how these rights are routinely violated, undermined, and ignored. In order to consistently uphold these rights, it is necessary to understand what motivates human behavior and how individuals can engage with one another in such a way that honors each person’s inherent value and worth.

2.2 Basic Human Needs and Conflict Resolution Theory

In his book *The Third Side*, William Ury writes, “Whatever the surface issues in dispute, the underlying cause of conflict lies in the deprivation of basic human needs like love and respect. Frustration leads people to bully others, to use violence, and to grab someone else’s
things.” Conflict resolution theorist, scholar, and practitioner John Burton developed Basic Human Needs Theory, which details the human needs, that when frustrated, can lead to conflict. Following is a brief history of the social conditions that led to Burton’s work and an explanation of Basic Human Needs Theory.

The era immediately following World War II was a time period of optimism in academia as it related to the social sciences and the role the social sciences might play in solving some of the world’s most complex social problems and persistent human problems, including issues related to conflict, war, and peace. Social scientists, of disparate backgrounds, were eager to apply new knowledge via a multi-disciplinary approach to pressing critical issues, especially pertaining to social, industrial, and international conflict in pursuit of a more peaceful world. Because of the disparate background of many of these scholar-practitioners, there was a lack of cohesion in terms of theory and practice. Ideas were often drawn from social psychology, including knowledge about misperceptions, cognitive dissonance, dehumanization, and commitment theory; from group dynamics such as role theory and group think; industrial relations knowledge such as concession-convergence bargaining, intra-group cohesion; and from international relations knowledge such as escalation spirals and nonviolent direct action. A process was often deemed as successful if it led to some form of positive change in the participants and new ideas about possible options for the future emerged. A true theoretical basis


for arguing that intractable conflicts could be resolved by these methods was missing. As a result, a revived interest in psychologist Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs arose.

Maslow’s Theory of Human Needs asserts that all people possess “a number of basic needs and that the frustration of these needs would lead to conflictful behavior and even to organized (or disorganized) violence.” According to Maslow, these needs are hierarchical in nature — one need must be met before the next, higher need, can be addressed — and follow a developmental, stages of growth sequence. Typically portrayed as a pyramid, Maslow’s human needs include: 1) physiological needs; 2) safety and security; 3) love and belonging; 4) esteem; and 5) self-actualization.

Basic Human Needs Theory, originally developed by conflict scholar John Burton, grew out of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs Theory. For Burton, basic human needs were “fixed, ontological, and universal.” Where Maslow posited that human needs are hierarchical, Burton argued that human needs are sought simultaneously, intensely, and relentlessly. Human needs are the very basic needs that are at the core of the human experience and that humans require to thrive and to achieve a sustainable state of peace. (See Figure 2)


31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.
Burton asserts that any conflict that has its roots in the violation or frustration of basic human needs is what he referred to as “deeply-rooted conflict.” In contrast, a disagreement that has its foundation in less deeply rooted interests such as commercial or industrial interests is understood to be “disputes.” Disputes may be resolved utilizing typical negotiation and mediation interventions; whereas, conflicts rooted in frustrated human needs are not amenable to compromise and/or negotiation tactics. Conflicts must be addressed via “problem-solving workshops,” wherein the goal is to gain understanding of all parties and to explore ways in
which all parties’ needs may be met. Herein lies the differentiation of “conflict management” and “dispute resolution.”

Foundational to Burton’s thinking on the role of Basic Human Needs in the etiology of violent conflict is his considerations of social-psychological values. The values, which operate within individual and small-group levels, are fundamental to the ways in which humans behave and are universal in terms of operating across cultures and ideological systems. Therefore, one might even consider these values to be “social-biological values” because they are reflective of biological drives and biological motivations. Socio-biological values are concerned with the survival, personality development, and self-maintenance of the individual and/or small group within any social environment. Burton’s perspective on the importance of socio-biological values as the key drivers of human behavior, especially behavior oriented around conflict, eventually shifted toward a theory based on needs. Originally influenced by Maslow, Burton’s thinking evolved to include the work of sociologist Paul Sites.

In contrast to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, Sites argued that there are eight needs, all of which hold equal importance and none of which are contingent upon the other. Sites’ eight human needs, all of which are required to achieve a state of harmony and peace, consist of the following: 1) consistency in response; 2) stimulation; 3) security; 4) recognition; 5) distributive justice; 6) rationality and the appearance of rationality; 7) meaning; and 8) control. To this list of eight needs, Burton added a ninth, role defense — “the protection of needs once they have been


acquired.” Site’s original list and Burton’s reframing of it eventually evolved into a revised list of Basic Human Needs: 1) identity; 2) participation; 3) recognition; and 4) security. Burton asserts that each of these is an “ontological part of the human development process.”

Foundational to both the values approach and the needs approach is Burton’s argument that, “certain needs will be pursued, regardless of any force that might be used by authorities.”

Burton’s implementation of Basic Human Needs Theory manifested as “analytical problem-solving facilitated conflict resolution.” The underlying assertion of problem-solving is that conflict is rarely about the actual content of the conflict and rather about the frustration of one or more of the basic human needs. Therefore, rather than orient negotiation and mediation around the content of the conflict, the Basic Human Needs facilitator encourages the parties to bring to the surface their underlying motivation — i.e., the fulfillment of their needs. The chronic frustration and violation of human needs can lead the frustrated individuals to force their way into the consciousness of society via terrorism and other forms of extreme violence. In the workplace, this might show up as bullying behavior. Therefore, violence can be perceived as an extreme alert that human needs are in a chronic state of violation.


36 Ibid.

37 Ibid.

38 Ibid.

39 Ibid.
An aspect of Burton’s Basic Human Needs Theory that makes it so attractive to the study of dignity and its role in workplace culture is the concept of prevention. Burton contrasts provention to prevention: “provention [signifies] taking steps to remove [underlying] sources of conflict, and more positively to promote conditions in which collaborative and valued relationships control behaviors.”

Provention is of paramount importance to the work of peace-building because it takes into account both conflict prevention measures and measures to ensure the sustainability of peace. Burton coined this term as a means of encapsulating the concept of “prevention of the undesirable event by removing its causes, and by creating conditions that do not give rise to its causes.”

Provention is dependent upon proactive strategies, and humans tend to be reactive creatures. That stated, Burton’s Basic Human Needs Theory offers a framework from which policymakers, community leaders, organizational leaders, etc. can affect positive social change in which “relationships are sustained by legitimate mechanisms of reciprocated support and not by coercive measures or by elites, by virtue of their own authority.”

Many conflict scholars and practitioners see Burton’s Basic Human Needs Theory as incomplete. However, Basic Human Needs Theory has served as a strong foundation for additional theoretical explorations, including Donna Hicks’ Dignity Model.


41 Ibid.

42 Ibid.
Bernard Mayer is a conflict resolution theorist, scholar, and practitioner who also positions human needs at the center of all conflicts. Mayer developed the “Wheel of Conflict” as a way of demonstrating that people engage in conflict “either because they have needs that are met by the conflict process itself or because they have needs they can only attain (or believe they can only attain) by engaging in conflict.”

Where Burton defines “deeply rooted conflict” as a frustration of basic human needs, Mayer explains that, “Conflict emerges and is experienced along cognitive (perception), emotional (feeling), and behavior (action) dimensions.” This definition assumes a three-dimensional perspective to conflict and allows for a better understanding of the complex nature of conflict and why conflict often appears to progress in seemingly contradictory directions.

In considering conflict as perception, Mayer explains that conflict is a belief that one’s own needs, interests, wants, or values are not compatible with the needs, interests, wants, or values of someone else. There can be both subjective and objective elements to this conflict dimension.

As an emotion, conflict can be understood as the actual physiological response a person has to the perception of conflict. This is often described in terms of how this perception makes a person feel — angry, sad, irate, anxious, worried, scared, etc. A conflict may not necessarily manifest behaviorally in order for it to manifest emotionally. Emotions and feelings about a


conflict may not be felt proportionally by all parties involved. And, of course, emotions are drivers of human behavior.

Conflict is also understood by the actions and words expressed by those who are in conflict. Conflict as behavior may be expressed as a direct action taken by one person or as an exercise of power. It may be a form of violence or a form of conciliation. The action associated with a conflict is often what parties assume the conflict is actually about. Mayer argues that by considering conflict along all three dimensions — cognitive, emotional, and behavioral — it becomes evident that it does not proceed linearly.

Each person or group within a conflict is engaging in each dimension differently and with varying intensity, which accounts for what often appears to be irrational and inconsistent behavior by the involved parties. Like individuals, social systems also experience conflict that can be understood along the social and cognitive dimensions, although as Mayer explains, these are typically understood in terms of culture, ethos, organizational (family, community, national) values, public opinion and popular beliefs.

Understanding the nature of social systems conflicts require that we reconcile the emotive and cognitive nature of them and accept that within social systems conflict evokes certain reactions and attitudes from a significant number of people within a society although not always the majority. As an example, Mayer explains that, “when we look at conflicts between union and management, environmental groups and industry associations, progressives and conservatives, it is important to understand the attitudes, feelings, values, and beliefs that these groups have concerning each other if we are to understand what is


occurring.” The way in which — and the degree to which — the individuals within the system perceive the conflict frustrates their basic human needs will have a correlating impact on the intensity of the response to the conflict. In this way, Mayer is in alignment with Burton — at the core of deeply rooted conflict is the frustration of human needs, which may manifest itself as competition for resources and power; expressions of frustration as it relates to the structures and institutions that hold up society; ineffective and flawed communication; and class struggle.

Mayer’s “Wheel of Conflict” was designed to function as a practical framework that serves as a map that guides conflict engagers through the conflict process and helps determine what is at the root of a particular conflict. By understanding the different sources of conflict and the forces that motivate conflict behavior, conflict engagers are able to discern the best path forward. The Wheel of Conflict is depicted in Figure 3.


Figure 3  Wheel of Conflict

The Wheel of Conflict was derived from, or inspired by, Christopher Moore’s “circle of conflict.” Mayer explains that Moore’s circle of conflict included "relationship problems, data problems, value differences, structural problems and interests” as its core components, all of
which were valuable yet incomplete because it failed to incorporate basic human needs, which as Burton asserts, are non-negotiable and always defensible. Mayer also agrees with Burton that human needs are at the core of all deeply rooted conflicts. Human needs must be addressed in order for the conflict to be transformed. To be effective in addressing needs, conflict engagers typically will need to work through the elements that influence how people experience their needs and how they pursue them. Mayer has identified five factors that are particularly critical to understanding how conflict unfolds. These are represented in the wheel: the ways in which people communicate, their emotions, their values, the structures in which they interact, and history.

The first of these factors is emotions. To effectively understand or analyze conflict, it is necessary to differentiate between emotions and feelings. Emotions are *physiological* and can be *objectively measured* by blood flow, brain activity, facial micro-expressions, and body language. Feelings are *how we experience our emotions* based off the memory associations and reactions we have with that emotion. Feelings are subjective and are influenced by personal experiences, beliefs, personal temperament, and memories. In conflict, our emotions can be stimulated, or triggered, by the ways in which, and the degree to which, our human needs are frustrated. We express these emotions through a range of feelings such as anger, sadness, anxiety, worry, etc. Our emotions are the energy that drives conflict, and they can also be the energy that serves to

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de-escalate it. A skilled conflict engager has the emotional intelligence acumen to be able to help those in conflict manage and regulate their emotional experiences and emotional expressions.

Human beings are imperfect communicators and are especially challenged when experiencing emotional duress. When human needs are frustrated, it is not always apparent or obvious to the person that they are experiencing a form of violence or that they are experiencing a violation of a human need. They may experience strong emotions, express those emotions through bold or loud feelings, but they are often challenged to communicate effectively about what is driving the emotional expression. People are often not adept at identifying or articulating their needs. Add to this complexity, the fact that culture, gender, age, class, cognitive capacity, and environment all influence conflict and communication. Honing one’s emotional intelligence skills is crucial to increasing one’s communication skills. The proficient conflict engager is able to help those in conflict unpack their emotional experiences and communicate them in a manner that moves the conflict forward productively.

Conflict must be understood within its historical context. As Mayer explains, “The history of participants in a conflict, of the system in which the conflict is occurring, and the issues themselves has a powerful influence on the course of that conflict. … History provides the momentum for the development of conflict.”52 History offers insight into how and why human needs have become frustrated; and therefore, understanding the history of a conflict also enables the conflict engager to envision a path forward — one that may be amenable to all parties and that honors the human needs of the parties as well as the unique needs of the social system.

The conflict structure is the framework in which interactions take place and complications develop and is, therefore, another potential source of conflict. According to Mayer, structural components of conflict may include “available resources, decision-making procedures, time constraints, legal requirements, communications mechanisms, and physical settings.” 53 Although structural elements may be altered as a result of a conflict process, often the structure in which a conflict arises is unalterable, and the parties must find a means of achieving resolution within the existing system. However, if the structure is the source of the frustrated human need, a change in the system will be required in order to achieve a transformation of the conflict.

Mayer explains that, “Values are the beliefs we have about what is important, what distinguishes right from wrong and good from evil, and what principles should govern how we lead our lives.” 54 Values are deeply associated with an individual’s sense of self and sense of integrity. Therefore, when a person perceives that his/her/zher values are under attack, it is experienced as though the person’s identity is under attack. An identity attack can feel as real as a physical attack, causing the amygdala to respond, adrenaline to flood the system, and the fight or flight survival response to kick in. Conflicts that are oriented around values can quickly become intractable and emotionally charged, making communication increasingly difficult.

Mayer asserts that, “When individuals address values directly and express their beliefs


affirmatively, they can address conflict more constructively.” This often requires the assistance of a sophisticated conflict engager who is comfortable navigating an emotional landscape that is not always predictable or comfortable.

Mayer’s Wheel of Conflict also includes contextual factors that influence all sources of conflict — culture, power, personality, and data. Culture can be understood as the social behavior and norms found in human societies. Culture encompasses the range of phenomena that are passed on through social learning in all human societies. Culture clearly influences conflict because it plays a role in communication styles, history, emotional expression, values development, and the structure of conflict. Power can be understood as one’s ability to influence the behavior of others. Understanding the power dynamics between the parties in conflict or within the social system is paramount to navigating a conflict in which human needs are frustrated. Personality too can be a source of conflict largely as it relates to interpersonal styles, emotional expressions, and the ways in which a person utilizes power and data to navigate conflict and achieve his/her/their or needs.

Mayer’s concept of human needs differs from John Burton’s Basic Human Needs Theory. Mayer’s human needs more closely resemble Maslow’s theory, though he too does not hold the position that they are hierarchical. Also, Mayer differentiates between interests and needs. According to Mayer, “Interests are viewed as more transitory and superficial, needs as more basic and enduring.” Some conflict theorists argue that resolutions that focus primarily on


interests versus needs are less enduring. Mayer proposes that human needs are considered via three overlapping types of needs that are present in conflict and that provide insights into the core motivations of behavior in conflict. Mayer categorizes human needs in conflict under three main brackets: 1) survival needs; 2) interests; and 3) identity needs. See Figure 4.

Figure 4  Human Needs in Conflict

A fundamental difference between John Burton’s Basic Human Needs Theory and Bernard Mayer’s “human needs in conflict” is at the level of implementation. Burton drafted a list of human needs that are core to deeply rooted conflicts — i.e., those conflicts that cannot be negotiated because the source is founded in the violation or deprivation of essential, ontological human needs. Mayer’s “human needs in conflict” seems to be designed with mediated interventions in mind — i.e., what Burton would call “disputes” as opposed to “deeply rooted conflicts.” While Burton’s Human Needs Theory is more reflective of comprehensive human needs, Mayer offer’s a legitimate and worthy framework in which to mediate the resolution of disputes. And, Mayer’s Wheel of Conflict offers a vital framework from which to deepen one’s understanding of the full context of a conflict or dispute and therefore engage in a problem-solving process in which one seeks to deepen one’s understanding of all parties’ perspectives, needs, hopes, and desires more thoroughly. Therefore, the conflict engager might embrace the Wheel of Conflict and conceive of the human needs at the center as an opportunity to explore both Mayer’s and Burton’s human needs interchangeably depending on whether one is seeking to transform conflict or mediate a dispute.

John Burton’s Basic Human Needs Theory paired with Bernard Mayer’s Wheel of Conflict both provide helpful theoretical insights into exploring the role of dignity in the workplace. Before moving forward with additional scholarly work that indirectly relates to dignity and workplace culture such as neuroscience and theories about belonging and designing intentionally developmental workplace cultures, it is worth taking a brief look at how quantum physics might influence an understanding of the importance of honoring dignity.
2.3 Quantum Theory and Dignity

Quantum theory, the theoretical basis of modern physics, explains the nature and behavior of matter and energy on the atomic and subatomic level. In her book, *Leadership and the New Science*, Margaret Wheatley provides a layman’s explanation:\(^{58}\)

In the quantum world, *relationship* is the key determiner to everything. Subatomic particles come into form and are observed only as they are in relationship to something else. They do not exist as independent ‘things.’ There are no basic ‘building blocks.’ Quantum physics paints a strange yet enticing view of a world that, as Heisenberg characterized it, ‘appears as a complicated tissue of events, in which connections of different kinds alternate or overlap or combine and thereby determine the texture of the whole.’ These unseen *connections* between what were previously thought to be separate entities are the fundamental ingredient of all creation.

In quantum physics, everything exists in an interconnected, and deeply intimate order. And, everything exists only in relationship — a constant weaving and merging of energy and change. This principle of quantum physics posits that what happens to one individual has an effect on another. In his book *Quantum Theory*, physicists David Bohm explains that:\(^{59}\)

… the quantum theory possesses a very complete internal unity, such that each part works together with the others in an interlocking way, and such that the whole theory would fail unless each part were present. Finally, we saw that even the wave function undergoes indivisible and uncontrollable changes when the object under observation


interacts with a measuring apparatus. This behavior of the wave function leads to qualitative description of the properties of matter in terms of incompletely defined and mutually incompatible potentialities, which can be realized more fully only in interaction with a suitable system in the environment.

Wheatley beautifully makes sense of this by drawing connections between the quantum world and the corporate world. In *Leadership and the New Science*, she writes:

To live in a quantum world, to weave here and there with ease and grace, we need to change what we do. We need fewer descriptions of tasks and instead learn how to facilitate process. We need to become savvy about how to foster relationships, how to nurture growth and development. All of us need to become better at listening, conversing, respecting one another’s uniqueness, because these are essential for strong relationships.

The era of the rugged individual has been replaced by the era of the team player. But this is only the beginning. The quantum world has demolished the concept that we are unconnected individuals. More and more relationships are in store for us, out there in the vast web of life.

Power in organizations is the capacity generated by relationships. It is an energy that comes into existence through relationships. An organization’s capacity for healthy relationships — not its organizational form in terms of tasks, functions, span of control and hierarchies — is more fundamental to strong relations.

- Do people know how to listen and speak to each other?
- Are they able to work well with diverse members?
- Do people have free access to one another throughout the organization?

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• Are they trusted with open information?
• Do organizational values bring them together or keep them apart?
• Is collaboration truly honored?
• Can people speak truthfully to one another?

Because power is energy, it needs to flow through organizations; it cannot be bounded or designed to certain functions or levels. What gives power its charge, positive or negative, is the nature of the relationship. When power is shared in such workplace redesigns as participative management and self-managed teams, positive creative power abounds.

If power is the capacity generated by our relationships, then we need to be attending to the quality of those relationships. We would do well to ponder the realization that love is the most potent source of power.

Wheatley and Bohm provide insightful perspectives for understanding the undeniable interconnectedness of humans. John Burton and Bernard Mayer help to explain the ways in which this interconnectedness becomes entangled and chaotic through frustrations of human needs. With this brief introduction to quantum physics complete, a look at social neuroscience and David Rock’s SCARF Model is helpful in understanding the role of dignity in the workplace.

2.4 Neuroscience and Dignity

The twentieth and twenty-first centuries ushered in an unprecedented understanding of the human brain and with this understanding of the brain came a deeper understanding of human behavior — what shapes how every individual thinks and, therefore, behaves; what shapes individual conscious and, therefore, collective conscious. Advances in neuroscience demonstrate that humans are not puppets living under the mysterious control of some unknown force, but
rather are that force and have great power in shaping the future of it. To understand how humans can consciously engage in dignity work requires an understanding of the brain.

The brain is an exceptionally sophisticated organ responsible for regulating thoughts, memory — the interconnected relationship between the two — judgment, personal identity, and other aspects collectively referred to as “the mind.” However, the brain’s responsibilities do not stop there. It also regulates all aspects of the body. It is both the birthplace of hopes and dreams and the engine that allows for the creation and realization of them. The brain and spinal cord comprise the nervous system — the hub for processing and communicating the information that controls all aspects of the human body.

The forebrain, midbrain and hindbrain are the three main parts that comprise the brain. The cerebrum, which comprises the left and right hemispheres of the brain, the brain stem, which is attached to the spinal cord, and the cerebellum, which is located below and behind the cerebral hemispheres are important structures within the forebrain, midbrain, and hindbrain.

The cerebrum is the largest section of the brain. This portion of the brain plays a critical role in decision-making. Understanding the cerebrum and how it works is paramount to intentionally engaging in behavior that optimizes and honors dignity. From an evolutionary perspective, this is a highly developed area of the brain and can be thought of as the brain’s CEO. The cerebrum is where complex functions such as action and thought occur. Housed within the cerebrum are the following:  

1. The frontal lobe is often referred to as the “executive center” of the brain because it controls cognition, including speech, planning, and problem-solving. It contains an important area of the brain called the prefrontal cortex, which is responsible for foreseeing consequences of actions, exercising self-restraint, and developing moral and ethical standards.

2. The parietal lobe controls sensation (i.e., touch, pressure, and ascertaining size and shape).

3. The temporal lobe mediates visual and verbal memory as well as smell.

4. The occipital lobe controls visual reception and the recognition of both shapes and colors.

Each of these lobes is divided by sulci — fissures that form boundaries between each. The cerebrum is symmetrical in structure and is divided into left and right hemispheres. Generally, the left hemisphere is responsible for functions such as creativity, and the right hemisphere is responsible for functions such as logic and spatial perception. Though each side has distinct areas of control, they are interdependent of one another. Every human has a dominant hemisphere that controls language, mathematical, and analytical functions, as well as whether that person is left-handed or right-handed. The non-dominant hemisphere controls simple spatial concepts, facial recognition, some auditory functions and some emotional functions. Nerve fibers send messages to the body, crossing over the medulla; therefore, the left hemisphere controls the right side of the body and the right hemisphere controls the left side of the body.

The limbic lobe is comprised of adjacent portions of the frontal, parietal, and temporal lobes that surround the corpus callosum and is involved in both involuntary and voluntary
behavioral activities, receiving input from the thalamic nuclei that are connected with parts of the hypothalamus and with the hippocampal formation.

Within the cerebral hemispheres exist the basal ganglia — large grey masses of nerve cells called nuclei. There are four basal ganglia: 62

1. The caudate
2. The putamen
3. The global pallidus
4. The amygdala

From an evolutionary perspective, the amygdala is the oldest of the basal ganglia and is almost exclusively concerned with survival. The amygdala controls the fight, flight, freeze response designed to ensure the body has the hormonal support necessary to respond when the brain perceives a life-threatening stimulus. The amygdala is an almond-shaped nucleus located under the corpus striatum in medial parts of the temporal lobe. While the amygdala does receive olfactory input as a function of its survival responsibilities, it plays no role in olfactory perception.

Beneath the cerebrum and above the brainstem is the diencephalon. This portion of the brain is comprised of the epithalamus, thalamus, hypothalamus (responsible for controlling the sex drive, pleasure, pain, hunger, thirst, blood pressure, body temperature, and other body functions such as the emission of oxytocin) and the subthalamus. The diencephalon functions as a relay system between incoming sensory input and other areas of the brain and is also a location

for interaction between the central nervous system and endocrine system. The diencephalon has a role in the limbic system — the area of the brain located below the cerebrum and in front of the cerebellum — which is responsible for hereditary traits and emotions and memories. The limbic system also has a role in regulating basic body functions.

The thalamus plays an important role in the relay and distribution of most sensory and motor signals to specific regions of the cerebral cortex. The thalamus segregates and organizes the sensory signals, which are generated in numerous receptors and projected via intricate pathways to specific relay nuclei. Just below the thalamus lies the hypothalamus, which controls the endocrine functions such as the secretion of oxytocin and vasopressin that allow for the muscle contractions of the reproductive and digestive systems. Oxytocin is an important hormone associated with bonding, developing trust, and forming human attachments.

While the cerebrum is the engine of thinking and emotions, the brain stem is the engine for basic body functions. It is the area of the brain that works “behind the scenes” and on autopilot, keeping the body breathing, pumping blood and managing critical functions that keep the body alive. The brain stem includes:

1. The midbrain — controls visual and auditory systems
2. The pons — controls arousal and respiration as well as serves as relay system for the cerebrum and cerebellum
3. The reticular activating system — a group of nerves concerned with consciousness and alertness

The cerebellum, sometimes referred to as the “little brain,” regulates and coordinates nerve impulses between the brain and the body’s muscles. Playing no role in sensory perception, the cerebellum is concerned with influencing the body’s ability to maintain equilibrium, muscle tone, and the coordination of voluntary motor control.

Communication within the nervous system largely occurs between independent cells — one cell transferring information to another. There are two types of cells: neurons and neuroglia (also referred to as glial) cells. The neurons are the taskmasters of the brain while the glial cells work as the “bodyguards” for the neurons. The brain consists of more than 10 billion neurons all of which have their own identities expressed in complex networks of unique relationships with other neurons. Each of the more than 10 billion neurons has its own function, depending on its specific function and location and the interdependent relationships relative to its function and brain location.

Neurons are the brain’s carriers of information. Much like a cargo ship transports goods from one port to another, neurons carry data from one area of the brain to another. All actions — voluntary and involuntary, conscious and unconscious — derive from the transmission of information from one neuron to another, a process called neurotransmission.

A neuron consists of a cell body that has branching structures called dendrites. These branching structures reach out of the cell body in the same way that tree branches reach out from the tree trunk. The dendrites receive information from nearby neurons in the form of impulses and push that information through the cell body in which they are associated. The neuron also has an axon — tube-like fiber with its only branching system — that carries nerve impulses away from the cell body to the dendrites of nearby neurons. The axon of one neuron reaches out to the dendrite of another neuron, but they do not actually transport information by touching. Rather,
there is a space between the two called a synapse. Neurons translate their messages into presynaptic and postsynaptic chemical messages. The chemical floats out of the presynaptic neuron and is caught by the postsynaptic. The chemical message fits into the receptor like a key in a lock and that is where the message is translated. These chemical messengers are called neurotransmitters. The neurotransmitters float across the synapse to have their messages heard in the second neuron. The neurotransmitter is either recycled back into the presynaptic neuron or it can be dumped into the synapse and flushed out into the cerebral spinal fluid, which pushes it into the blood and then it is flushed out of the body via urine.

Extraordinarily complex and highly intricate, the brain has developed numerous chemicals, including hormones and neurotransmitters to strengthen or weaken responses and to influence how information is organized. The following chemicals are particularly relevant to human connectivity:64

1. Adrenalin — triggers the fight / flight / freeze response
2. Testosterone — stimulates aggression
3. Oxytocin — instills trust, increases loyalty and promotes attachment and bonding
4. Estrogen — triggers the release of oxytocin
5. Endorphins — reinforces collaborative experiences with pleasure
6. Dopamine — generates a reward response and fortifies addiction
7. Serotonin — regulates moods

8. Phenylethylamine — induces excitement and anticipation

9. Vasopressin — encourages bonding in males

Each of the above-mentioned chemicals influence how the brain responds to conflict and attachment, yet humans are not enslaved to these chemicals. There is choice involved. How a person chooses to respond to a conflict situation or an opportunity for human connection will inform the brain on the appropriate chemical response and how much of that chemical is necessary to achieve the desired response.

Because all actions and functions of the human mind and body are the result of neurotransmissions, the brain has developed efficiencies in the form of neural pathways. Much like a well-worn path is created by constant travel, neural pathways develop within brain structures that allow certain actions to go on autopilot. For example, simple activities such as tying one’s shoe, driving a car, making coffee, and even more complex tasks that are done routinely such as operating complicated machinery are all actions the brain has developed sophisticated and well-worn pathways for, allowing a person to complete these tasks without giving any conscious thought to them. These neural pathways free the brain to give more energy and focus to other neural networks that are not as well formed. For example, while making coffee, one may be thinking about a complicated task that needs to be completed later in the day that requires solutions that have yet to be determined. The solutions-focused thinking involves the connecting (wiring and firing) of numerous neurons as information is delivered to various areas of the brain mentioned in the above brain overview that are necessary to accomplish the task. One neural network is working on autopilot while another is actively forming and transmitting new information.
It is easy to understand this in relation to mundane tasks such as tying one’s shoes or making coffee, but the same autopilot concept holds true to belief systems about one’s self, one’s family of origin, one’s community, and the belief systems associated with politics, religion, the environment, etc. The brain does not discriminate against right and wrong, moral and immoral, healthy and unhealthy, productive and unproductive, collaborative and competitive. The brain is a brilliant order-taking machine that simply creates what it is asked to create, and it is very efficient about creating what it is asked most frequently to create. This is great news when a person’s neural pathways are life sustaining, promote positive human connection, develop and perpetuate trust, bonding, and attachment. But when the neural pathways are founded in self-interest at the expense of others, zero-sum expectations regarding resources, fear-based responses to differing ideologies and belief systems, then these efficiencies the brain so brilliantly developed can become destructive to self, the community and, ultimately, humanity — and most certainly to workplace cultures.

In order to consciously and intentionally create neural pathways designed to enhance dignity, collaboration, and a mindset that honors the inherent value of life, one must have an understanding of the anatomy of the brain, how the brain functions and the key areas of the brain that help to form specific emotions, feelings, and behaviors, which is why the above overview of the brain is essential. In order to change something, one must understand what is being tasked to change.

The human brain is wired for survival. To that point, it is designed for two main functions: 1) keep the individual alive; and 2) keep the species alive. All areas of the brain

support one another to create opportunities for the human and the human species to remain in existence.

Emotions serve as an important evolutionary tool to ensure survival, which is why the brain experiences two primary emotions: fear and love. All feelings, at their core, are founded in one of these two emotions. When one of these two emotions is triggered, the nervous system responds with chemicals that create numerous feelings. And these feelings inform human behavior.

Mirror neurons play an important role in the expression of emotions. Mirror neurons are a class of brain cells that fire when an individual performs an action and also when the individual observes someone else performing the same action.66 Because connectivity is paramount to human survival, humans are intensely social beings. Mirror neurons send messages to our limbic system allowing us to experience what others feel. They allow for the deepening of prosocial behavior because they allow individuals to have intensely shared emotional experiences. For example, watching someone perform deeply emotional music inspires a shared emotional experience. Observing an individual crying often brings tears to the eyes of the observer. Watching someone experiencing a panic attack causes panic in the observer. Mirror neurons are the birthplace of empathy and suggest that deep within the human architecture is the framework for connectivity or togetherness. There would be no point of a mirror neuron system if humans were designed to live in isolation from one another. The honoring of dignity plays a crucial role in how we connect and foster healthy bonds.

As mentioned above, the amygdala is, from an evolutionary perspective, the oldest of the basal ganglia and is almost exclusively concerned with survival. Located deep within the anterior inferior temporal lobe, it receives information from the sensory regions of the thalamus and the cortex as well as from the hippocampus and prefrontal cortex. The amygdala plays a critical role in the survival of the human species because it is the guardian of the fear emotion and provides the body with the chemicals — most notably adrenaline — to respond to life-threatening stimuli. The connections from the amygdala to the cortex can influence the attention the brain gives to a perceived threat, which is influenced by both the perception of the current stimuli as well as memories of previous perceptions of danger. The amygdala also has indirect influence over the cortex through its connections to the attention system in the brainstem, which has other parts that trigger the cascade of physiological reactions associated with fear that send feedback to the brain. The “in the moment” feedback merges with the feedback associated with working memory to produce the feeling of experiencing an emotion.

When the brain receives a sensory stimulus that informs it that danger is present or pending, that information is routed to the thalamus. The thalamus routes it over two parallel pathways: the thalamo-amygdala pathway (the “short route”) and the thalamo-cortico-amygdala pathway (the “long route”). The thalamo-amygdala pathway conveys a quick, high-level impression of the situation that does not involve cognition. This pathway activates the amygdala and generates an emotional response before any perceptual integration has had time to occur. However, the information that travels through the thalamo-cortico-amygdala pathway is processed in the cortex and informs the amygdala on the validity of the threat. The assessment requires various levels of critical processing, including a comparison of explicit memory by means of the hippocampus, which communicates closely with the amygdala. The hippocampus
supports explicit memory and holds information about the dangerousness of a situation or object. The hippocampus is especially sensitive to context associated with behaviors that have been negatively perceived. The hippocampus is responsible for a stimulus (and the objects and conditions surrounding the stimulus) becoming a long-term source of conditioned fear. This perception of imminent danger activates the amygdala. The parallel operation of the explicit (hippocampal) and implicit (amygdalic) memory systems explains why traumas experienced very early in childhood are often not remembered. The hippocampus is not yet fully developed during childhood, but the amygdala is well formed and ready to record unconscious memories. Early childhood traumas can disturb the mental and behavioral functions of adults by providing inaccurate data upon which to act.

In a truly life-threatening situation, the amygdala can be a real lifesaver. However, as noted previously, memory can provide false data. Without intervention from the prefrontal cortex — the executive center of the brain tasked with logic and analytical thinking — the amygdala can cause the individual to engage in self-destructive behaviors. For example, if a child is lost at the park and cannot find his parent, he may experience an intense feeling of panic that causes him to freeze in one place. The chemicals flooding his body may literally have rendered him frozen in fear. This can be a very pro-survival response to danger because it might afford the parent an enhanced opportunity to find the child. Fast-forward twenty years, that fear may have become so profound to the child that it was imprinted in the brain as “parks are dangerous.” However, the person is incapable of remembering the source of the fear because of his underdeveloped hippocampus at the time of the event. The memory can persist for decades, or perhaps throughout his life. He may feel a great sense of discomfort, or even full-blown panic attacks, when he is in a park, near a park, or drives past a park. This fear may cause great
disruption in his day-to-day life as he seeks out every opportunity to avoid what might, as an adult, be packaged as “an aversion to nature.” This is a small example of how the amygdala can provide a false sense of danger to the brain that, without intervention, can cause self-destructive behavior. Apply this same thinking to false data about individuals of other cultures, ethnicities, belief systems, etc., and it quickly becomes apparent how self-destructive neural pathways can develop and perpetuate behavior that is self-destructive to both individuals and the communities in which they live.

This process of feeling overtaken by fear is referred to as an “amygdala hijack” — when the amygdala is engaged and the fight / flight / freeze coping mechanism is activated. In a truly life-threatening situation, the amygdala hijack may save a person’s life. But when a person is hijacked inappropriately, this behavior can be disruptive as well as destructive.

Like the well-worn path in the grass, continued use of the path hardens the soil and more clearly defines the pathway. Neural pathways are the same. The more an individual perpetuates a thought or belief system, the more developed the neural pathway becomes. In other words, the more true it becomes to the individual — the more it begins to function as its own system. And, just like the well-worn path, a lack of use results in new growth covering the previous pathway, which means the path through the grass is not destined to always be a path. A lack of wear and tear allows it to take on a new shape. The same holds true about belief systems. Intervention allows a new pathway to take shape. New information changes previously held belief systems and forges new pathways that inform different behaviors. Neuroscience has brought to the forefront of human possibility the awareness that the past does not have to shape the future. New

neural networks can be developed at any time by seeking out and consuming new information, then acting upon that new information in order to allow pathways for different behavior to emerge.

In his book, *The Dance of Conflict: Explorations in Mediation, Dialogue and Conflict Resolution Systems Design*, author Kenneth Cloke surfaces the poignant reality that, “While people in conflict commonly make reference to the facts, behaviors, feelings, personalities or events surrounding their conflicts, for the most part they ignore the deeper reality that these experiences are all processed and regulated by their nervous systems, and are therefore initiated, resolved, transformed and transcended by their brains.” 68 In other words, individuals create, process, and experience conflict and are, therefore, solely responsible and completely capable of processing information differently. The brain can remain mired in conflict or it can transcend it.

Just as the amygdala is the guardian of the emotion of fear and activates the fight or flight response to perceived threats, the hypothalamus is associated with oxytocin — the prosocial, “tend and befriend” hormone that encourages trust, increases loyalty and promotes attachment and bonding. Oxytocin is primarily in the hypothalamus. From there, it is either released into the blood stream via the pituitary gland or to other parts of the brain and spinal cord where it attaches to oxytocin receptors thereby influencing behavior and physiology. 69

While the fundamental features of living are contingent upon the activities of the entire brain, the hypothalamus plays an important role in maintaining the body’s comfort by

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maintaining homeostasis — the maintenance of hormone emission, body temperature, blood pressure, heart rate, water and electrolyte levels.\textsuperscript{70}

Research shows that oxytocin may have a dual purpose and dual pathways. When an individual is experiencing periods of low stress, oxytocin physiologically reinforces good social bonds with feelings of well-being. However, when a person is experiencing periods of high stress and high levels of the stress hormone cortisol are present, oxytocin can encourage prosocial behavior such as seeking out the positive attention and affection of others.\textsuperscript{71}

The hormone oxytocin and how it emits in the body supports the notion that the human brain is wired for connectivity. Actual or anticipated social contact can cause bursts of oxytocin emission. However, the brain may also respond to the stress associated with periods of social deficits with bursts of oxytocin emissions as well in order to produce physiological changes that then encourage the individual to behave in more prosocial ways — i.e., a physiological nudge to make positive contact with other people. In this manner, oxytocin actually affords the potentially stressful experiences to become an opportunity for expressing joy and love.\textsuperscript{72}

Research has found oxytocin to be an incredible resource for powerfully increasing trust. Numerous studies have found that participants given pretend money and encouraged to invest that money with a stranger will, on average, invest only one-fourth to one-third of their money. However, after a few sniffs of oxytocin, their trust levels increase significantly, and their


\textsuperscript{71} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid.
investment amount jumps to 80 percent or more.\textsuperscript{73}

There is a reciprocal relation between oxytocin and empathy: Oxytocin increases an individual’s capacity for empathy, and empathy increases the emission of oxytocin in the body. Therefore, from an evolutionary perspective, it is beneficial to exercise empathy in relationship to others because both — the act and the hormone — serve to strengthen social bonds.

Daniel Goleman, author of \textit{Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Make You Smarter Than IQ}, explains the three types of empathy:\textsuperscript{74}

1. \textit{Cognitive empathy}: Cognitive empathy is knowing how another person feels, or “perspective-taking.” This form of empathy is highly effective at motivating people to apply their best efforts. While at first blush all forms of empathy may appear to be prosocial, cognitive empathy does have a dark side. Interrogators, narcissists and sociopaths (individuals who are purely self-motivated) can be masters at this form of empathy and utilize it for purely selfish reasons.

2. \textit{Emotional empathy}: Emotional empathy is truly feeling the emotion along with another individual. Emotional empathy is due to the activation of mirror neurons, which help individuals to be well-attuned to another person’s inner emotional world. While emotional empathy does promote bonding and attachment and can positively affect trust and loyalty, one downside is that it can become overwhelming to the person extending empathy, causing burnout and then ultimately detachment as a


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coping mechanism. Emotional empathy must be paired with a healthy ability to self-regulate one’s own emotions and high attention to self-care.

3. **Empathetic empathy**: Empathetic empathy, also referred to as empathic or compassionate empathy, involves the capability of understanding a person’s predicament and feeling with them along with the willingness to help if help is necessary. This form of empathy is what love looks like in action.

An intentional and widespread focus on increasing empathy and collaboration — both interpersonally and within institutional structures such as schools, corporations and governmental agencies and systems — is paramount to the intentional shift in the future of humanity. For the first time in human history, individuals are able to lay claim to a future of dignity through collaborative means rather than evolving in response to changes in the environment while competing, often violently, for resources.

2.5 The SCARF Model

It has thus far been demonstrated that much of the human motivation driving social behavior is mediated by an overarching organizing principle (outlined in the neuroscience section of this paper) of minimizing threats — real and perceived — to survival and maximizing opportunities for human connection.

In the SCARF Model, David Rock demonstrates that the brain treats social needs in a similar fashion as survival needs. The SCARF model involves five domains of human social experience: status, certainty, autonomy, relatedness, and fairness.75

1. **Status** is about relative importance to others.

2. **Certainty** concerns being able to predict the future.

3. **Autonomy** provides a sense of control over events.

4. **Relatedness** is a sense of safety with others, of friend rather than foe.

5. **Fairness** is a perception of fair exchanges between people.

According to Rock, these five domains activate either the “primary reward” or “primary threat” circuitry (and their associated networks) of the brain. Therefore, if a person experiences a perceived threat to his/her social status, the brain responds in the same manner as a perceived threat to one’s life. Similarly, the perception that there has been an experience of fairness will activate the same reward circuitry as receiving a monetary reward. In order to make these unconscious drivers conscious, it is important to label and understand each of them. Only by understanding them does it become possible to design interactions that will reduce the experience of perceived threats. This is particularly important to workplace interactions because perceived threats impede cognitive functioning.

Rock explains that when a person perceives threatening behavior from a boss or superior such as undermining credibility, that person is less able to solve complex problems and more prone to make mistakes. This reduced cognitive performance is driven by several factors:

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77 Ibid
Firstly, when a human being senses a threat, resources available for overall executive functions in the prefrontal cortex decrease. There is a strong negative correlation between the amount of threat activation, and the resources available for the prefrontal cortex. The result is literally less oxygen and glucose available for the brain functions involved in working memory, which impacts linear, conscious processing. When feeling threatened by one’s boss, it is harder to find smart answers because of diminished cognitive resources.

Secondly, when threatened, the increased overall activation in the brain inhibits people from perceiving the more subtle signals required for solving non-linear problems, involved in the insight or ‘aha!’ experience.

Thirdly, with the amygdala activated, the tendency is to generalize more, which increases the likelihood of accidental connections. There is a tendency to err on the safe side, shrinking from opportunities, as they are perceived to be more dangerous. People become more likely to react defensively to stimuli. Small stressors become more likely to be perceived as large stressors. When the boss appears threatening, perhaps they just do not smile that day, suddenly a whole meeting can appear threatening and the tendency can be to avoid risks.

It is obvious that the threat or avoid response does not cultivate an ideal environment for collaboration or positively influencing coworkers. However, this response is often the workplace status quo due to the constant violations of dignity that often occur in workplace environments.

The intent of the SCARF model is to demonstrate a framework for minimizing threats to dignity (i.e., activations of the threat response) and maximize opportunities for honoring dignity (i.e., positive states of mind) while engaging with and attempting to collaborate with and influence
others in the workplace.

Rock provides an in-depth look at each of the five domains that comprise the SCARF model below:78

**A deeper look at Status**

Status is about relative importance, ‘pecking order’ and seniority. Humans hold a representation of status in relation to others when in conversations, and this affects mental processes in many ways. The brain thinks about status using similar circuits for processing numbers. One’s sense of status goes up when one feels “better than” another person. In this instance the primary reward circuitry is activated, in particular the striatum, which increases dopamine levels. … The perception of a potential or real reduction in status can generate a strong threat response.

**Increasing status reward**

People feel a status increase when they feel they are learning and improving and when attention is paid to this improvement. Status can go up when people are given positive feedback, especially public acknowledgment. Giving positive feedback may reduce the need for content promotion, not increase it. … Status is about one’s relative position in a community of importance such as a professional group or social club based on what is valued. Status can be increased without cost to others or an effect on relatedness.

**Autonomy**

Autonomy is the perception of exerting control over one’s environment; a sensation of

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having choices. The degree of control organisms can exert over a stress factor determines whether or not the stressor alters the organism’s functioning. Inescapable or uncontrollable stress can be highly destructive, whereas the same stress interpreted as escapable is significantly less destructive. The difference in some rodent studies was life and death. … An increase in the perception of autonomy feels rewarding. A reduction in autonomy, for example when being micro-managed, can generate a strong threat response. When one senses a lack of control, the experience is of a lack of agency, or an inability to influence outcomes. … Working in a team necessitates a reduction in autonomy. Invite choice in decision-making.

*Increasing rewards from autonomy*

Providing significant autonomy in an organization can be difficult but seeking out every opportunity to create it is helpful. Examples include allowing people to set up their own desks, organize their workflow, even manage their working hours, can all be beneficial if done within agreed parameters.

*Relatedness*

Relatedness involves deciding whether others are ‘in’ or ‘out’ of a social group. Whether someone is a friend or foe. Relatedness is a driver of behavior in many types of teams, from sports teams to organizational silos: people naturally look for tribes where they experience a sense of belonging. … In the absence of safe social interactions, the body generates a threat response, also known as feeling lonely. However, meeting someone unknown tends to generate an automatic threat response. The concept of relatedness is closely linked to trust.
While the SCARF model does not mention dignity specifically, it provides an obvious segue to an exploration of Donna Hicks’ Dignity Model.

2.6 Dignity Model

International peace-builder Donna Hicks developed what she refers to as the “Dignity Model” based on her multi-disciplinary research and two decades’ experience working with warring parties around the globe. What she discovered is that the concept of dignity is the missing link in understanding human conflict. Through her research and professional experience, she determined humans are particularly vulnerable to being treated as if they didn’t matter, and that treatment, or disregard, wounds something very profound in the human spirit. She argues that this vulnerability “explains why it hurts when our dignity is violated, and it gives us the knowledge, awareness, and skills to avoid unknowingly harming others.”

Understanding the role of dignity in the human experience enables us to repair and rebuild relationships that have been broken as a result of conflict and illuminate paths to reconciliation. She explains that by honoring the dignity of others, people are able to experience the freedom necessary to invite intimacy and connection. The overarching message of the Dignity Model is: “Demonstrate the care and attention for yourself and others that anything of value deserves.” Hicks asserts that humans share a longing for dignity that when experienced and recognized in one another creates a sense of safety for all parties, something necessary for growth and human development.


80 Ibid.
As detailed in the SCARF Model, dignity is so vital to the human experience that when a person’s dignity is violated that violation is experienced similarly to the way the brain processes a physical threat. The amygdala can become triggered and the person may experience the fight or flight response, or what Rock refers to as the “threat response” or “avoid response.” In her book, *Dignity: The essential role in resolving conflict*, Hicks writes:

Thus, what appears to exist side by side with human desire for dignity is an opposing tension: our obvious vulnerability. Although we are precious and invaluable beings, our dignity can be violated very quickly, just as our lives can be upended in the blink of an eye. We are just as vulnerable to feeling unworthy as we are to feeling worthy. Because of the primacy of our relationships, our sensitivity to others and the world leaves us open to injury of all sorts and, ultimately, to the possibility of death. It appears that the feeling of loss is at the heart of human vulnerability — loss of dignity, loss of connection to others, and loss of life itself.

The experience of worth and vulnerability is an emotional experience that is derived from the limbic system. Therefore, our responses to dignity violations are also rooted in emotions — dread, shame, anger, disgust, and a myriad destabilizing feelings that cause us to experience pain and aversion. Most people will go to great lengths to avoid these negative feelings. Hicks notes that, “Some people who have experienced chronic violations of dignity have even gone to the

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extreme of taking their own lives to bring an end to these intolerable feelings. Others go to the opposite extreme by killing those who caused the injury.”

As noted previously, the human brain is wired for connection, and dignity plays a crucial role in fostering connection. So, while the limbic system supports survival by producing hormones in the amygdala that serve as a means of self-protection (cortisol and adrenaline) and fuels the body’s ability to fight or flee the scene of danger, it also supports human connection by eliciting oxytocin and other feel good hormones that support human connection, bonding, and trust. And dignity plays a crucial role here as well. The more we honor, support, and encourage the intrinsic value in others, the more we are able to connect with them, and these social connections build upon one another in positive and prosocial ways. Hicks explains:

Being treated with dignity triggers the limbic system to release those pleasant feelings of being seen, recognized, and valued — all the life-expanding experiences that come with human connection. Instead of being flooded with fear, anger, resentment, and revenge, we experience safety in a new way. After treating one another with dignity repeatedly, after having multiple reciprocal experiences of recognizing another’s value and vulnerability, we will be well on our way to discovering the possibilities that lie before us. With our inner worlds free from the turmoil and uncertainty that accompany our fear of loss of dignity, we can explore a new frontier together, what it is like to feel safe enough to be vulnerable.

So, while the brain has two innate ways in which to seek safety and ensure survival, self-preservation seems to have been the dominant default mode of survival which has resulted in


myriad conflicts and widespread human-inflicted suffering throughout history, and this certainly includes the workplace.

Hicks’ dignity model offers the possibility of a paradigm shift — a roadmap for a new way of being in relation with one another. The Dignity Model also offers a proactive approach to peace-building, an approach that cultivates peace as way a of being rather than as a response to conflict. The Dignity Model is a framework for proactively creating and sustaining peace, as well as a reactive model for responding to conflict.

The Dignity Model is rather straightforward. Hicks has identified ten essential elements that are critical to a person’s dignity and that serve as a guide for how to communicate with and treat others. It is critical to become familiar with the ten essentials elements of dignity, because only by knowing what they are can people develop the awareness necessary to ensure they do not unintentionally violate the dignity of others. Although we innately know when our dignity has been violated, we do not innately understand why or know what to do to ensure we do not violate the dignity of others — or even our own dignity. The “Ten Essential Elements of Dignity” are as follows:

1. **Acceptance of identity.** Approach people as being neither inferior nor superior to you. Give others the freedom to express their authentic selves without fear of being negatively judged. Interact without prejudice or bias, accepting the ways in which race, religion, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, and disability may be at the core of other people’s identities. Assume that others have integrity.

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2. **Inclusion.** Make others feel that they belong, whatever the relationship —
whether they are in your family, community, organization, or nation.

3. **Safety.** Put people at ease on two levels: physically, so they feel safe from 
bodily harm; and psychologically, so they feel safe from being humiliated.
Help them to feel free to speak without fear of retribution.

4. **Acknowledgment.** Give people your full attention by listening, hearing,
validating, and responding to their concerns, feelings, and experiences.

5. **Recognition.** Validate others for their talent, hard work, thoughtfulness, and
help. Be generous with praise, and show appreciation and gratitude to others
for their contributions.

6. **Fairness.** Treat people justly, with equality, and in an even-handed way
according to agreed-on laws and rules. People feel that you have honored their
dignity when you treat them without discrimination or injustice.

7. **Benefit of the doubt.** Treat people as trustworthy. Start with the premise that
others have good motives and are acting with integrity.

8. **Understanding.** Believe that what others think matters. Give them the chance
to explain and express their point of view. Actively listen in order to understand them.

9. **Independence.** Encourage people to act on their own behalf so that they feel in
control of their lives and experience a sense of hope and possibility.

10. **Accountability.** Take responsibility for your actions. If you have violated the
dignity of another person, apologize. Make a commitment to change your
hurtful behaviors.
Of course, not violating the dignity of others is only one aspect of honoring dignity. It is also imperative that a person not participate in the violation of one’s own dignity. Hicks offers the following “Ten Temptations to Violate Dignity”: 85

1. **Taking the bait.** Don’t take the bait. Don’t let the bad behavior of others determine your own. Restraint is the better part of dignity. Don’t justify getting even. Do not do unto as others as they do unto you if it will cause harm.

2. **Saving face.** Don’t succumb to the temptation to save face. Don’t lie, cover up, or deceive yourself. Tell the truth about what you have done.

3. **Shirking responsibility.** Don’t shirk responsibility when you have violated the dignity of others. Admit it when you make a mistake, and apologize if you hurt someone.

4. **Seeking false dignity.** Beware of the desire for external recognition in the form of approval and praise. If we depend on others alone for validation of our worth, we are seeking false dignity. Authentic dignity resides within us. Don’t be lured by false dignity.

5. **Seeking false security.** Don’t let your need for connection compromise your dignity. If we remain in a relationship in which dignity is routinely violated, our desire for connection has outweighed our need to maintain our own dignity. Resist the temptation to settle for false security.

6. **Avoiding conflict.** Stand up for yourself. Don’t avoid confrontation when your dignity is violated. Take action. A violation is a sign that something in a relationship needs to change.

7. **Being the victim.** Don’t assume that you are the innocent victim in a troubled relationship. Open yourself to the idea that you might be contributing to the problem. We need to look at ourselves as others see us.

8. **Resisting feedback.** Don’t resist feedback from others. We often don’t know what we don’t know. We all have blind spots; we all unconsciously behave in undignified ways. We need to overcome our self-protective instincts and accept constructive criticism. Feedback gives us an opportunity to grow.

9. **Blaming and shaming others to deflect your own guilt.** Don’t blame and shame others to deflect your own guilt. Control the urge to defend yourself by making others look bad.

10. **Engaging in false intimacy and demeaning gossip.** Beware of the tendency to connect by gossiping about others in a demeaning way. Being critical and judgmental about others when they are not present is harmful and undignified. If you want to create intimacy with another, speak the truth about yourself, about what is happening in your inner world, and invite the other person to do the same.

Hicks derived the essential elements of dignity through her own observations while facilitating dialogues between warring parties. It became clear that unaddressed violations of dignity were the key factors that prevented parties from coming together in agreement. In other words, it was the emotions they felt or expressed toward one another as a direct result of the treatment of one another that created a barrier to resolution and not their ability to achieve common ground.

Hicks is trained in John Burton’s Basic Human Needs Theory as well as Herbert Kelman’s interactive problem-solving approach, which seeks to assist parties in deepening their
understandings of one another. Problems become solvable when parties are able to achieve the ability to conceive one another as equals as it relates to their shared human needs. Hicks explains that the “Burton-Kelman approach focused on providing a forum for parties to discuss unmet needs, the insights from which could be fed into the political process.” What she realized in this process of facilitating complex dialogues between staunch enemies is that Burton’s initial list was lacking key elements of dignity — the desire to be understood; the desire for suffering to be named and acknowledged; the desire to be freed from domination so that space for hope and possibility could grow; the desire to be given the benefit of the doubt; the desire to be apologized to when wronged. Ultimately, the ten essential elements of dignity built on Burton’s original needs and formalized the concept of dignity — something Hicks had determined was essential to truly transforming deeply rooted conflicts.

After publishing Dignity in 2013, Hicks continued her research and began to expand her consultation practices into corporate spaces, she expanded the Dignity Model, presenting new research in her book Leading with Dignity: How to Create a Culture That Brings Out the Best in People. Her research points to the idea that honoring dignity goes beyond the initial practices outlined in the Ten Essentials of Dignity and the Ten Temptations to Violate Dignity and requires that one adopt a dignity consciousness. Hicks asserts that dignity is an immense source of power that endows each person with a capacity to develop mutually beneficial connections that create positive change in all relationships, including those that are cultivated in the workplace. Developing a dignity consciousness is paramount to activating this power. In her


book, she writes, “I have concluded that dignity can be summed up in the following way: it is about *connection, connection, and connection* (the “three Cs”).\(^8\)

She goes on to explain, “‘Knowing dignity’ or ‘dignity consciousness’ means that we are connected to our own dignity (the first C), the dignity of others (the second C), and the dignity of something greater than ourselves (the third C). The third C can take on different interpretations—for some, it can mean a connection to a higher power, but it also includes a connection to the natural world and the planet that is home to us all. Additionally, it can include a connection to a purpose that contributes to the greater good — something that gives meaning to our lives.”\(^9\) The development of a dignity consciousness is a three-stage process that evolves over the course of one’s human development. For Hicks, dignity is derived and understood in these three stages:\(^\text{90}\)

- **Dependence** — As children, we are wholly dependent on our caretakers, and our sense of worth is grounded in how well these caretakers acknowledge our needs and make efforts to meet them. Adults too can get stuck at this developmental level. Without healthy relationships, without repeated doses of love and attention, anyone could get trapped into believing that because others mistreat them, they must not be worthy.\(^\text{91}\)

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\(^9\) Ibid.

\(^\text{90}\) Ibid.

• **Independence** — This stage of understanding our dignity is knowing that our sense of worth depends not only on how others treat us, but also on building upon repeated experiences of having been shown love and attention (i.e., having our dignity honored throughout our childhood). At this stage, we internalize the source of our dignity, and gain clarity that our sense of value is derived from internal sources. At this stage, an inner confidence develops that helps to ground our feelings and actions. We no longer seek constant praise and approval in order to feel good about ourselves; however, we remain vulnerable to the negative judgment of others when we think that they are questioning our value and worth, causing resistance to perceived criticism as a means of preserving dignity.92

• **Interdependence** — In this stage, the recognition that all people have limits to what they can know about themselves develops, and people begin to acknowledge that they may be the source of someone else’s trouble. In other words, people begin to recognize and acknowledge that blind spots exist. Hicks writes, “To help us see those blind spots, and to help us gain an awareness of how we might be violating our own or others’ dignity, we need extra sets of eyes. We have moved beyond simply internalizing our worth to seeing the advantage of receiving feedback from others, even if it feels uncomfortable. At this stage, we have the capacity to stay grounded in our worth and, at the same time, make ourselves vulnerable. We are back to where we started — needing the love and attention of others — but at this stage we need them for very different reasons. We need the love and attention not to discover our dignity, but to experience

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how much we are dependent on each other. In this way, we come to understand that vulnerability is where our truth resides.”

This interdependence stage relates to the basic human need of belonging. Though Hicks does not specifically present the need for belonging as an element of dignity, it fits into the Basic Human Needs Theory that informed her work and cannot be ignored as it relates to dignity and workplace culture. Following is an examination of important contributions to the concept of belonging, especially as it relates to the workplace.

2.7 Theories of Belonging

In her book, Braving the Wilderness: the Quest for True Belonging and the Courage to Stand Alone, Brené Brown provides a theory for what she refers to as “true belonging.” In the book, she recalls a definition of belonging that she presented in her 2010 book, The Gifts of Imperfection:

Belonging is the innate human desire to be part of something larger than us. Because this yearning is so primal, we often try to acquire it by fitting in and by seeking approval, which are hollow substitutes for belonging, but often barriers to it. Because true belonging only happens when we present our authentic, imperfect selves to the world, our sense of belonging can never be greater than our level of self-acceptance.

In Braving the Wilderness, Brown suggests that this definition withstands the test of time but is incomplete. There is much more to true belonging. “Being ourselves means sometimes having to


find the courage to stand alone, totally alone. It is not something we achieve or accomplish with others; it is something we carry in our heart. Once we belong thoroughly to ourselves and believe thoroughly in ourselves, true belonging is ours.”

She goes on to explain, “Belonging to ourselves means being called to stand alone — to brave the wilderness of uncertainty, vulnerability, and criticism. Even when we feel utterly alone, we are connected to one another by something greater than group membership, policies, ideology — we are connected by love and the human spirit.” This directly relates to Hicks’ assertion that dignity consciousness is a connection to ourselves, others, and something greater than ourselves. Brown’s definition of belonging evolved to a definition of true belonging, which she describes as:

True belonging is the spiritual practice of believing in and belonging to yourself so deeply that you can share your most authentic self with the world and find sacredness in both being a part of something and standing alone in the wilderness. True belonging doesn’t require you to change who you are; it requires you to be who you are.

This definition begs a definition of “spirituality,” which Brown provides:

Spirituality is recognizing and celebrating that we are all inextricably connected to each other by a power greater than all of us, and that our connection to that power and to one another is grounded in love and compassion.

Brown suggests that it is spirituality that helps us to “stay connected to what binds us as humans”

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96 Ibid.


while navigating an increasingly divisive and cynical world.” Here again are connections to Hicks’ dignity work. An examination of dignity simply must include the basic human need of belonging. They are too close to be considered separate from one another. From Brown’s research, a theory of true belonging emerged:

- People are hard to hate close up. Move in.
- Speak truth to bullshit. Be civil.
- Hold hands. With strangers.
- Strong back. Soft front. Wild heart.

**People are hard to hate close up. Move in.**

In order to experience true belonging, we must satisfy our biological need for connection. To this, it is of paramount importance that our efforts to connect are aligned with our basic human needs and dignity needs for safety (physical and emotional) and in order to accomplish that, we must establish and honor boundaries. Utilizing empathy, compassion, and humanizing language that honors dignity for one’s self and others fosters relationships that allow for connection and trust.

**Speak truth to bullshit. Be civil.**

Brown explains, “It is helpful to think of lying as a defiance of truth and bullshit as a wholesale dismissal of the truth.” The human tendency to violate the essential dignity need of

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extending the benefit of the doubt (i.e., being skeptical) leads to a total surrender of objective 
inquiry, which leads to the “wholesale dismissal of the truth.” The tendency toward dismissing 
truth often results in an emotion-driven approach to connection, which ultimately weaponizes 
our need for belonging. One only need to look to politics to understand what Brown is referring 
to. The collective surrender of any attempt to dig deeply into complicated social and political 
issues that impact a global society to adopt emotion-based responses to complex problems and 
then to turn those emotions into sources of social division. Brown offers two practices for 
speaking truth to bullshit.102

First, approach bullshitting with generosity when possible. Don’t assume that people 
know better and they’re just being malicious or mean-spirited. In highly charged 
discussions, we can feel shame about not having an informed opinion and these feelings 
of ‘not enough’ can lead us to bullshitting our way through a conversation. We can also 
believe we’re responding from real data and have no idea that there is nothing to back up 
what we are saying. Additionally, we can get so caught up in our own pain and fear that 
truth and fact play second fiddle to emotional pleas for understanding or agreement. 

Generosity, empathy, and curiosity can go a long way in our efforts to question what we 
are hearing and introduce fact.

The second practice is civility. Brown draws on a definition of civility from the Institute 
for Civility in Government that closely reflects how her research participants talked about

102 Brown, Brené. Braving the Wilderness: the Quest for True Belonging and the Courage to 
civility. The organization’s cofounders, Cassandra Dahnke and Tomas Spath, write: 103

Civility is claiming and caring for one’s identity, needs, and belief without degrading someone else’s in the process … [Civility] is about disagreeing without disrespecting, seeking common ground as a starting point for dialogue about differences, listening past one’s preconceptions, and teaching others to do the same. Civility is the hard work of staying present even with those with whom we have deep-rooted and fierce disagreement. It is political in the sense that it is a necessary prerequisite for civic action. But it is political, too, in the sense that is about negotiating interpersonal power such that everyone’s voice is heard and nobody’s is ignored.

Brown shares research from Christine Porath, an associate professor for management at Georgetown University, “Incivility can fracture a team, destroying collaboration, splintering members’ sense of psychological safety, and hampering team effectiveness. Belittling and demeaning comments, insults, and other rude behavior can deflate confidence, sink trust, and erode helpfulness — even for those who aren’t the target of these behaviors.” 104 It is clear that in the workplace, if the expectation is that people speak up, take chances, and innovate, then the workplace culture must be open to truth-telling, civility, and, above all, safety.

Hold hands. With strangers.

Brown and Hicks’ research both demonstrate that building a true belonging practice and adopting a dignity consciousness requires maintaining what Brown describes as “a belief in


inextricable human connection” and what Hicks describes as a connection to something greater than one’s self. For Brown the inextricable human connection is an unbreakable connection that flows between us and every other human in the world. When our belief in this connection is disrupted, fragmented, or broken, we are more likely to retreat from another, to hate from a distance, to tolerate wholesale dismissals of truth, and to dehumanize one another. In order to get close to others, to hold hands, even with strangers, it is imperative to honor this connection to something greater than one’s self. Brown writes, “Women and men with the strongest true belonging practices maintain their belief in inextricable connection by engaging in moments of joy and pain with strangers. We need to catch enough glimpses of people connecting to one another and having fun together that we believe it is true and possible for all of us.

**Strong back. Soft Front. Wild heart.**

Very simply stated, this element of Brown’s theory is the recognition that true belonging requires the courage and vulnerability to abandon the certainty and safety of our individual ideological bunkers and to engage in a willingness to be present with one another through the joyful and painful aspects of daily life. We accomplish this by “BRAVING the wilderness”.

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B — Did I respect by own boundaries? Was I clear about what is okay and what is not okay?

R — Was I reliable? Did I do what I said I was going to do?

A — Did I hold myself accountable?

V — Did I respect the value and share appropriately?

I — Did I act from my integrity

N — Did I ask for what I needed? Was I nonjudgmental about needing help?

G — Was I generous toward myself?

Another scholar who has made a significant contribution to the concept of belonging is Peter Block. In his book, *Community: the Structure of Belonging*, he asserts that belonging has two meanings:

First and foremost, to belong is to be related to and a part of something. It is membership, the experience of being at home in the broadest sense of the phrase. Belonging is best created when we join with other people in producing something that makes a place better. It is the opposite of thinking *I must do it on my own.* That wherever I am, it is all on my shoulders and that perhaps I would be better off somewhere else. The opposite of belonging is to feel isolated and always (all ways) on the margin, an outsider. I am still forever wandering, looking for that place where I belong. To belong is to know, even in the middle of the night, that I am among friends.

The second meaning of the word *belong* has to do with being an owner: something

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belongs to me. To belong to a community is to act as a creator and co-owner of that community. What I consider mine I will build and nurture. The work, then, is to seek in our communities a wider and deeper sense of emotional ownership and communal ownership and accountability, both in their relationships and in what they actually control.

Block explains that belonging can also be thought of as a longing to be. Like Hicks and Brown, he argues that, “Being is our capacity to find our deeper purpose in all that we do. It is the capacity to be present and to discover our authenticity and whole selves. This is often thought of as an individual capacity, but it is also a community capacity.”

While Hicks situates belonging in dignity (albeit indirectly), and Brown situates belong via “BRAVING,” Blocks situates belonging in community. The idea of community shows up in Basic Human Needs Theory in our need for participation and cultural security. Block describes community as, “the container within which our longing to be is fulfilled. Without the connectedness of a community, we will continue to choose not to be.” For Block, community, as structure, exists for the sole purpose of belonging. The identity of a community is cultivated from the “gifts, generosity, and accountability of its citizens.” Block agrees with Hicks and Brown that there is an interdependent and interconnected element to the human experience, and for Block that is the essence of community. “Community is fundamentally an interdependent human experience given form by the conversations citizens hold among themselves. The history,

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112 Ibid.

buildings, economy, infrastructure, and culture are products of the conversations and social fabric of any community. The built and cultural environments are secondary gains of how we choose to be together.”114 To this point, the goal of leaders should be to create the “structure and experiences that bring citizens together to identify and solve problems”115 rather than to be better role models or drive change. The citizens within the community hold all the resources, knowledge and internal power necessary to identify problems and to solve them.

Community is ultimately “holding hands with strangers” and acknowledging that in this container of community, belonging requires that we cease to see one another as strangers at all and that we embrace the interdependence so important to the third stage of dignity consciousness.

2.8 Systems Design

In her book, Leading with Dignity, Hicks asserts that dignity is an immense source of power that enables each person with a capacity to develop mutually beneficial connections that create positive change in all relationships, including those that are cultivated in the workplace.116 In order to access this power, it is essential that organizations recognize and honor the interdependent nature of the human existence in such a way that honors dignity, embraces the need for belonging, and builds a community that fosters the connection necessary to cultivate innovation.


In her book, *Leadership and the New Science*, Margaret Wheatley draws on the ideas of connection outlined above, using quantum physics to inform her ideas, to explain how power is generated in organizations. She explains: 117

Power in organizations is the capacity generated by relationships. It is an energy that comes into existence through relationships. An organization’s capacity for healthy relationships — not its organizational form in terms of tasks, functions, span of control and hierarchies — is more fundamental to strong relations.

1. Do people know how to listen and speak to each other?
2. Are they able to work well with diverse members?
3. Do people have free access to one another throughout the organization?
4. Are they trusted with open information?
5. Do organizational values bring them together or keep them apart?
6. Is collaboration truly honored?
7. Can people speak truthfully to one another?

Because power is energy, it needs to flow through organizations; it cannot be bounded or designed to certain functions or levels. What gives power its charge, positive or negative, is the nature of the relationship. When power is shared in such workplace redesigns as participative management and self-managed teams, positive creative power abounds. If power is the capacity generated by our relationships, then we need to be attending to the quality of those relationships. We would do well to ponder the realization that love is the most potent source of power.

Love in this context can be understood as willing the good of another and offering active care for the whole person, which ties perfectly into the preservation of human needs and the honoring of dignity and belonging. In his book, *Caring Enough to Be Heard*, David Augsburger writes, “Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person, they are almost indistinguishable.” From a dignity perspective, being heard relates to acknowledgment, recognition, fairness, understanding, and being given the benefit of the doubt.

Wheatley aptly describes organizational behavior as being influenced by the invisible quantum fields in which the interdependence of human relations is scientifically evident. By tending to these fields through the honoring of human needs and dignity via the infusion of dignity in corporate mission, vision, values, and all organizational structures and processes, as well as through policies and practices that allow for the experiential evidence of this infusion, organizations create a fundamental shift in innovation. As mentioned previously in this paper, if the expectation is that people speak up, take chances, and innovate, then the workplace culture must be open to truth-telling, civility, and, above all, safety.

In their book, *An Everyone Culture: Becoming a Deliberately Developmental Organization*, authors Robert Kegan and Lisa Laskow Lahey present an organizational design that, perhaps indirectly, embraces love, dignity, and community. The deliberately developmental organization (DDO) seeks to realize organizational potential as well as human potential. DDOs create cultures where people are able to bring their whole selves into the workplace and develop

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their individual capabilities. Deliberately developmental organizations implement recommendations from the science of human development in order to accelerate organizational development. These organizations are designed in such a way that contributors at every level of the organization have opportunities to develop their greatest potential. From a human needs perspective, this is justice operationalized in the workplace. Deliberately developmental organizations also share certain assumptions — assumptions about the possibility and value of growing in adulthood; ways of structuring people’s growth as it relates directly to their work; ways of helping people achieve the most from giving and receiving feedback and coaching; and ways of connecting people development to business development.120

In order to understand this organizational design, an understanding of how the authors define “development” is necessary. For Kegan and Lahey, development is a “specific, theoretically robust, reliably measurable, and business-valuable phenomenon” that meets the following three criteria:121

- Development is a specific, describable, and detectable phenomenon (the growth of our mind-sets, or meaning-making logics; qualitative advances in our abilities to see more deeply and accurately into ourselves and our worlds; the process of successively being able to look at premises and assumptions we formerly looked through)


• Development has a robust scientific foundation (forty years of research, by investigators across the world, with a wide diversity of samples and reliable means of measurement).

• Development has a business value (organizations need more employees in possession of the more complex mind-sets, and this need will intensify in the years ahead).

With the above criteria in place, a DDO operates under three specific dimensions as a means of ensuring development of both people and business. These dimensions are comprehensive of twelve discontinuous departure features — departures from familiar, business as usual principles, practices and structure. By “discontinuous” the authors mean that these features are quantitative departures from standard practices designed to create a new continuity focused on people development.122 These dimensions are categorized as Edge, Home, and Groove.

**Dimension 1: EDGE — Developmental Aspirations**

• *Adults can grow.* From the ground up, DDOs design the organization to support the growth of its members.

  • The organization helps the employees identify a personal challenge that is meaningful to that person, as well as valuable to the company, that he or she can work on in order to grow

  • Others are aware of the employee’s growing edge and are invested in that person’s ability to transcend the challenge

• The employee is given the support needed to overcome any barriers or limitations to transcending the challenge. The person is able to articulate what that support is.
• The person experiences actively working toward transcending the challenge or growing edge on a daily or weekly basis.
• When this growing edge is transcended (i.e., the person becomes a more capable version of himself) this accomplishment is recognized, celebrated, and opportunities for continued growth are presented.

• Weakness is a potential asset; error is an opportunity. In order to manage others’ perceptions, most people constantly seek to disguise perceived weaknesses and promote their perceived assets. Expressions of vulnerability and perceived limitations are rare and most likely only exposed behind closed doors and in confidence. People will go to great lengths to shelter themselves from any demonstration or expression of incompetence or inadequacy. In contrast, a DDO seeks to counter this tendency to perceptions of weakness by enabling its members to uncover and value their growing edge, and to experience themselves as valuable even in the midst of mistakes. DDOs recognize that people become increasingly valuable when they overcome their limitations. Therefore, limitations are seen as an organizational resource and an asset that should be continuously and publicly engaged. The identification of areas of limitation or weakness provides opportunities for individual and organizational growth.123

• **Run on affirmative developmental principles.** DDOs have a pervasive ecology — structures, practices, tools, and shared language — that allows the organization to orient itself around a set of shared developmental principles, which are rooted in the possibility of new life, of emergence, new capability, and evolution at the individual and collective level. These principles are openly discussed, debated, applied, revised, and posted as an active element of the culture.124

• **The bottom line is all one thing.** A DDO recognizes that organizational development and human development are mutually inclusive and interdependent. The goals of profitability and fostering development are intrinsically linked. Deliberately developmental organizations recognize that profit motive is a catalyst to development and development is a catalyst to profit.125

**Dimension 2: The Groove — Developmental Practices and Tools**

Developmental principles are manifested in a DDO through a set of practices that runs through all aspects of the organization, which Kegan and Lahey refer to as the groove. “These practices include how meetings are structured, how employee performance is monitored and discussed, and how people talk to one another about their work and the challenges they face personally and in advancing the interests of the company. These practices represent another set of discontinuous departures from the routines, language, and structures of most organizations. And these practices are natural extensions of, and deeply aligned with, growth-based principles.


They are the practical means by which people at every level engage their growing edge.\textsuperscript{126} Kegan and Lahey identify four underlying dimensions to the groove.

- \textit{Destabilization can be constructive}. Because DDOs translate its members’ limitations into organizational resources, they seek out ways to ensure members are able to have these experiences. The underlying belief is that if a member is able to perform his or her job responsibilities to a high level, then that person is no longer in the right job. Destabilization promotes development.\textsuperscript{127}

- \textit{Mind the gaps}. Seeking to always overcome gaps in thinking that serves only to avoid embarrassment and protect one’s self from uncomfortable exposure or conflict is a way of being for DDO leaders. Leaders create a transparent work that affords organizational members the immediate access to core business issues and the conversational routines necessary to allow them to manage the discomfort and pain that can arise from this level of transparency.\textsuperscript{128}

- \textit{Set the time scale for growth not closure}. Deliberately developmental organizations invest time learning and growing into daily practices and routines so that everyone can


experience the necessary conditions to achieve greater success in the future.\textsuperscript{129}

- \textit{The interior life is part of what is manageable.} Deliberately developmental organizations share Wheatley’s perspective that power operates in the invisible field. The culture embraces practices that allow for the inner experiences such as strategizing, operations, execution, performance enhancement, and process improvement to be designed and carried out by the members, allowing for members to bring their whole selves to the workplace. This is the essence of belonging and community building.\textsuperscript{130}

\textbf{Dimension 3: Home — Development communities to provoke and hold vulnerability}

For Kegan and Lakey the central role of community is core to the individual development within a DDO, which is why they have termed this third dimension home. Deliberately developmental organizations recognize growth occurs when individuals experience a sense of belonging in a workplace community and that this sense of belonging is how people experience their inherent value not just as workers or contributors but also as human beings. And like Donna Hicks, DDOs agree that being constantly held accountable and engaged in real and sustained dialogue is essential to how people experience their inherent value. The following criteria comprise the home dimension:

- \textit{Rank does not have its usual privileges.} In a typical hierarchical organization, the higher a person climbs on the organizational chart, the more deference and superiority is bestowed upon that person and the less apt a person is to be challenged by


individuals lower on the org chart. Not so in a DDO where higher rank offers no free pass in terms of ideas, freedom from the disagreement or constructive feedback from members in lower ranks. There is also no immunity from the requirement to identify and expose limitations and seek opportunities for individual growth. Kegan and Lahey write, “DDOs recognize that leadership’s tendency to use its power to design and sustain structures that protect itself from challenge sets a limit on the organization’s ability to exceed itself.”

- **Everyone does people development.** People development is not limited to a single functional role such as human resources. Instead, people development is baked into the job description of every single member of the organization. Taking responsibility for one’s self is as important as taking responsibility for one’s coworker. This is reminiscent of Brene’ Brown’s “hold hands with strangers” element of true belonging and Donna Hicks’ interdependent stage of dignity consciousness.

- **Everyone needs a crew.** DDOs recognize that vulnerability is an essential element of growth, and if people must be willing to be vulnerable, then it stands to reason that they also need a community that will accept and embrace their vulnerability. In a DDO, every person at every level of the organization has a crew — a reliable group that is instrumental in fostering vulnerability. The crew calls out blind spots and

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supports growth as a result of vulnerability. Hicks would refer to this as the development of dignity consciousness. It is once again an example of the interdependent nature of humanity. Wheatley might call this out as an example of the quantum field. We can only understand ourselves in relationship to those around us.

- **Everyone builds the culture.** In a DDO, individual alignment with the organization’s culture is essential but insufficient. All employees are expected and required to continuously work toward the improvement of not just themselves, but also the organization. Every person works to strengthen culture by participating in the continuous and collective redesign of structures, processes, and routines. A community only functions as a container for belonging when all of its members are actively engaged in the integrity of its operations.

In many ways a deliberately developmental culture embodies the true belonging work presented by Brene´ Brown and Peter Block. DDOs also incorporate elements from the Dignity Model. They are intentional about developing organizational communities that support and care for its members with the knowledge that the natural, universal flow of reciprocity that exists in the quantum field will enhance the organization’s purpose and, ultimately, bottom line.

**2.9 Business Paradigms**

Organization development consultant and coach Frederic Laloux coined the phrase “Teal Organizations” as a means of defining an organizational structure that is representative of the

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next stage of human consciousness. This organizational structure is non-hierarchical in nature and offers a workplace environment that is self-managed. No one reports to a boss or supervisor and everyone is empowered with the autonomy and resources necessary to make decisions that are in the best interest of the organization, the individuals who work within the organization (often referred to as members), and the specific area within the business that correlates most directly with his or her area of expertise. The Teal Organization was born out of this newly emerging human consciousness that has its roots in a profound need to experience dignity and wholeness in all areas of one’s life, including the workplace. In his book, *Reinventing Organizations: A Guide to Creating Organizations Inspired by the Next Stage of Human Consciousness*, Laloux writes:135

Modern organizations have brought about sensational progress for humanity in less than two centuries — the blink of an eye in the overall timeline of our species. None of the recent advances in human history would have been possible without organizations as vehicles for human collaboration. And yet, many people sense that the current way we run organizations has been stretched to its limits. We are increasingly disillusioned by organizational life. For people who toil away at the bottom of the pyramids, surveys consistently report that work is more dread and drudgery, not passion or purpose. … Life at the top of the pyramids isn’t much more fulfilling. Behind the facade and the bravado, the lives of powerful corporate leaders are ones of quiet suffering too. Their frantic activity is often a poor cover up for a deep inner sense of emptiness. The power games,

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the politics, and the infighting end up taking their toll on everybody. At both the top and bottom, organizations are more often than not playfields for unfulfilling pursuits of our egos, inhospitable to the deeper yearnings of our souls.

Laloux’s asserts that humans yearn for connection, meaning, and purpose in work and have a deep desire to contribute meaningfully and for those contributions to be recognized, honored, and valued. There is an innate desire for collaboration and personal relationship.

As humans have evolved over the course of the last two centuries, so too have organizations. Just as humans have a soul — a spirit that seeks fulfillment and evolutionary purpose — so too do organizations. Organizations are living entities that co-create with members as they strive together for wholeness and to be understood and experienced in all their complexity. The needs of both the organization and the members should be equally honored. Laloux offers a look at the history of human development and the paradigm for which work was organized and structured within each paradigm. He assigns a color to each stage — hence the term “Teal Organizations.” Table 1 portrays an overview of each paradigm.136

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paradigm</th>
<th>Current Example</th>
<th>Key Breakthroughs</th>
<th>Guiding Metaphor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RED Organizations</td>
<td>Constant exercise of power by chiefs to keep troops in line. Fear is the glue of the organization. Highly reactive, short-term focus. Thrives in chaotic environments.</td>
<td>–Division of labor –Command authority</td>
<td>Wolf Pack</td>
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<td></td>
<td>–Mafia</td>
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<td></td>
<td>–Street Gangs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>–Tribal Militias</td>
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<tr>
<td>AMBER Organizations</td>
<td>Highly formal roles within a hierarchical pyramid. Top down command and control (how and what). Stability valued above all through rigorous processes. Future is repetition of the past.</td>
<td>Formal roles stable and scalable hierarchies Processes long-term perspectives</td>
<td>Army</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>–Catholic Church</td>
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<td></td>
<td>–Military</td>
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<td></td>
<td>–Most government agencies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>–Public school systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>ORANGE Organizations</td>
<td>Goal is to beat competition; achieve profit and growth. Innovation is the key to staying ahead. Management by objectives (command and control on the what and freedom on the how).</td>
<td>–Innovation –Accountability –Meritocracy</td>
<td>Machine</td>
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<td></td>
<td>–Multinational companies</td>
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<td></td>
<td>–Charter schools</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>GREEN Organizations</td>
<td>Within the classic pyramid structure, focus on culture and empowerment to achieve extraordinary employee motivation.</td>
<td>–Empowerment –Values-driven culture –Stakeholder model</td>
<td>Family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Culture-driven organizations (e.g., Southwest Airlines, Ben &amp; Jerry’s, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>TEAL Organizations</td>
<td>Fueled by the evolutionary power of life; the focus is on allowing the organization to develop, evolve and grow organically and in alignment with its own evolutionary purpose and that of the members.</td>
<td>–Self-management –Wholeness –Evolutionary purpose</td>
<td>Living System also referred to as a Living Organism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Organizations of all sizes, across all sectors, in countries around the world</td>
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Table 1  Overview of Organizational Paradigms.
Laloux explains that the “next stage of human evolution corresponds to Maslow’s ‘self-actualizing’ level; it has been variously labeled authentic, integral, or Teal.” And that, “[T]he shift from Green to Teal is a particularly momentous one in the human journey …” The term “first-tier consciousness” is used to describe the Red through Green stages and “second-tier consciousness” for Teal and stages that may develop beyond Teal. Laloux goes on to explain that, “All ‘first-tier’ stages consider that their worldview is the only valid one, and that all other people are dangerously mistaken. People who transition to Teal can accept, for the first time, that there is an evolution in consciousness, that there is a momentum in evolution toward ever more complex and refined ways of dealing with the world.” Teal consciousness accepts that in order to address the challenges that come with the modern world, we must embrace a new way of organizing how we work; how we collaborate; how we relate to and with one another; how we think; how we problem-solve; and how we source our collective knowledge and wisdom.

As noted in Table 1, there are three core breakthroughs of the Teal paradigm. These breakthroughs are fundamental elements of every Teal Organization. They include:

• **Self-Management**: Teal Organizations operate without hierarchy or consensus-based decision-making. They have found that the key to operating effectively is within a system of peer-based relationships. There is no formal leadership team — C-suite, no executive or senior leadership, no managers, no supervisors, etc. Each member

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138 Ibid.

manages his or her self and is empowered with the resources and decision-making power necessary to do so.

- **Wholeness**: Teal Organizations have developed a consistent set of practices that invite every person within the organization to reclaim his or her inner wholeness and to bring all of who they are to the workplace. There is no bifurcating of one’s self — the professional self and the personal self. Instead, Teal Organizations desire and expect that individuals show up fully, wholly, and authentically.

- **Evolutionary Purpose**: Teal Organizations have a life and a sense of direction of their own. Instead of trying to predict and control the future of the organization, members are all invited to listen in and understand what the organization itself wants to become and what purpose it wants to serve.

These breakthroughs all manifest in myriad, concrete, day-to-day practices within Teal Organizations that depart in big and small ways from traditional Red through Green management practices. What is most important is that every Teal Organization practice is rooted in these core breakthroughs. The following are general practices that map to each breakthrough.

**Three Practices Related to Self-Management**

Companies seeking to transition to a Teal paradigm have an initial choice to make before getting started. Does the organization want to take on an existing set of Teal practices? If so, the Holacracy model is an obvious and natural choice. Holacracy is an established, well-defined Teal Organizational Model that operates under the consultancy firm HolacracyOne. HolacracyOne works with individuals who are seeking to start a new Teal Organization or who want to transition an existing business to a Teal Organization. However, if the organization wants to establish its own set of practices, the following practices should be considered in the
development of the self-management aspect of the organization.

- **Establish an advice process.** Teal Organizations empower its members to make the decisions that need to be made to meet the organization’s purpose so long as they consult with the members who will be affected by the decision and also seek advice from those who have expertise on the subject matter. Every Teal Organization approaches the advice process in their own unique way, but the important element here is that an advice process is in place so that effective decision-making can take place. What is imperative is that it is perfectly clear that no one (not even the organization’s founders) can approve a decision. In self-managed organizations, members hold decision-making power. What is also critical is that any person who is affected in a meaningful way by a decision or has expertise on the subject matter is given the opportunity to advise on the decision.

- **Establish a conflict resolution mechanism.** In traditional organizations, conflicts are almost always routed up the organizational ladder. In a Teal Organization, the individuals involved in and affected by a conflict (directly or indirectly) are responsible for the resolution of it. This means that a mechanism for conflict resolution must be established from the beginning. This is one of the most challenging aspects for members of Teal Organizations to come to terms with because most people do not have the knowledge and skills to effectively navigate conflict in a way that honors the dignity and security of all parties.

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• **Peer-based evaluation and salary process.** Teal Organizations all approach this practice differently. The critical aspect of this particular self-management practice is that it is peer-based, transparent, collaborative, and truly aligns with the spirit and purpose of the organization. What must be avoided is the tendency to default to older paradigm top-down, decision-making practices.

**Four Practices Related to Wholeness**

The manner in which the founder(s) of an organization “show up” will serve as a model for how members of the organization also show up. The more the founder is able to self-disclose about him/her/zher self, the more authentic the leaders are able to be, the more vulnerable and honest the founder is willing to be about his/her/zher own strengths, weaknesses, desires, etc., the more others will as well. In other words, the more able the founder is to embrace and model wholeness, the more others will follow suit. The founder models what wholeness will look and feel like within a Teal Organization. The following four practices should be implemented at the conception of a Teal Organization.141

• **Establish ground rules designed to create a safe space.** In order to show up fully, wholly, authentically, and with vulnerability and courage, individuals must feel safe to do so. Teal Organizations often define a set of values with correlating behaviors. These may be established at the start of the organization or they may be developed as triggers that are presented within the organization. The ground rules will likely be a working document that changes as the needs of the individuals and organization change. To be in the spirit of a Teal Organization, these ground rules are established by the individuals

within the organization and are not mandated down from one particular person such as the founder.

- **Establish a workspace that cultivates wholeness.** Corporate work environments are too often drab, dreary, uncomfortable spaces that limit individual expression and movement, increase individual discomfort, and often strain physical well-being. Members of Teal Organizations are cognizant of the way space affects human behavior and are intentional about designing workspaces that foster and cultivate wholeness. Unlike most traditional Red through Green Organizations, Teal Organizations are designed by those who inhabit them and not by a facilities manager or someone hired to perform a similar role.

- **Establish thoughtful onboarding practices designed to deliver an intentional experience.** Teal Organizations are thoughtful and intentional about how new members of the organization are brought into the Teal experience. Specific training is often included to help the person transition into a self-managed environment. Teal Organizations might also include conflict resolution training that provides new knowledge and skills for navigating conflict in this new terrain.

- **Meeting practices.** Like all other practices designed to invite wholeness, meeting practices should be thoughtfully and intentionally designed to ensure that traditional meeting practices that tend to stroke egos and drown out quieter, less competitive voices, are not replicated. Instead, integrating practices that invite wholeness such as short meditations, moments of silence, intention-setting, etc. are baked into the meeting process from the beginning.
Two Practices Related to Purpose

Inherent to the founding of a new organization is simply the desire to do so. Something sparked a passion in the founder that was profound enough that the person or persons chose to harness their energy, resources, intellectual capacities, time, relationships, etc. into the creation of something new. While the purpose may be self-evident to the founder(s), it is likely not self-evident to everyone else. Sharing that passion and purpose with the team is of paramount importance in order for others to reflect on and build upon their own purpose and passion in relationship with the organization’s purpose. Exploring the why behind the passion and purpose helps others to explore their own why and to connect their own why to that of the organization’s.

Teal Organization founders are able to see the purpose of an organization as separate from their own purpose and make the connection between the two without confusing the two as the same thing. This is a critical distinction because Teal founders understand that a Teal Organization is a living system that will grow and evolve, and the founder needs to trust that the organization’s evolution will be aligned to its own purpose — not necessarily the purpose of the founders. There should be a freedom and expectation of letting go of one’s own expectations in order to allow the organization to grow and evolve in its own organic way without being stifled or restricted by the founders’ own purpose. Initially, the founder will be the main person articulating the organization’s purpose. Over time, the members of the organization will be able to articulate it as well. And the story will become something that belongs to everyone. The founder and every individual within the organization should be able to connect their own sense of purpose with the organization’s purpose. Two practices can help to achieve this.142

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• Establishing recruitment practices that align with the organization’s purpose.

Most recruitment practices in traditional organizations seek for skills fit and culture fit. While skills and culture are of importance in a Teal Organization, it is also critical that the recruitment process includes a purpose fit. Does the individual’s own life purpose align with the evolutionary purpose of the organization? Does the person truly desire to experience wholeness in the workplace? Is the person ready for that level of vulnerability and engagement with his or her work and the colleagues with whom that work will be co-created? Will the new hire be a steward of the organization’s evolutionary purpose? The recruitment process can surface deep and meaningful conversations that help shape and nurture the evolutionary purpose of the organization as well as the life purpose of the potential member.

• Establishing an empty chair practice. Some Teal Organizations implement an empty chair practice. The empty chair gives the organization representation at each meeting. At the end of a meeting, or at any point in a meeting, any person from the team may choose to sit in the empty chair and represent the organization’s purpose. The question they may be listening for is … Has this meeting served the organization well? This practice allows the living organism metaphor to come to life in each meeting and keeps the organizational purpose in the forefront of every decision.

The Emergence of Teal Organizations

The day-to-day practices noted above are all representative of practices currently in place in some form or fashion in each of the organizations that currently operate in the Teal paradigm. The Teal Organization Model is currently an emerging model, and thanks to the work of
HolacracyOne and research conducted by Frederic Laloux, the paradigm is continuing to emerge as for-profit and nonprofit organizations around the world seek new and meaningful ways to evolve in response to the needs of the changing workforce.

HolacracyOne was mentioned previously as a company that has operated as a Teal Organization since its inception. Zappos is a well-known and successful business operating under the Holacracy model though it transitioned to the model and did not start as a Teal Organization from inception. Morning Star and Patagonia are other well-known businesses that have been functioning as Teal Organizations since inception. AgBiome is an emerging leader in the agricultural biotech space that has operated as a Teal Organization since its inception.

Research conducted for Laloux’s book, *Reinventing Organizations*, featured nine other companies in various sectors, both nonprofit and for profit, all of which have been operating successfully as Teal Organizations for many years — some even for decades.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Designing organizational systems that incorporate dignity as a key attribute is essential to addressing the basic human needs and dignity needs inherent to a highly motivated and engaged workforce. At the time of this research, there was a gap in research that addresses dignity as an attribute of systems design. With a goal of gaining an understanding of the complexity of dignity as an attribute of systems design and its impact on workplace culture, this study incorporated feedback from individuals who had firsthand experience working in an organization that is intentional about equity, fairness, and social justice. The benefits to the study were to increase understanding about the interconnected nature of dignity and employee engagement in organizational systems.

Participants of the study were all employees of a nonprofit located in an urban area in the Southwest portion of the United States. As a requirement to the study, participants completed the Friendly Style Profile™ inventory, which determined which of the following conflict style the participant aligned with: Accommodating Harmonizing, Analyzing Preserving, Achieving Directing, and Affiliating Perfecting. This conflict style inventory assessed a person’s response to conflict in high-stress situations as well as in low-stress conflict situations and provided

insight into what motivates each style in the workplace, what work processes each style prefers to embrace, and the general pace in which each style prefers to conduct work. Each of these elements can influence how a person experiences dignity in the workplace as well as how conflict is experienced and navigated.

Data was collected via one-on-one, semi-structured interviews using an interview protocol framework that aligned with the conceptual framework, as well as a review of company documents such as the employee handbook, mission, vision, and values statements, onboarding material, and a weekly one-on-one check-in agenda template.

Participants were recruited with the support of an internal sponsor. This person notified employees of the study via email. The researcher reached out to all individuals within the organization and personally invited them to participate in the study. Participants signed a consent form, completed the Friendly Style Profile, and submitted requested demographic data. At the start of each interview, the researcher debriefed with the participant on the results of his/her/zher conflict style, provided a brief overview of the Ten Essential Elements of Dignity, and then engaged in an interview that included a set of behavioral questions designed to elicit feedback on each participant’s perspectives on the role of dignity as an attribute of systems design in a workplace environment that was intentionally focused on equity, fairness, and social justice as organizing principles of the company. The interviews were recorded via a recording device. A note-taker was present to transcribe the interviews in real time.

3.2 Statement of the Problem

At the time of the study, organizations were missing opportunities for innovation and bottom-line growth by failing to align performance management systems with basic human needs and dignity needs. Consequently, employees were missing opportunities for accessing
their potential, and were, therefore, failing to thrive in the individual and collective human experience. Organizational leaders needed to understand the importance of integrating basic human needs and the essentials of dignity as an attribute of organizational systems design in order to maximize employee engagement, attract and retain top talent, increase innovation, and optimize bottom line growth.

3.3 Research Setting and Participant Selection Criteria

Research participants came from a nonprofit organization in which participants were expected to work within the scope of their specific roles and responsibilities with some leeway to support coworkers cross-functionally. Participants of the research study came from various organizational functions and ranged from five years of corporate experience to more than fifteen years of experience.

The data collection was conducted in an off-site coworking location in a private conference room, which achieved privacy and anonymity. A conflict style inventory, semi-structured, face-to-face interviews, and document reviews were conducted.

The concept of intersectionality was explored within the context of the individuals’ Friendly Style Profile conflict style and the power differential associated between each style and how that influenced the person’s perceptions of dignity in the workplace with attention given to ethnicity, gender, age, and role within the organization. Prior to the interview, participants completed the Friendly Style Profile™ … a guide through storm and calm™ … for people at work inventory. Demographic data was collected prior to the start of the interview. At the start of each interview, the researcher debriefed the results of the inventory and provided a brief overview of the Ten Essentials Elements of Dignity. The researcher inquired about which element of dignity was most resonant to that participant and then engaged in a series of
behavioral questions designed to elicit feedback on how the participant experienced dignity in the workplace. The intention of the instrument was to gain a deepened understanding of how the conflict styles may influence a person’s perception of dignity in the workplace and, therefore, gain a more nuanced understanding of how organizations can meet the dignity needs of stakeholders.

3.4 Research Questions

At the time of this study, there already existed a body of research that explored dignity in the workplace at an interpersonal level. This study sought to explore dignity as an attribute of organizational system design. In other words, how might organizations embed dignity in the organization at the paradigm level and intentionally activate dignity throughout the entire system. Therefore, the study sought to answer questions about dignity through the lens of a holistic system and how all parts of an organization might work together to cultivate and sustain dignity.

The primary research question posed by the study was: What are the mechanisms that organizations could develop in order to sustain an organizational system that honors the dignity needs of all stakeholders? The study included secondary questions that probed deeper into the elements of the system and how processes either sustain or diminish dignity. These include:

- What elements are necessary at the organizational system level to cultivate and sustain a culture of dignity as perceived by employees?
- What elements are necessary from a process perspective to cultivate and sustain a culture of dignity as perceived by employees?
3.5 Researcher’s Background

At the time of the research, the researcher worked as a restorative justice practitioner, mediator, conflict resolution specialist, peace-building trainer, leadership development trainer, and higher education professor. The vision for the researcher’s work is to be a peacemaker who inspires and empowers others to become agents of positive change, thereby creating a ripple effect of sustainable peace. The mission of the work is to help individuals understand, navigate, and mediate conflict with integrity and mutual concern for the wellbeing of all stakeholders. This vision and mission are the guiding light in all aspects of the researcher’s work. Prior to working in this capacity, the researcher had a fifteen-year career in corporate marketing.

The transition from corporate marketer to corporate peace-building trainer evolved from witnessing and experiencing chronic violations of trust, basic human needs, and dignity in every workplace the researcher engaged. This lack of acknowledgment of the need for individuals to experience love, respect, dignity, belonging, acceptance of identity, wholeness, etc. in the workplace led the researcher to experience and witness patterns of behavior that ranged from distrust and rudeness to abuse, bullying, sexual harassment, and even violence. The vast majority of the behavior stemmed from individuals seeking to get their basic human needs met and not having the skills to do so in a pro-social manner. The researcher assumed that the individuals did not intend to do harm, but the impact of the behavior often did create harm. The researcher witnessed how these anti-social behaviors devastated workplace engagement, violated trust, negatively affected projects and client relationships, and increased employee absences due to illnesses caused by stress — all of which failed to advance the organizations’ mission and ultimately negatively affected bottom-line growth.
Having held leadership roles at every stage of the researcher’s career, the need to motivate and inspire individual contributors, build and lead high-functioning teams, and successfully collaborate cross-functionally in order to meet client needs and fulfill project expectations led to an increased curiosity regarding human behavior and the need to understand why humans experience challenges in their relationships that too often lead to failed outcomes, decreased performance, and overall dissatisfaction in the workplace. This curiosity led the researcher to explore — academically and professionally — how organizations can intentionally structure organizational systems in such a way that contributors are able to innovate with enthusiasm, to experience joy and wholeness in the workplace, and to experience their own passion and purpose in such a way that aligns in a meaningful way to the organization’s purpose.

3.6 Interpretive Framework

Every researcher brings a specific and unique understanding of the world to his/her/zher research. This understanding, or “conceptualization of existence and reality,” shapes a person’s history and the context in which the person finds him/her/zher self.144 For this reason, identifying a personal philosophy was important, as this philosophy ultimately defined what the researcher considered to be real and highlighted the way in which the researcher acquired an understanding of the world. Philosophy can be understood as “a view of the world encompassing the questions and mechanisms for finding answers that inform that view.”145 Because research is always interpretive and guided by the researcher’s own beliefs, feelings, and assumptions about the world, it is important that the researcher resolved his/her/zher philosophical position prior to the


145 Ibid.
onset of research in order to ensure that future decisions of data were methodologically based.\textsuperscript{146} Knowing one’s beliefs about the world and having a well-defined articulation of them allows the researcher to make decisions of a methodological nature, which informs the way a collection of data is used. In order to identify the underlying assumptions, the researcher held about the world, Birks and Mills recommend reflecting on the following questions — the answers to these questions became the researcher’s “personal philosophical position.”\textsuperscript{147}

1. How do we define our self?
2. What is the nature of reality?
3. What can be the relationship between researcher and participant?
4. How do we know the world, or gain knowledge of it?

**How Is “Self” Defined?**

Political and cultural writer Andrew Solomon explored the way humans forge meaning from adversity. The thesis of his talk was that there is no inherent meaning that exists in adverse situations. He argues that humans construct meaning from lived experiences.\textsuperscript{148}

This idea of constructing meaning from adverse experiences begs another question: *What makes an experience adverse?* This researcher posed that an adverse situation is one in which the fulfillment of one or more basic human needs and/or dignity needs is in conflict with the

\textsuperscript{146} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{147} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{148} *TED Talk*, 2014.

https://www.ted.com/talks/andrew_solomon_how_the_worst_moments_in_our_lives_make_us_who_we_are.
fulfillment of one or more of another set of basic human needs and/or dignity needs. This contradiction of needs fulfillment creates adversity, and it is through the pursuit of the fulfillment of needs that identity emerges and a sense of self takes shape. A person’s sense of self is informed by and shaped by the degree to which each of these basic human needs are met, the tension that exists by the internal conflict that might occur when one set of needs is in competition with another set of needs, and the degree to which one experiences dignity (or dignity violations) in response to his/her/zher attempts at meeting these basic human needs. Thus, this researcher defined her sense of self as a peace-builder whose identity was shaped by the relentless and simultaneous pursuit of dignity and basic human needs, especially as it related to the ways in which she constructed meaning and built identity through the pursuit of basic human needs and dignity needs in times of adversity.

What Is the Nature of Reality?

Humans interpret, construct meaning, build identity, and respond to the world, by filtering what is seen, heard, sensed, smelled, and intuited through a deeply personal and vast array of memories, experiences, and perceptions in association with his/her/zher current state of emotional, spiritual, intellectual, and physical development. This means that reality is fluid, ever-changing, intensely unique, and very often at odds with the reality of others.

Reality is an illusion that grounds individual identity and an individual sense of purpose. As people change, grow, and evolve each person’s own illusion of reality changes and evolves. Through the development of emotional intelligence skills, increased knowledge (both academic and experiential), maturity, and wisdom each person begins to
give less importance to the certainty of reality and instead begins to explore the gray space that emerges when a sense of certainty about the world is able to be released.

**What Can Be the Relationship Between Researcher and Participant?**

Qualitative research is storytelling. It is using questions as a vehicle for eliciting the participant’s truth, for experiencing the participant’s self, and for exploring the participant’s reality in hopes of gaining a deeper understanding of the research topic. The researcher brings his/her/zher sense of self and understanding of reality to the research design and is how the researcher “shows up” for the research participant. To the degree that the researcher is able to achieve and accept self-awareness about the ways in which he/she/zher may be influencing the research process by simply being present to it, the more objective the data that emerges from the research will be. However, the data is a product of the shared reality of the researcher and the participants. So, it must be understood and explored within that context. The relationship between the researcher and participants is one of interconnectedness — many selves joining in a reality together — as well as one of disconnection — the researcher as the objective observer. This contradictory state of being — both interconnected and objective observer — is a paradox the researcher must be aware of and navigate throughout the research process.

**How Do People Know the World, or Gain Knowledge of It?**

Humans know the world and gain knowledge of it through emotions, which are manifestations of the satisfaction of basic human needs — unmet needs as well as the needs that are met. When needs are met, individuals experience love, joy, and happiness. When needs are not met, fear, anger, sadness, and perhaps even disgust may be experienced. These emotions guide a person’s sense of safety and trust. They inform how
people show up and engage with the world around them. They shape understanding of what is perceived to be true and untrue — what is real and what is not real. Each person’s understanding and knowledge of the world directly correlates to the satisfaction of his/her/zher basic human needs.

**Researcher’s Philosophical Position Statement**

The definition of the researcher’s self as a peace-builder is shaped by the relentless and simultaneous pursuit of dignity and basic human needs, especially as it relates to the ways in which the researchers constructs meaning and builds identity through the pursuit of these needs in times of adversity. Reality is fluid, ever-changing, intensely unique, and very often at odds with the perceived reality of others. Reality is an illusion that grounds identity and a sense of purpose. As people change, grow, and evolve their own illusion of reality changes and evolves. The relationship between the researcher and participants is one of interconnectedness — many selves joining in a reality together — as well as one of disconnection — the researcher as the objective observer. This contradictory state of being is a paradox the researcher must be aware of and navigate throughout the research process. People gain knowledge and understanding of the world through emotions, which are manifestations of the satisfaction of basic human needs. A person’s understanding and knowledge of the world directly correlates to the satisfaction of his/her/zher basic human needs.

**3.7 Human Subject Consideration**

Ethical considerations are essential to every research study that involves human subjects. They are particularly important in a case-centered study for several reasons: the close proximity the researcher has to the research participants and the face-to-face mode of the researcher-
participant relationship and its implications on research outcomes. Case study research also runs a higher risk of the participants’ identities being exposed without their consent. 149

Case study research requires close proximity to the participants. The researcher utilized Hicks’ Ten Essentials Elements of Dignity in developing the interview protocol, using this as an important framework for honoring the dignity needs of participants with particular focus being given to identity needs, needs for acknowledge, psychological safety, and fairness. Ensuring anonymity, as well as physical and psychological comfort and safety was of paramount importance. Interviews were conducted in an onsite conference room located in coworking space. The interviews were spaced with enough time between each interview to ensure participants did not cross paths. Face-to-face interviews were framed within the context of the theoretical framework and utilized the participant’s individual results from the Friendly Styles Profile as a lens from which to pose questions. The researcher exercised self-awareness, emotional regulation, and active listening skills to maintain awareness of how the researcher-participant relationship influenced the data. Ensuring the psychological safety of participants was critical to the study. Because this case study was conducted in a professional working environment with workers as the research participants, special attention for the unique needs of workers was essential. Workers must understand, believe, and feel safe in the knowledge that their participation was voluntary and anonymous and not in any way recommended or coerced by their employer. Gaining proper consent from research participant was critical. The researcher balanced the ethical obligation of informed consent with the need for quality outcomes by

gaining consent twice. The researcher gained consent prior to the start of the interview and then also after the completion of the interview along with a thoughtful and thorough debriefing with each participant.150

Protecting the privacy of workers’ information and data collected was essential to ensuring participants’ safety and protecting the integrity of the research. The following safeguards served to mitigate any risks of privacy violation:

• The researcher maintained full control of collected data, storing it on password-protected, cloud storage and maintaining back-up copies of digital and hardcopy data

• Only the researcher had the authorization to access, use, and disseminate study data and results

• Personal identifiers such as names, email addresses, and phone numbers were stored on a password-protected cloud storage site

• A findings report was developed and shared with the participating organization; however, no identifiers of participants were included

All efforts toward transparency, safety, and preserving of participants’ dignity was thoughtfully managed at each stage of the research process.

The researcher received approval from a key leader at the organization in order to commence with the study. Approval from Southern Methodist University’s Institutional Review Board was received prior to conducting the study. In order to increase transparency and rapport-
building, a consent form was deployed to participants that included the following criteria: 151

- Participants’ right to voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time
- The main concern of the study and procedures for data collection
- A statement that addressed any known risks associated with participating in the study
- Expected benefits to be experienced by participating in the study
- Signature of researcher and participant

3.8 Reflexivity

A researcher’s background, social influences, culture, gender, class, political persuasions, and educational and professional background all influence the ways in which data are interpreted and the stance or position the researcher takes when expressing the data in writing. Transparency about one’s position as a researcher and how the research has been constructed in relationship with the researched was critical to the validity of the study because it enabled the researcher to achieve greater intentionality regarding objectivity. Questions the researcher considered and reflected upon in order prevent projecting the researcher’s own view of the work onto the data included: 152

- Should what people actually say be written about or should there be an acknowledgment that sometimes people are not able to remember, or perhaps choose not to?


• What personal political reflexivities need to come into the report?
• Does the writing connect the voices and stories of the individuals back to the set of historic, structural, and economic relations in which they are situated?
• How much license can the researcher take in theorizing the words of the participants?
• How might the words of the researcher be used for progressive, conservative, and repressive social policies?
• To what extent has the analysis offered an alternative to common sense and/or the dominant discourse?

These questions helped the researcher to avoid using personal experiences and biases as a lens for understanding the participants’ experiences and served as a mechanism for self-awareness and objectivity.

3.9 Data Management

The data collection activities for the case study research included identifying the site location, gaining access through a gatekeeper, and establishing rapport with that person; identifying the purposeful sampling techniques to be applied; collecting the data and recording information; minimizing field issues; and storing data securely. Each of these activities is explored in more detail below.

Site Location, Access, and Rapport-Building

Research was conducted at an offsite, coworking space in a private conference room. Access was granted through the human resource manager who had the authority to allow the

researcher the necessary access to conduct the study. The researcher conveyed to the gatekeeper the rationale as to why this organization was selected for the case study with the nonprofit organization that situated equity, fairness, and social justice as central to its workplace culture. The researcher communicated the semi-structured approach to the interview process and expressed that each interview could be expected to last up to two hours. The researcher proposed four-week timeframe to conduct all interviews with the expectation that it would require an estimated forty hours of employee time total. The researcher offered a findings report to the organization in the spring of 2020 as reciprocity for participation.

**Purposeful Sampling Strategy**

Purposeful sampling is a process of selecting individuals and sites for study because they are able to inform an understanding of the main area of concern for the research. For the case study research, maximum variation sampling strategy was employed in order to document diverse variations and identify important common patterns. All fourteen employees of the nonprofit organization, including the founding CEO were invited to participate and 100 percent employee participation was achieved.

**Data Collection**

Data collected for the study was categorized into two groups: 1) one-on-one interviews with individual participants, and 2) data collected from other sources such as the employee handbook; onboarding materials; mission, vision, values statements; and weekly one-on-one feedback forms.

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The one-on-one interviews with individual participants were recorded in two ways: a digital recording device was used to record the interviews. A transcription was developed from this recording. A note-taker was also present to transcribe the interview in real-time. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview protocol (see Appendix A).

The second category of data, data from other sources, included the employee handbook; onboarding documents; mission, vision, values statements; and feedback documents used in weekly one-on-one meetings between managers and direct reports. The researcher kept a journal during the research study to record observations and reflections regarding the data.

The researcher designed an interview protocol (see Appendix A) that included a header to record information; project title; time, date, and place of interview; interviewer and interviewee; open-ended questions; and space for note-taking to record observations and notes from participants’ answers. The Interview Protocol Refinement (IPR) is a framework developed by Milagros Castillo-Montoya of the University of Connecticut that helps to fine-tune and strengthen the reliability of the interview protocol. It includes the following four phases: 156

- Phase 1: Ensure interview questions align with research questions
- Phase 2: Construct an inquiry-based conversation
- Phase 3: Receive feedback on interview protocols
- Phase 4: Pilot the interview protocol

Employing each phase helped the researcher develop a research instrument that was appropriate


for the participants and also maintained congruency with the goals of the research. The interview protocol included four types of questions:

- **Introductory questions** that were relatively general and elicited nonintrusive information. These were designed to be non-threatening and allowed the interviewer and participant to develop rapport and ease into the interview process.
- **Transition questions** segued the introductory questions to the key questions.
- **Key questions** are related to the research’s main area of concern and were most related to the purpose of the study.
- **Closing questions** helped to lift the participant out of the interview. They were designed to be easy to answer and provided an opportunity for the interview to come to a close.

In addition to an interview protocol, data collection also included an observational protocol. Observation is a skill that requires addressing issues such as “the potential deception of the people being interviewed, impression management, and the potential marginality of the researcher in a strange setting.” The protocol deployed for this research was as follows:

- The setting was an offsite, coworking space, in a private conference room.
- The participants were individuals who worked for the organization across various

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160 Ibid.
functional areas of the business with experience ranging from five years professional experience to more than fifteen.

- The participant assumed the role of complete participant, fully engaged in the activity while observing (i.e., face-to-face interviews).  

**Minimizing Field Issues**

There are several challenges that may occur in the field that were considered prior to the start of the research including:  

- **Entry and organization access:** Gaining authorization from the organization to participate in the case study research was the first step toward gaining access. However, convincing workers to take time away from their work to participate, building trust and credibility, and convincing to participate in the conflict styles inventory and requests for interviews all posed additional access challenges. The researcher sought to mitigate these challenges by reaching out to individual workers and personally inviting the workers to participate in the study. The researcher shared with the individual the potential personal benefits of participating (learning about one’s self, having the opportunity to learn about the role of dignity in the workplace,

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and having the opportunity to share in a body of work that may elevate their own experiences in the workplace, etc.).

- **Dynamics between interviewer and interviewee**: Navigating the four types of interview questions and managing the natural tempo of each interview can be a taxing job, requiring mental and emotional agility. The researcher prepared for this by paying close attention to emotional intelligence competencies, practicing active listening skills, extending empathy as appropriate, and implementing appropriate social skills.

- **Availability of documents and audiovisual materials**: Ensuring proper functioning of audio equipment prior to interviews and having backup equipment was essential. The researcher had a predetermined inventory of documents that was desired and utilized the gatekeeper as a possible support person for accessing documents. Knowing in advance documents that can contribute to the research was important; however, the researcher did actively listen for other sources of data, which did surface in interviews.

- **Data storage and security**: In order to ensure proper storage and security of data, the researcher utilized the following guidelines:  
  
  - The researcher kept back-up copies of both electronic data and hardcopy data  
  - The researcher used a high-quality digital recording device  
  - The researcher developed a master list of types of information collected  
  - The researcher protected anonymity  
  - The researcher developed a data collection matrix

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Ethical Concerns

Qualitative research faces inevitable ethical issues that may surface throughout the course of the study. These ethical concerns can be categorized into five categories. The researcher adhered to the following recommendations to address each concern:

1. **Informed consent procedures**: The researcher provided potential participants with a concise and focused presentation of the key information necessary to help the individual understand the research, what was expected of participants and the potential risks or harms as well as the benefits of participating in the research. Individuals had opportunities to ask questions about the study and were given sufficient time to consider whether or not to participate. A consent form was provided that stated the voluntary nature of the research and that the participant could voluntarily withdraw participation at any point. Both the researcher and participant signed the consent form.

2. **Deception or covert activities**: The explanation of the research and consent form was straightforward, transparent, and honest. The researcher had the consent form reviewed by advisors to vet the transparency and to check any biases that may be inadvertently skewing honesty.

3. **Confidentiality toward participants**: The researcher protected the identity of participants by assigning numbers to the individuals.

4. **Benefits of research to participants over risks**: The researcher explained that the research was designed to contribute to the body of knowledge associated with optimizing employee engagement and enhancing dignity as an attribute of

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organizational systems design. As such, the participant played a direct role in bringing this knowledge forward for the betterment of all workplaces. The researcher also explained that the participant had the benefit of implementing new knowledge in his/her/zher own workplace.

5. **Participant requests that go beyond social norms**: Every reasonable attempt to maintain the physical and psychological safety needs of the participants was honored. There were no requests that went beyond social norms, but the researcher was prepared to politely decline any such requests should they have been presented. Participants were reminded that the study was voluntary, and that they could withdrawal from the research should they choose to.

### 3.10 Data Validation and Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, data validation endeavors to determine the accuracy of the findings as described by the participants and the researcher, acknowledging that any report of the research is a representation by the researcher. Validation, as a process, strengthens research and provides a means of documenting the accuracy of the study. This documentation is also referred to as the validation strategy.

**Validation Strategies**

While a research study will inevitably bring to the forefront new perspectives and terms, these ideas must be translated into deployable strategies. The researcher employed several validation strategies, presented below, in order to ensure accuracy of the data.

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An engagement strategy that included twelve to fourteen interviews over a four-week period assisted the researcher in building trust with participants, helped the researcher to learn the company’s culture, and allowed for checks on misinformation that could have surfaced. This time in interviews with numerous participants across all functional areas of the organization allowed the researcher to gain clarity on what was “salient to the study, relevant to the purpose of the study, and of interest for focus.”

A triangulation strategy involved converging multiple sources of information in order to shine a light on a theme or perspective. The researcher used multiple sources that included surveys; semi-structured interviews; corporate documents such as mission, vision, values, and belief statements; onboarding materials; and employee feedback documents.

The researcher identified a peer, a colleague with expertise in organizational development and conflict management systems design, to serve as a reviewer and debriefing colleague in order to interrogate the data and the researcher’s perspective and interpretation of it. Written accounts of each peer-debriefing session were maintained.

Clarifying the researcher’s biases was conducted in the form of a written interpretative framework on the outset of the study and continued throughout the duration of the study in the form of journaling. This allowed the researcher to maintain perspective on positionality, biases, and assumptions that may have influenced the study.

The researcher brought the data, analysis, interpretations, and conclusions back to the participants on an individual basis to gain their insights, perspectives, and feedback on accuracy and credibility. This strategy encouraged the participants to be both actors and directors of the

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study and was congruent with the researcher’s constructivist approach to understanding and forging meaning from the world. Participants were each asked to review original drafts of the researcher’s work and encouraged to offer alternative language and framing of interpretations.

Transferability is the transfer of working hypotheses between settings. Descriptions that are full and textually rich allow readers to make decisions regarding transferability. The researcher was intentional about writing in such a way that allowed readers to fully contextualize the information so that it was transferable to other settings and recognized where there were shared characteristics to other settings. As an example, the writing allowed readers to transfer findings from a small nonprofit organization to a for profit.

The researcher engaged a conflict resolution consultant with expertise in systems design to conduct an external audit to assess the accuracy of the findings by examining both the process and product of the account. The auditor had no connections to the study. The task for the auditor was to assess if the findings, interpretations, and conclusions were supported by the data.


CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

This research study utilized Donna Hicks’ Essential Elements of Dignity, John Burton’s Basic Human Needs Theory, and The Friendly Style Profile™ ... a guide through conflict and storm™ for people at work conflict styles inventory as the theoretical framework from which the interview protocol was designed and the data was analyzed. This chapter offers an overview of the following:

- Data collection process
- Descriptive overview of research participants
- An overview of The Friendly Style Profile with a table that portrays a breakdown of the conflict styles represented within the organization
- Explanation of the Essential Elements of Dignity most relevant to the organization’s employees
- Explanation of the Basic Human Needs that are met when these Essential Elements of Dignity are experienced within the workplace
- A detailed analysis of each of the major categories that emerged from the data

4.1 Data Collection

The interview protocol used in the research study explored critical themes relevant to employee engagement. Each major theme, or category, explored in the interview protocol

includes sub-themes/sub-categories that offer more specific details in key areas. From these themes, In Vivo Codes, Concept Codes, and Emotion Codes emerged. A findings summary statement for each participant and each category was developed from the coding.

The data was analyzed by research participant and as well as by category. Each participant’s data resulted in a participant theme, which was then summarized into a single participant theme finding statement. The category data were also summarized into a single finding, resulting in a findings statement for each major category. Detailed codebooks for each category is available in Appendix B.

The following categories and sub-categories relevant to dignity and its role in employee engagement are explored in great detail in this chapter:

1) Core dignity need

2) Relationship between trust and dignity
   a) Trust in leadership
   b) Trust in coworkers
   c) Trust in workplace processes

3) Relationship between creativity and dignity
   a) How experiencing dignity influences individual creativity
   b) How experiencing dignity influences collective creativity

4) Relationship between employee contribution and dignity
   a) How experiencing dignity influences collaboration
   b) How experiencing dignity influences one’s ability to contribute at highest level
   c) How experiencing dignity influences one’s critical thinking

5) Essential environmental needs
a) Conditions necessary to experience creativity

b) Conditions necessary to experience positive workplace connections

6) Experiencing individual worth and dignity

   a) Dignity in feedback mechanisms

In order to ensure a thorough and nuanced review of the data was conducted, the researcher took a three-stage coding approach to the data. The first round of coding involved assigning data to these six major themes and supporting sub-themes. The data were assigned to each theme and sub-theme without interpretation. In Vivo Coding was used in this first round of coding. In Vivo Coding uses the research participants’ own words in the data record. Some data were assigned verbatim while other data were summarized for purposes of efficiency, coherency, and/or clarity.

From the first round of coding emerged Concept Codes. “Concept Codes assign meso- or macrolevels of meaning to data or to data analytic work in progress. A concept is a word or short phrase that symbolically represents a suggested meaning broader than a single item or action — a ‘bigger picture’ beyond the tangible and apparent.” Concept Codes are typically applied to larger units of data that can be analytically lumped together to create a boarder picture. “Concept Coding is an appropriate method when the analyst wishes to transcend the local and particular of the study to more abstract or generalizable contexts. The method bypasses the detail and nuance


of other coding methods to transcend the particular participants of fieldwork and to progress toward the ideas suggested by the study.”

The third and final round of coding included Emotion Codes. The Emotion Coding used in this study label the emotions recalled by the participants. It does not include the emotions experienced by the participants during the course of the data collection. “Emotion Coding is particularly appropriate for studies that explore intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions. It also provides insights into participants’ perspectives, worldviews, and life conditions.” The Emotion Codes, which identify and express the participants’ actual feelings, are In Vivo Coded in quotation marks and represent statements from research participants. Emotion Codes emerged in two categories: 1) relationship between employee contribution and dignity, and 2) experiencing individual worth and value.

4.2 Descriptive Overview of Research Participants

The organization has fourteen employees, all of whom participated in the study. Of the fourteen employees, eleven of the employees hold one or more master’s degrees. Two of the employees are currently Doctor of Philosophy candidates. At the time of data collection, nine of the fourteen participants had been employed with the organization two years or less. Two study participants were employed with the organization part time. Table 2 provides an overview of the participants’ demographic data.


# Research Participant Demographic Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alias</th>
<th>Friendly Style Profile</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Years with Organization</th>
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<tr>
<td>Anna</td>
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<td>Asian</td>
<td>3 years or more</td>
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<td>Analyzing Preserving</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2 years or less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>LatinX</td>
<td>2 years or less</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Caucasian</td>
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<td>Male</td>
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<td>3 years or more</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2  Overview of Research Participant Demographic Data.
Research Participant Biographical Sketches

Below is a biographical sketch of each of the fourteen research participants. The sketches include a general description of how each participant defined the essential element of dignity that most resonated for him or her in their role in the organization. Each sketch includes the conflict style assigned to each participants as a result of completing the Friendly Style Profile.

Anna — *Fairness is bringing one’s full self to the workplace*

Anna has been with the organization for three or more years. She holds masters’ degrees in the social sciences. Her conflict style is *Achieving Directing*. The essential element of dignity that most resonated for Anna is fairness. Throughout her career, she has worked as a social justice advocate for youth. Anna has a keen sense of fairness and seeks to ensure that her colleagues are treated equitably in the workplace.

Azra — *Acknowledgment is having one’s voice heard, honored, and validated*

Azra has been with the organization for two or less years. She holds a master’s degree in English studies. Her conflict style is *Analyzing Preserving*. The essential element of dignity that most resonated for Azra is acknowledgment. This helps her to experience confidence and courage in the workplace. Prior to joining the organization, Azra worked as an educator in secondary public education as well as in higher education.

Beth — *Inclusion means everyone’s opinion matters*

Beth has been with the organization for two or less years. She holds a master’s degree in the human services field. Her conflict style is *Accommodating Harmonizing*. The essential element that most resonates with Beth in her role at the organization is inclusion. Prior to joining the organization, Beth worked with underprivileged youth in secondary education.
Curtis — Recognition affirms one’s competencies and performance

Curtis has been with the organization for two or less years. He holds masters’ degrees in various liberal studies fields. His conflict style is Achieving Directing. The essential element of dignity that most resonates with Curtis in his role at the organization is recognition. Prior to joining the organization, Curtis held various leadership roles within the U.S. government, as well as various educational roles with nonprofit organizations.

Gabbie — Acceptance of identity is showing up as one’s authentic self

Gabbie has been with the organization for two or less years. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in political studies. Her conflict style is Affiliating Perfecting. The essential element of dignity that most resonates with Gabbie in her role at the organization is acceptance of identity. Prior to joining the organization, Gabbie worked as a teacher for several different school districts and nonprofit organizations. Throughout her career she has worked to uplift underrepresented populations.

Jason — Safety is acceptance of identity, freedom, and autonomy

Jason has been with the organization for two or less years. He holds a master’s degree in the area of liberal studies. His conflict style is Analyzing Preserving. The essential element of dignity that most resonates with Jason in his role at the organization is acceptance of identity. Jason is particularly passionate about equity and uses this passion to uplift others both in his work as a former educator as well as in work with nonprofit organizations.
Jennifer — *Acknowledgment is being fully heard and then taking action on what was communicated*

Jennifer has been with the organization for three or more years. Her conflict style is *Affiliating Perfecting*. The essential element of dignity that most resonates with Jennifer in her role at the organization is acknowledgment. Jennifer holds a Bachelor of Science degree in educational studies. Prior to working with the organization, she worked as a teacher as well as held various positions in curriculum design and service.

Keshawn — *Safety is acceptance of identity, freedom, and autonomy*

Keshawn has been with the organization for two or less years. His conflict style is *Analyzing Preserving*. The essential element of dignity that most resonates with Keshawn in his role at the organization is safety. Keshawn holds a master’s degree in educational studies. Prior to joining the organization, Keshawn was a teacher. He is passionate about working with underrepresented populations.

Lanelle — *Safety is amplifying one’s voice with authenticity and without fear of retribution*

Lanelle has been with the organization for two or less years. Her conflict style is *Affiliating Perfecting*. The essential element of dignity that most resonates with Lanelle in her role at the organization is safety. Lanelle holds a master’s degree in educational studies. Prior to joining the organization, Lanelle worked in public education where she held several leadership roles. She is particularly interested in instructional design and curriculum development.

Molly — *Benefit of the doubt is necessary to experiencing independence in one’s work*

Molly has been with the organization for three or more years. Her conflict style is *Achieving Directing*. The essential element of dignity that most resonates with Molly in her role within the organization is benefit of the doubt. Molly holds a Bachelor of Science degree in the
areas of human services and social services. Prior to her work with the organization, Molly worked as a teacher and sports coach. She also has experience in the legal profession.

**Monica — Safety is being able to openly share one’s perspectives and opinions without fear of retribution**

Monica has been with the organization for two or less years. Her conflict style is *Affiliating Perfecting*. The essential element of dignity that most resonates with Monica in her role at the organization is safety. Prior to her work with the organization, Monica held several educator positions within the public school system, including working as a teacher. She holds a master’s degree in the liberal studies. She values strategic thinking and brings that skill set to her professional roles.

**Nicole — Acceptance of identity is showing up authentically and having that authenticity affirmed**

Nicole has been with the organization for two or less years. Her conflict style is *Affiliating Perfecting*. The essential element of dignity that most resonates with Monica in her role at the organization is acceptance of identity. She is committed to living authentically and works diligently to honor her personal, professional, and cultural identity in all aspects of her life. Nicole holds a master’s degree in educational studies. Prior to her role at the organization, Nicole held various leadership positions with nonprofit organizations.

**Sara — Acknowledgment is approval and permission to move forward**

Sara has been with the organization for two or less years. Her conflict style is *Accommodating Harmonizing*. The essential element of dignity that most resonates with Sara is acknowledgment. Sara holds a Bachelor of Science degree in political studies and liberal arts. Prior to joining the organization, Sara worked as a teacher with various nonprofit educational
organizations. Sara values relationship-building and enjoys the personal relationships she has cultivated in the workplace.

**Tom — Fairness is equity and authenticity in having one’s voice heard**

Tom has been with the organization for three or more years. His conflict style is *Analyzing Preserving*. The essential element of dignity that most resonates with Tom in his role at the organization is fairness. He strives to co-create with his colleagues a workplace culture that is just and equitable. Tom is passionate about education and has worked as a teacher in various cities around the world. In addition to his work as an educator, Tom also has experience working as a consultant for nonprofit organizations. He holds a master’s degree in the field of public administration.

**4.3 Friendly Style Profile**

The *Friendly Style Profile™ ... a guide through calm and storm™ for people at work* is a conflict style inventory developed by Susan K. Gilmore Ph.D. and Patrick W. Fraleigh, Ph.D.¹⁷⁶ The *Friendly Style Profile* assists in helping individuals develop a comprehensive picture of themselves. The style functions as a tool for understanding how an individual presents psychologically and behaviorally in a normal state of conflict as well as when tensions escalate. The inventory provides a comprehensive picture that includes how spirit, stamina, skills, and style all influence a situation. The authors define these as:¹⁷⁷


- Spirit is “the connections among a person’s beliefs, values, and actions; the integrity of the person’s choices.”
- Stamina is “the person’s health, fitness, strength, and well-being, both emotionally and physically.”
- Situation is “the context of a person’s life; this includes immediate surroundings, general circumstances, family history, community, and culture.”
- Skills are “all the abilities and competencies that a person has developed with regard to people, data, and things.”
- Style is “the characteristic way a person responds and reacts, internally, to the people and events encountered; style may not be obvious, if the person is interpersonally very skilled.”

The authors explain that a person can “alter, modify, shape, have impact on any and all of the above dimensions;” however, some of the dimensions are easier to alter than others. Stamina is modified through self-care and attention to wellbeing. Skills are modified through intentional personal and professional development. Spirit can mature and grow through intentional effort, personal reflection, and attention. Style is something that is inherent to who a person is and while it can be managed and regulated through emotional intelligence and dignity intelligence skills, it is not something that is likely to change. The authors claim that, “People


179 Ibid.
who understand, accept, and effectively manage themselves are happier and more successful than people who do not.”  

Style preference emerges within the individual from “a complex mixture of genetic programming, various child-rearing practices, infinite unplanned life-shaping experiences, a huge number of intentional learning experiences, social cultural variables, nutrition, and exposure to chemical substances.” Style preferences are well-developed by the time a person transitions through puberty and are not likely to change in adulthood. The Friendly Style Profile categorizes style preferences into four distinct styles:

1. Accommodating Harmonizing
2. Analyzing Preserving
3. Achieving Directing
4. Affiliating Perfecting

Each style has its own strengths that makes particular interactions and transactions easier for that individual. While anyone can acquire the skills necessary to be fluent in each style’s strengths, these strengths come naturally for each particular style. Each style has a particular purpose in work — a motivating driver. Additionally, each style has a particular pace of work that aligns with that style’s strength and purpose. Each style has a preferred method of working, or process. Some styles prefer to work autonomously, while other styles need group work in order to contribute their best work. No one style is better or more effective than another. Organizations that seek to orient performance management systems around basic human needs and dignity needs benefit from considering conflict style in the organizational systems design. As this study

180 Ibid.

will demonstrate, a failure to do so can have unintended consequences that negatively affect employee engagement. The Tables 3–6 detail the strengths, purpose, pace, and process of each style.

**Accommodating Harmonizing**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Pace</th>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Flexible</td>
<td>Have fun</td>
<td></td>
<td>Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broad-minded</td>
<td>Keep the peace</td>
<td></td>
<td>Blend in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleased with the success of others</td>
<td>Ensure happiness</td>
<td>Quick and responsive</td>
<td>Immerse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humorous touch</td>
<td>Absorb differences</td>
<td></td>
<td>Facilitate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attuned to the feelings of others</td>
<td>To be likable</td>
<td></td>
<td>Encourage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quick to forgive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Compromise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Consensus</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3  Friendly Style Profile *Accommodating Harmonizing* Overview

**Analyzing Preserving**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Pace</th>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organized</td>
<td>Avoid failure and loss</td>
<td></td>
<td>Individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical</td>
<td>Preserve accomplishments</td>
<td></td>
<td>Coordinate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintains historical perspective</td>
<td>Secure the future</td>
<td></td>
<td>Parallel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeps to tried and true methods</td>
<td>Holds on to accomplishments</td>
<td>Slow and steady</td>
<td>Guide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintains track of time</td>
<td>Avoid making a fool of one’s self</td>
<td></td>
<td>Caution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willing to put professional work ahead of personal feelings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Negotiate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thorough</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Outcome</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4  Friendly Style Profile *Analyzing Preserving* Overview
Achieving Directing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Pace</th>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accepts difficult challenges</td>
<td>Pursue power and success</td>
<td>Individual</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High energy</td>
<td>Seek novelty and change</td>
<td>Attract</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative taking</td>
<td>Experience one’s self having an impact</td>
<td>Lead</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not afraid to take risks</td>
<td>Solve new and challenging puzzles</td>
<td>Fast and forceful</td>
<td>Champion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wins the confidence of others</td>
<td>Increase personal knowledge and experience</td>
<td></td>
<td>Advise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Exchange</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forward looking and optimistic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Persuade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspires high performance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Outcome</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5 Friendly Style Profile Achieving Directing Overview

Affiliating Perfecting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Pace</th>
<th>Process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Supportive and encouraging</td>
<td>Contribute to humanity</td>
<td>Ensemble</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compassionate and nurturing</td>
<td>Seek realization of ideals</td>
<td>Join with</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full committed and loyal</td>
<td>Join energy for a worthy cause</td>
<td>Follow</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willing to put in extra effort</td>
<td>Maintain high-principles</td>
<td>Assist</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expects to learn and improve</td>
<td>Urgent and intense</td>
<td>Support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Will challenge authority on basis of principles</td>
<td></td>
<td>Capitulate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team player</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 Friendly Style Profile Affiliating Perfecting Overview
This research study originally sought to explore whether or not an individual’s conflict style influenced his/her/zher relationship to the Essential Elements of Dignity. In other words, would each style naturally resonate more with a particular element of dignity? And if so, this would be important criteria to consider in developing organizational systems that honor the dignity needs of its stakeholders. However, the study did not find any correlation between conflict style and preferred element of dignity. What the study did find is that the most dominate conflict style can define workplace culture, workplace processes, and how individuals experience their own contributions in the workplace.

The organization studied has *Analyzing Preserving* as the dominant conflict style with *Affiliating Perfecting* as the second most dominate. A breakdown of the organization’s conflict styles is represented in Table 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Friendly Style Profile</th>
<th>Participants Per Style</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Accommodating Harmonizing</em></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Analyzing Preserving</em></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Achieving Directing</em></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Affiliating Perfecting</em></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7 Overview of Organization’s *Friendly Style Profile*. 
The *Analyzing Preserving* conflict style, with one exception, is represented in the individuals within the organization who are responsible for developing and managing the organization’s policies, procedures, and processes. This style, which seeks to hold on to what has been preserved and maintains an historical record of the organization, is data- and process-driven. Iteration and deliberation are key characteristics of this style, and therefore, these individuals work at a slow and steady pace. This style seeks to avoid failure; therefore, these individuals tend to be risk-averse and lean toward tried and true methods for decision-making. Because these individuals within the organization are the people who hold power, both authoritative and influential, the individuals with this style wield more influence in overall operations of the organization and, therefore, shape the organizational culture. Their decisions affect the entire organization. Though the individuals who fall into this category are not removed from the client experience, they engage less directly with the clients the organization serves and are further removed from day-to-day client interactions.

The service delivery and client-facing employees in the organization, with one exception, fall into the *Affiliating Perfecting* and *Accommodating Harmonizing* styles. These two styles seek to join energy in ideating, collaborating, and innovating. They are more apt to pursue new ideas in order to advance the mission of the organization. The individuals who represent these two conflict styles have the closest proximity to the clients and have experiential and firsthand knowledge of the client needs. However, because this style is less process- and data-driven, and more likely to make decisions based on personal experience, knowledge, expertise, and intuition, they have less power in decision-making. They also experience the *Analyzing Preserving* approach to decision-making as “perfectionism,” and therefore see their ability to have influence as often unattainable, which over time, de-incentivizes efforts at innovation.
Jennifer described the culture of perfectionism as “intimidating.” She explained that everyone is “expected to be perfect” and this expectation prevents innovation. She said, “It is really hard to be creative because leadership isn’t going to push people to do so.” She went on to say, “Everyone is expected to be perfect, which is scary.” She noted that there is an expectation that people be very detail-oriented and that mistakes are frequently pointed out. The frequency of critical feedback causes her to withdraw and reduces her ability to be creative or to bring creative ideas forward. Because Jennifer is Accommodating Harmonizing in conflict style, she finds it difficult to experience herself pleasing others. And, being able to bring joy to the workplace is core to her personal, internal reward mechanism.

Lanelle also commented on the culture of perfectionism, indicating that the fear of failure (a key driver to the Analyzing Preserving style) “prevents innovation and keeps the organization stuck.” For Lanelle, the culture of perfectionism is related to her dignity need for psychological safety. And, she noted that psychological safety is essential for her to be innovative and creative. She explained organizational processes are so regimented that it breeds distrust within the organization and that the overly regimented processes silence voices. This directly violates Lanelle’s dignity need for psychological safety. For her, psychological safety is the ability to amplify one’s voice, and the importance of people being able to openly speak up in the organization with an authentic voice and without judgment or fear of retribution. The regimented process so comforting to the Analyzing Preserving style is experienced as a form of oppression for Lanelle.

Anna, who is Achieving Directing in her conflict style, also shared that the regimented processes embedded in the organization’s culture are at odds with the organization’s equity-focused mission. For Anna, the regimented process is a violation of her dignity need for fairness.
She explained that workplace processes privilege people who think a certain way, specifically people who are strategic in their thinking and who have expert presentation skills. Anna also explained that indecisiveness in the organization stunts creativity. And while she knows that she intuitively has good ideas, “instinctively good ideas can’t always be proven.” She commented, “I don’t bring up ideas anymore because it is one more thing to be researched, proven, and understood.”

Molly, another person with the *Achieving Directing* conflict style, noted that creative processes are cumbersome and time-consuming. And Nicole, who is *Affiliating Perfecting*, commented that, “rigidity in process can reduce collaboration and critical thinking skills.” Speaking from her personal experience, she explained that she often does not bring new ideas forward because of a desire to not prolong the conversation.

The individuals who associate with the *Analyzing Preserving* style experience the organization differently. Keshawn noted that he has permission to openly express his ideas, thoughts, and feelings. He experiences his opinions being valued, and, in his experience, diversity of thought is embraced. He commented that he “knows his personal interests will be accepted and embraced” and that he “is trusted to problem-solve and innovate.” Azra also asserts that her opinions are heard and validated. She explained that her opinion is often sought and that this helps her to experience creativity. This meets her dignity need for acknowledgment and motivates her to put more of herself into her work.

The *Friendly Style Profile* elicited data that helped to surface how inequity was showing up in the organization and how the various conflict styles experience dignity in relationship to the *Analyzing Preserving* culture. While the slow and steady, data- and process-driven approach meets the dignity needs of the individuals with the *Analyzing Preserving* conflict style, it can be
a source of dignity violation for those who hold equal wisdom and expertise but lack the same inherent affinity for deliberation and rigid data-driven decisions. As a result, voices are unintentionally silenced, creativity is diminished, and opportunities for new ideas and innovation are lost.

4.4 Essential Elements of Dignity

A foundational aspect of the data collection process was to ask the research participants to rank the Essential Elements of Dignity in order of one to ten. With one being the element most essential to them in their role at the organization. The data collection was then structured around the element of dignity that most resonated with that research participant. Acceptance of Identity, Safety, and Acknowledgment were the three most selected essential elements of dignity with three people ranking each of these three as their number one element. Fairness received two number one rankings. And Inclusion, Recognition, and Benefit of the Doubt each were ranked most important by one research participant respectively.

What emerged from this process is the importance of having one’s voice heard. The individuals who selected Acceptance of Identity focused on the importance of authenticity and the ability to bring one’s full self to the workplace and to speak openly and without fear of retribution. Jason noted, that when he has his identity honored, he does not have to spend the extra energy ensuring that everyone feels comfortable with who he is and how he identifies. He is able to use that energy toward critical thinking and collaboration. He commented, “Having my identity honored contributes to my overall sense of happiness inside and outside of work.” He explained that acceptance of identity increases his motivation and energy. Gabbie explained that having her identity accepted “creates the foundation to be open for feedback and recognition and acknowledgment, which drives motivation.” Nicole echoed what Jason said, explaining that
acceptance of identity, “fuels critical thinking because there are not insecurities taking up space in the mind.” And, “it quiets a lot of internal noise and frees up space to create.” Nicole explained that acceptance of identity enables authenticity, which leads to the experience of being valued, which increases trust and therefore motivation is increased.

Safety, specifically psychological safety, equates to the ability to amplify one’s voice, and the importance of people being able to openly speak up in the organization with an authentic voice and without judgment or fear of retribution. Keshawn explained that psychological safety is experienced by an appreciation of diversity of thought and experiencing his opinion being valued. He went on to explain that psychological safety allows him space to explore and to creatively “go down a rabbit hole” to see what he can find. He stated that he can “think and breathe in a space that is motivating.” Lanelle explained that when she feels safe and trusted she can work independently, which is where she experiences creativity. Monica explained that psychological safety allows her to speak openly and honestly with her manager. When she experiences safety, she feels empowered, which allows her to be creative. She feels empowered to do her job, and she feels more engaged.

Acknowledgment equates to having one’s voice heard, honored, and validated. Azra explained that acknowledgment builds trust, and it builds relationships. When she feels heard, she believes that leadership is setting her up for success. Jennifer described that receiving acknowledgment helps her to feel safe. She also stated that acknowledgment builds trust, and when this comes from leadership it supports her belief that the organization wants her to grow as a leader. It empowers her to trust feedback. For Jennifer, acknowledgment makes collaboration feel comfortable. For Sara, acknowledgment is an indication of approval, and therefore gives her the permission to move forward. It gives her confidence that what she has accomplished is what
her colleagues or manager were looking for, and this gives her the courage to continue with her work. Conversely, a lack of acknowledgment is understood as disapproval and can prevent work from progressing.

Fairness is experiencing one’s ideas being honored and acted upon, as well as being able to bring one’s full self to the workplace. For Tom, fairness is having his voice heard and his ideas acted upon. He commented, “If people feel their voice is heard, that they are believed in, there is confidence in their ability, that they are capable of having autonomy and independence, it allows me to not second-guess. It allows me to not have imposter syndrome because my voice has similar weight as others. I do not feel judged.” He explained that when he can trust that his voice has equal weight, he can be more creative, comfortable, and confident. Anna shares this perspective. She explained that fairness is having her ideas honored and acted upon and being able to bring her full self to the workplace. Fairness empowers her to be more authentic, present, and participatory. When she experiences fairness, she feels content and free.

Benefit of the doubt and recognition are associated with independence and the ability to work autonomously. These two, for the participants, are directly related to trust. When a person is trusted, they are given the benefit of the doubt. When they are given the benefit of the doubt, they are able to work independently. Molly explained that experiencing the trust that flows out of benefit of the doubt helps her to operate with integrity. Curtis indicated that when he receives recognition from leadership, it increases his trust in them, and it helps him to foster trust in the organization even when the decisions the organization makes are not always clear. Recognition empowers him to work independently and to experience autonomy.

For the research participants, a core requirement of experiencing dignity in the workplace is having one’s voice genuinely heard and the experience of having one’s authentic
Table 8 provides a list of Donna Hicks’ Ten Essential Elements of Dignity and their definitions along with the number of participants that selected each element of dignity. While Understanding and Independence were not selected by any of the participants as the essential element of dignity that most resonated for them in the workplace, these elements were represented in how they experienced the other elements. For example, Molly and Curtis both desire independence in their work. For Molly, Benefit of the Doubt is a precursor to experiencing Independence. For Curtis, Recognition offers him the feedback necessary to experience the confidence to work independently. Understanding was represented in Acceptance of Identity and Acknowledgment. No research participants discussed Accountability as an important element of dignity in their work.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essential Element of Dignity</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Participants Per Dignity Element</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acceptance of Identity</td>
<td>Interact without bias, accepting the ways in which race, religion, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, age, and disability impact people’s identities.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion</td>
<td>Make others feel that they belong.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>Put people at ease at two levels: physically, so they feel safe from bodily harm, and psychologically, so they feel safe from being humiliated.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgment</td>
<td>Give people your full attention by listening, validating, and responding to their feelings and experiences.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recognition</td>
<td>Validate others for their talent, hard work, thoughtfulness, and help. Be generous with praise and show appreciation.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>Treat people justly. People experience dignity when they are treated without discrimination or injustice.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefit of the Doubt</td>
<td>Treat people as trustworthy. Start with the premise that others have good motives and are acting with integrity.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding</td>
<td>Give others the chance to explain and express their point of view. Actively listen in order to understand them.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Encourage people to act on their own behalf so that they feel in control of their lives.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accountability</td>
<td>If you have violated the dignity of another person, apologize. Change your hurtful behaviors.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8  Overview of Participant Essential Element of Dignity.
4.5 Basic Human Needs

Participants were presented with John Burton’s Basic Human Needs and asked to circle which basic human needs are met when they experience dignity in the workplace. Self-esteem, freedom, belonging, identity, and security were the top five basic human needs that were met. Two people indicated they experience love, but the researcher noticed several people pause or hover over the word before moving on. Love is a pro-social emotion, and though it is not a word many are accustomed to using in the workplace, it appeared to resonate with enough participants to warrant further exploration. A follow up question to the research participants was sent via email:

Using the following definition of love to frame your answer, when you experience dignity in the workplace, is your basic human need for love also met? If so, please explain. “Love is the momentary upwelling of three tightly woven events: first, a sharing of one or more positive emotions between you and another; second, a synchrony between your and the other person’s biochemistry and behaviors (i.e., feeling emotionally connected); and third, a reflected motive to invest in each other’s well-being that brings mutual care.”

This definition of love by Barbara Fredrickson, Ph.D. encompasses the neuroscience of connection and how the brain, through mirror neurons, and the eliciting of oxytocin creates strong bonds that foster empathy and trust-building. With a more comprehensive understanding of love as a basic human need, all of the research participants who responded (seven

respondents) indicated that yes, when their dignity needs are met in the workplace, they experience this basic human need.

Molly replied via email stating, “I would say that when I experience dignity in the workplace, yes my basic human need for love is also met. I would say this based on how you define love as a positive emotion between myself and someone else and a feeling of connectedness, as well as the fact that I care deeply about the other's wellbeing. And when I feel dignity, I feel that they care deeply about me. It's weird to say love in a work setting, but again per your definition, I think that is met. My feelings would be focused on deep care, empathy, and respect for another, and that it's mutual and exists genuinely beyond the walls of our office.” Nicole replied, “Yes. Our workplace is positive and warm and encourages shared understanding. Rooted in a mutual affinity for the students we serve, everything else is an upswell from that shared love in my view.” Beth replied also in agreement, “Yes, I do believe my basic human need for love is met when I experience dignity in the workplace. When I feel like I have a say in my job and I feel like I am being heard by another/others, then I have increased positive emotions, a positive emotional connection with the person that is showing me dignity/respect, which then brings me to want to invest in the well-being of that person.”

Gallup’s finding that performance management systems that are oriented around basic human needs, including psychological needs such as acceptance, acknowledgment, recognition, fairness, and emotional safety, enhance employee engagement and lead people to contribute at their highest level is verified by this research study. What this study also found is that something more profound is occurring. When dignity is an attribute of the overall system design, employees feel connected to one another in such a way that their overall self-esteem increases, their sense of belonging is enhanced, they experience

personal fulfillment and freedom. And, they experience a genuine sense of love that originates at a neurological level.

Table 9 illustrates how the participants ranked the Basic Human Needs when dignity is experienced in the workplace.

**Basic Human Needs Met When Dignity Is Experienced in the Workplace**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Human Need</th>
<th>Participants Per Basic Human Need</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Esteem</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Fulfillment</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Security</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9  Overview of Participant Basic Human Needs Fulfillment.

**4.6 Workplace Trust**

Trust is the belief that the words and actions of one’s leadership and coworkers will reliably align and that workplace processes will produce results that are in the best interest of the organization’s members, mission, and purpose. This research found that the single most important factor of cultivating trust in the workplace is creating an environment in which all
voices are heard. Additionally, employees need to personally experience equity — fairness and impartiality in all aspects of their work — and they need to witness the same equity among their coworkers across the organization.

Love, as a basic human need, plays an important role in cultivating a culture of trust. In Chapter 2 Section 4 of this paper, the neuroscience of dignity is explored. The human brain is wired for survival and building trusting relationships and strong bonds is one way of achieving that. An intricate feedback loop exists within the human neurological system designed to build and maintain human-to-human connection. This feedback loop begins with the sharing of a positive emotion. This exchange of positive emotion happens when dignity and basic human needs are honored. When a person experiences fairness, acknowledgment, acceptance of identity, etc. it produces a chemical reaction within the body. This chemical, as mentioned in Chapter 2, is oxytocin. Oxytocin supports the development of strong bonds, trust, and loyalty. When a positive emotion is shared and oxytocin is released, the person’s mirror neurons fire creating a syncing of biochemistry between the two people or groups of people. This biochemical syncing creates the urge to invest in the wellbeing of the other. Anna referred to this as “pouring into each other.” She said, “Trust is developed when individuals feel like they're being heard and listened to and encouraged to pursue success within their work. But then also outside of work as well. So essentially, when people feel poured into, trust is then developed at an interpersonal level. And then I think it trickles out into the organization.” Anna also mentioned the importance of proximity, indicating that physical proximity to her coworkers is important. And, it is. It is through physical proximity that mirror neuron activity takes place. Gabbie also mentioned the concept of being poured into. She commented, “When I am poured into, I am the most motivated. When I feel acknowledged, and when I am recognized and praised. I think that is the
thing that drives my motivation before [acceptance of] identity even. Yeah, I think identity creates the foundation to be open for feedback and then recognition and acknowledgment are the two actual drivers of self-motivation and investment.” When basic human needs are met, oxytocin is released, this causes a syncing of biochemistry, which produces more oxytocin, causing the individual to invest in the wellbeing of another, or “pour into” another. This entire process cultivates and sustains trust. Figure 5 illustrates this concept.

Figure 5 The Neuroscience of Trust
While experiencing having one’s voice heard and validated is critical to building trust, witnessing this experience with one’s coworkers is actually an important element of cultivating trust. Nicole mentioned that because there is a culture of mutual respect, she is able to trust that workplace processes are in the best interest of all. She is able to trust that all perspectives within the organization will be heard and that people feel accepted because of this. Gabbie noted that, “Leadership acknowledges that each person is at his or her own stage in terms of personal development.” This creates a sense of collective equity and fairness.

This concept of being heard and being poured into correlates to the concept of relatedness mentioned in Chapter 2, Section 5. “Relatedness involves deciding whether others are ‘in’ or ‘out’ of a social group. Whether someone is a friend or foe. Relatedness is a driver of behavior in many types of teams, from sports teams to organizational silos: people naturally look for tribes where they experience a sense of belonging. … The concept of relatedness is closely linked to trust.”

When asked how trust influences how the research participants feel in relationship to leadership and coworkers, comments included:

- “I feel heard.” (Tom)
- “I feel welcomed.” (Keshawn)
- “I feel affirmed.” (Azra)
- “I feel safe.” (Lanelle and Jennifer)
- “I feel trusted.” (Molly)
- “I feel good.” (Sara)
- “I feel appreciated, heard, and valued.” (Beth)

Creating an environment in which all voices are heard, meets the basic human need for love, which fosters a self-perpetuating culture of trust.

**4.7 Workplace Creativity**

Creativity is a process that begins with a genuine encounter with a business need that involves an intense absorption into an idea, thought, and/or desire. To experience creativity in the workplace, employees need to experience freedom — i.e., independence and autonomy — intuition and their own intrinsic power free of expectations to conform to process or protocol. The research found that the ability to experience creativity correlates to conflict style with regard to process. The *Analyzing Preserving* culture is experienced by individuals who align with that conflict style as a culture that fosters openness and where all voices can be heard. This fosters creativity. The basic human need that is met by this style group is freedom. Two main concepts that emerged: 1) freedom to create, and 2) freedom to experience one’s own power. Tom noted that he is given the space to explore. And that, when dignity is experienced, “People can collaborate to work toward problem-solving without fear of being judged, which leads to greater opportunities to collectively develop.” For Tom, dignity, and specifically fairness, means that all voices are heard. And this is especially relevant to creative processes. Keshawn echoed these sentiments stating that, “I am given the space to explore.” Azra also found these sentiments to be true. She expressed that having her opinion sought out got “the creative juices flowing.” She expressed that she has the freedom to think out loud and to be vulnerable. Jason indicated that having his dignity need for acceptance of identity met allowed him to express his thoughts more

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fully. He is comfortable bringing up new ideas. Monica shared that when her dignity need for safety is met, she is able to experience more creativity because she has “the freedom to be self-empowered.”

However, individuals who align with the Achieving Directing, Accommodating Harmonizing, and Affiliating Perfecting styles experience the Analyzing Preserving culture as rigid, risk avoidant, and inconducive to innovation. Their basic human need for freedom is not being met, causing them to hold back creatively. The concepts that emerged from these conflict style groups include:

- Perfectionism prevents progress
- Perfectionism is intimidating
- Process-heavy culture bogs down progress
- Commitment to tried and true methods prevent innovation

Lanelle, who is a part of the Affiliating Perfecting conflict style group, noted that, “When I feel safe and trusted and I am able to work independently, then creativity is experienced.” However, she followed this with, “fear of failure prevents innovation and keeps the organization stuck.” Jennifer, who is also Affiliating Perfecting, explained that, “People have to take a big risk to be creative and push through the fear of being shut down. … On one hand, anything creative will be amazing because it will have gone through many iterations and received a lot of feedback, but the person with the idea will have to be able to endure the intensity of a lot of critical feedback in a group setting.” Nicole, who is also Affiliating Perfecting, explained that the rigidity of process reduced creativity and discourages new ideas from coming forward. Molly, who falls into the Achieving Directing conflict style group, explained that the creation process is “cumbersome and time consuming.” Sara, who is part of the Accommodating Harmonizing style
group, explained that when her dignity need for acknowledgment is met, it indicates that it is okay to take risks and to move forward creativity. However, she caveated that with, “I do not often receive the kind of acknowledgment that indicates it is okay to try something new. … New things are not often tried due to a fear of being shot down.” Gabbie, also in the Affiliating Perfecting group, explained that when her dignity need for acceptance of identity is met it “opens up opportunities for individual creativity.” However, she followed that up with, “I am not sure the organization is open to the new ideas that come from that.” Gabbie went on to explain that there is a culture of perfectionism and that though, “there is talk about wanting the organization to open up to risk-taking, there have been no actions that support that change of behavior.”

The research found that inclusivity in process is vital in order for all employees to experience equal freedom of expression and to contribute creatively to the organization. Innovation is enhanced when employees experience independence and autonomy and have the freedom to utilize their intuition and their own intrinsic power without an expectation to conform to process or protocol.

4.8 Workplace Contributions

To contribute in the workplace is to share one’s intellectual and emotional resources, skills, and talents in support of an organization’s mission and purpose. This research found that in order for employees to contribute at their highest level, they need to experience having their identity fully embraced so that they have the freedom to be fully present. They need the psychological safety to authentically self-express. Employees need to be trusted to act autonomously. And, they need a consistent and targeted feedback loop of acknowledgment to affirm their contributions are valued. To fully explore the concept of workplace contributions, the research examined the topic through three specific engagement criteria:
1. Collaboration with team members
2. Motivation to perform at highest level
3. Critical thinking skills

**Collaboration with Team Members**

Azra indicated that when her dignity need for acknowledgment is met, “it feels fair, and in those situations she feels really good, has more energy to put into the work and is motivated to keep going and to do more.” Lanelle explained that when her need for safety is met, she feels motivated to work with her specific manager. However, the regimented processes so prevalent within the broader organization minimizes her desire to collaborate outside of her immediate team. Here again is the importance of designing inclusive processes in order to increase workplace collaboration. Jennifer also stated that acknowledgment makes collaboration more comfortable. Molly explained that when she is extended benefit of the doubt this positively affects collaboration because, “it reduces feelings of defensiveness.” Experiencing the trust that flows out of benefit of the doubt helps her to operate with integrity. And she experiences questions “as curiosity as opposed to threats.” Gabbie indicated that when her dignity need for acceptance of identity is met, she experiences a safe place for collaboration and “trusts that mistakes won’t be judged.” This empowers her to experience her authentic self.

**Motivation to Perform at Highest Level**

Tom mentioned that when his need for fairness is met, he is able to be self-motivated and can work autonomously. Fairness helps him to feel trusted by his peers and manager. Keshawn echoed the same sentiment about autonomy. When his need for safety is met, he is able to experience autonomy in his work while trusting that his personal interests will be embraced. Azra explained that when her need for acknowledgment is met, she “has more energy to put into
the work and is motivated to keep going and to do more.” Jason noted that when his need for acceptance of identity is met, it “creates happiness, increased energy, and increased motivation.” Nicole explained that when her need for acceptance of identity is met, she is able to show up authentically, which provides motivation. And, “acceptance of identity eliminates a lot of internal noise and frees up the space to create.” Gabbie stated that, “being poured into creates motivation.” She feels motivated when she experiences acknowledgment, recognition, and praise. Anna explained that having her need for fairness met helps her to be more “authentic, present, and participatory.” She is comfortable sharing and showing up with authenticity. When Beth feels included, she is motivated to do more and “find new ways of accomplishing work.” For Curtis, his dignity need for recognition causes motivation to “shoot up.”

**Critical Thinking Skills**

Keshawn explained that when his dignity need for safety is met, he feels trusted to problem-solve and to innovate. Azra explained that when she is acknowledged, and her opinion is sought after, it pushes her to expand her thinking, which helps her to grow as a professional. Molly indicated that when she experiences benefit of the doubt, it positively affects her critical thinking because the “trust that flows from it supports creativity and pushing past the charted path.” Nicole explained that when she experiences the acceptance of her identity, it “fuels critical thinking because there are not insecurities taking up space in the mind.” She is able to think more introspectively.

Fostering a work environment that creates space for all employees to contribute at their highest level requires that each person feels fully embraced and can be fully present. Psychological safety is the birthplace of authentic self-express.
4.9 Workplace Environmental Needs

Workplace environmental needs are the external criteria necessary to most effectively connect an organization’s members to their work and to one another in such a way that brings forth their greatest potential. This research found that in order to contribute at their highest level, employees need a work environment that allows them to connect with coworkers in a meaningful way while also providing space to work independently and autonomously. This means, the environment needs to provide dedicated space where employees can work uninterrupted in quiet solitude and also space for workplace collaboration and fellowship.

To fully explore the concept of workplace environmental needs, the research examined the topic through two specific criteria: 1) the workplace conditions necessary to experience creativity and, 2) the workplace conditions necessary to experience positive connections with coworkers.

Workplace Conditions Necessary for Creativity

The research participants reported needing autonomy in terms of when and where work is conducted. Tom expressed needing “a secluded room or quiet space that allows him to engage in thoughtful and critical thinking.” He needs supportive colleagues “who are willing and ready to innovate without judgment.” He also needs dedicated time to process without the distraction of emails or other interruptions. Keshawn needs total freedom in terms of when and where he works. He explained that he works best in “casual dining restaurants and coffee shops.” Not having the restrictions of time and place is critical to his ability to be creative. Lanelle needs a “safe and quiet place” that has proximity to others but also gives the experience of solitude. She needs to work in quiet, but also needs to be able to plug in to group collaboration when needed. Like Keshawn, Nicole indicated that she needs time out of the office where she can be alone with
her thoughts. She also needs dedicated time free from distractions. Anna needs group collaboration. Here again is the idea that proximity to colleagues is an essential element of engagement. Curtis reiterated that flexibility in terms of when and where he works is critical.

**Workplace Conditions Necessary to Experience Positive Connections with Coworkers**

The research participants reported needing meaningful and personal connections with their coworkers. Descriptors such as kindness, thoughtfulness, and respectfulness were reported by Tom. The desire to connect socially over lunch was expressed by Keshawn. Gabbie eloquently summed up what many participants stated by listing the following:

- “Feedback that creates opportunities for self-improvement”
- “Positive praise”
- “Trust-building activities”
- “Team-building activities”
- “Thought-partnering with one another”

Sara expressed a desire for “interpersonal time that allows people to get to know one another as people and not just as professionals.” Jason described a similar sentiment when he expressed that he appreciates, “nurturing personal relationships with coworkers as a way of demonstrating value in the person and not just in the work product the person produces.”

Creating opportunities for meaningful connections is an example of quantum theory in action. In quantum physics, everything exists in an interconnected, and deeply intimate order. And, everything exists only in relationship — a constant weaving and merging of energy and change. Chapter 2, Section 3 explores this concept by quoting a portion of Margaret Wheatley’s book *Leadership and the New Science.*

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An organization’s capacity for healthy relationships — not its organizational form in terms of tasks, functions, span of control and hierarchies — is more fundamental to strong relations.

- Do people know how to listen and speak to each other?
- Are they able to work well with diverse members?
- Do people have free access to one another throughout the organization?
- Are they trusted with open information?
- Do organizational values bring them together or keep them apart?
- Is collaboration truly honored?
- Can people speak truthfully to one another?

This research demonstrates that when organizations are intentional about creating opportunities for meaningful connections, the answer to each of the above questions is “yes.” Positive connections with coworkers create the space for healthy relationships among diverse members. Positive connections between coworkers creates opportunities for transparency and trust and for shared values to be a source of unity and trust-building.

4.10 Experiencing Individual Worth and Value in the Workplace

How individuals within an organization experience their individual worth and value, or dignity, is demonstrated by the feedback mechanisms established by an organization that convey to its members that their individual contributions are valued and that the organization supports the individual in his/her/their personal and professional growth. The research found that employees experience dignity in the workplace through genuine expressions of gratitude and acknowledgment, specifically when that feedback is tailored to their individual performance and contributions. This targeted feedback increases trust, helps employees grow as professionals, builds confidence, and sustains motivation. Love, as defined previously in this chapter — “… is
the momentary upwelling of three tightly woven events: first, a sharing of one or more positive emotions between you and another; second, a synchrony between your and the other person’s biochemistry and behaviors (i.e., feeling emotionally connected); and third, a reflected motive to invest in each other’s well-being that brings mutual care.” 187 — is experienced most directly in the feedback mechanism that includes highly targeted expressions of gratitude and acknowledgment.

When asked to describe the feedback mechanisms in place that convey to the research participant that his/her/their contributions are valued, all of the participants described a similar set of mechanisms. Every person in the organizations meets with his/her/their manager once a week for a weekly one-on-one. These meetings are opportunities for emotional check-ins as well as a check-in on projects and tasks. Growth opportunities are explored for both the manager and the direct report. This means that every individual has an opportunity to offer gratitude and acknowledgment to the manager, as well as constructive or critical feedback. And, the manager has the opportunity to express the same toward the direct report. The reciprocity of this exchange demonstrates how love is showing up in the feedback mechanism. These meetings occur weekly. The research participants collectively agreed that these routinely occur and that there is no cancel culture. One-on-ones are highly valued.

The organization also has a biweekly town hall meeting where everyone in the organization comes together. The meetings are designed to build community, create belonging, offer opportunities for recognition, as well as to support transparency through institutional

knowledge-sharing. To build community, individual and collective esteem, and transparent knowledge-sharing, a portion of the meeting is designated for each person to share how they have contributed in the past two weeks, a goal they are setting for themselves, and an area in which they need support. This exercise builds positive connections among the team and is another example of how quantum theory is actionable. Each person is able to experience their own worth and value in relationship with one another. This exercise of sharing and asking for support creates opportunities for bursts of oxytocin to be elicited among the team, fostering and sustaining trust-building. The biweekly meeting also includes a shout-out feedback system. Over the course of the two weeks between meetings, every individual has opportunities to write affirming messages to their colleagues — an accomplishment, contribution, success, etc. These are placed in a jar. A time is reserved at the meeting to read these out loud. A small gift, such as a coffee mug, is awarded to each person who receives a shout-out. This shout-out system is another way the organization creates a space for the sharing of positive emotions, the chemical bio-syncing of the team, and putting these positive emotions into action through the investing into one another. The meeting includes an organizational update from the CEO regarding organizational accomplishments, challenges, upcoming projects, strategy, etc. The open and transparent sharing of knowledge builds trust. Curtis described his perspective of the biweekly town hall as “sacred time” and something that should not be missed. In his opinion, no one should be traveling or out of the office. Attendance is perceived as critical, not because it is demanded by the organization but rather because of the value it brings to the individual.

The organization offers opportunities for financial recognition through spot bonuses. This might take the form of a gift card, or it might be a bonus added on to the next paycheck. This feedback mechanism is an example of how the organization pours into the lives of employees.
Spot bonuses are always random. Nicole explained that these often show up just when a person needs them most. Perhaps when workload has been stressful, or it is a high-volume time of year. Nicole explained, “The spot bonus often comes at a time where it feels like you're almost out of the fuel in your tank. It's a very fast-paced work environment. There's always something to do. There is never really a true lull at this workplace. So oftentimes those gestures, even something as small as a thank you, or I really appreciate it when you did this in a meeting, or whatever the case may be … it comes at the right time to kind of give you that additional jumpstart to be able to work harder or more. Whatever the case may be.”

A 360 evaluation is conducted at the end of each fiscal year. This is a thorough performance evaluation that every employee participates in. And, if the employee would like a six-month evaluation, that is available but needs to be requested.

When asked how these feedback mechanisms make the person feel, the following statements were provided:

- “I feel full of hope.”
- “I feel full of motivation.”
- “I feel invested back into the organization.”
- “I feel motivated, positive, and value is added to life.”
- “I feel great.”
- “I enjoy coming to work.”
- “I enjoy my manager.”
- “Coming to work feels safe to me.”
- “I feel trusted.”
- “I feel valued, appreciated, supported.”
• “I feel connected to the people and to work.”
• “It feels very rejuvenating.”

The above-mentioned feedback mechanisms create opportunities for genuine expressions of gratitude and acknowledgment to be experienced. This feedback mechanism system, especially the targeted feedback, increases trust, helps employees grow as professionals, builds confidence, and sustains individual and collective motivation.

4.11 Business Paradigm

The research found the organization is operating within two contradictory business paradigms, causing a disconnect between how the organization functions procedurally and how the organization functions culturally. This disconnect is not felt by the individuals who fall into the Affiliating Perfecting style group. But it is experienced by all other employees as a culture of perfectionism, which is at odds with the organization’s culture of equity.

In Chapter 2, Section 9, an overview of Frederic Laloux’s business paradigms is provided. He describes five paradigms and assigns a color to each one. The organization studied functions, procedurally, as an Amber paradigm. But culturally, it operates in the Teal paradigm.

The Amber paradigm is an organization that has highly formal roles within a hierarchical pyramid. There is a top down command and control that determines the how and what of organizational decision-making. Stability is valued above all and this is accomplished through rigorous processes. The future is determined by maintaining an historic record of the past and replicating successes.188

In the data collection stage of the research, a rigorous hierarchy began to become apparent. The organization has only fourteen employees, and these employees report up to five

different managers. As explained previously, the process for employees to present new ideas to leadership is highly rigorous. Lanelle described the process as, “Here everything is cautious. I have to present a plan to present data points. I have to do research. We have to do market studies before we can make a decision.” When asked her perspective on whether the organization is exceptionally hierarchical considering its small size in terms of employee count, she commented, “Coming into the organization, it was described as being pretty much flat and collaborative and people working together. Which I can see different teams working in silos, working together cross-functionally. But it is hierarchical as far as we know the ultimate decision comes from the top. So, because you want to make sure that you are being perceived as a professional, because the bulk of the people here are Analyzing Preserving, you have to make sure that you have all your ducks in a row. If you don't have all your ducks in a row, then you may not be able to speak up or give suggestions. So, yeah, it is a hierarchical organization, but not really there's one point and then everything else is pretty flat.” Essentially, the organization is collaborative and open to ideas and feedback but only if the individual has done the research that is judged by those at the top of the hierarchy to meet the necessary criteria to have a legitimate opinion. This Amber paradigm is experienced by those who are not in the Analyzing Preserving conflict style as “scary,” “unfair,” “not open to new ideas,” and “intimidating.”

The organization’s workplace mission, values, and culture are oriented around equity. A genuine commitment to equity and social justice is present and that is by intentional design. Culturally, the organization functions as a Teal paradigm. Teal organizations are fueled by the evolutionary power of life. The focus of a Teal organization is on allowing the organization to develop, evolve, and grow organically and in alignment with its own evolutionary purpose and
that of the members. This is evident in the strong feedback mechanisms in place that convey to employees the value of their contributions. The focus on creating opportunities for all voices to be heard, and the commitment to creating a work environment in which all individuals can show up as their full and authentic selves. The Teal workplace culture appears to provide the employees with such high levels of basic human need fulfillment that the disconnect between the Amber and Teal paradigms is manageable — at least for a period of time. How long is not apparent. Since more than half the organization has been employed with the organization for two years or less, it is not possible to ascertain how long this disconnect between Amber and Teal is manageable for employees. The stress the Amber paradigm places on the Teal paradigm within the organization is evident in the way the individuals in the Accommodating Harmonizing, Achieving Directing, Affiliating Perfecting conflict styles experience the rigorous data- and process-driven environment. And, as has been mentioned in previous sections of this chapter, the Amber paradigm shuts down creativity and innovation.

4.12 Findings Summary

A core requirement of experiencing dignity in the workplace is having one’s voice genuinely heard and the experience of having one’s authentic self fully embraced and honored. Having one’s voice heard cultivates the necessary trust to develop and sustain employee engagement. In order to show up authentically and amplify one’s voice, there must be psychological safety in the workplace and employees, especially people of color and LGBTQAI employees, must experience their identity being fully embraced. The experience of having one’s voice heard, empowers employees to act independently and autonomously. When this behavior is

acknowledged and affirmed, employees feel motivated and engagement becomes self-
perpetuating.

The single most important factor of cultivating trust in the workplace is creating an
environment in which all voices are heard. Additionally, employees need to personally
experience equity — fairness and impartiality in all aspects of their work — and they need to
witness the same equity among their coworkers across the organization. To experience creativity
in the workplace, employees need to experience freedom — i.e., independence and autonomy —
intuition and their own intrinsic power free of expectations to conform to process or protocol. In
order to contribute at their highest level, employees need to experience having their identity fully
embraced, so they have the freedom to be fully present. They need the psychological safety to
authentically self-express. Employees need to be trusted to act autonomously. And, they need a
consistent and targeted feedback loop of acknowledgment to affirm their contributions are
valued. In order to contribute at their highest level, employees need a work environment that
allows them to connect with coworkers in a meaningful way while also allowing the space to
work independently and autonomously. This means, the environment needs to provide dedicated
space where employees can work uninterrupted in quiet solitude and also space for workplace
collaboration and fellowship.

Employees experience dignity in the workplace through genuine expressions of gratitude
and acknowledgment, specifically when that feedback is tailored to their individual performance
and contributions. This targeted feedback increases trust, helps employees grow as professionals,
built confidence, and sustains motivation.
CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, TRANSFERABILITY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

This chapter presents the summary of the findings, the transferability to findings across various organizations, as well as recommendations for practices and for additional research offered by the researcher.

5.1 Summary

This study sought to explore how designing organizational systems that incorporate dignity as a key attribute is imperative to addressing the basic human needs and dignity needs inherent to a highly motivated and engaged workforce. The goal of this research was to gain an understanding of the complexity of dignity as an attribute of systems design and its impact on workplace culture in the most complete way possible in order to inform businesses on how to develop organizational systems that increase employee engagement and productivity by addressing the dignity needs of its stakeholders. The purpose of this study was to explore how organizations can develop and sustain systems that address the basic human needs and dignity needs of all stakeholders. The main area of concern this research addressed was dignity as an attribute of organizational systems design. This study made the case that organizational leaders need to understand the importance of integrating basic human needs and the essentials of dignity as attributes of organizational systems design in order to maximize employee engagement, attract and retain top talent, increase innovation, and optimize bottom-line growth. In order to fully
explore dignity as an attribute of organizational systems design, the following research questions were addressed by the study:

1. What are the mechanisms organizations could develop in order to sustain an organizational system that honors the dignity needs of stakeholders?
2. What elements are necessary at the organizational system level to cultivate and sustain a culture of dignity as perceived by employees?
3. What elements are necessary from a process perspective to cultivate and sustain a culture of dignity as perceived by employees?

The research found that a core requirement of experiencing dignity in the workplace is having one’s voice genuinely heard and the experience of having one’s authentic self fully embraced and honored. Participants explained that having one’s voice heard cultivates the necessary trust to develop and sustain employee engagement. In order to show up authentically and amplify one’s voice, there must be psychological safety in the workplace and employees, especially people of color and LGBTQAI employees, must experience their identity being fully embraced. The experience of having one’s voice heard, empowers employees to act independently and autonomously. When this behavior is acknowledged and affirmed, employees experience motivation in the workplace and engagement becomes self-perpetuating.

**Trust and Employee Engagement**

Trust is essential to employee engagement. Research conducted by the ADP Research Institute (ADPRI) and published by *Harvard Business Review* in 2019 found a direct link between trust and employee engagement. But the secret to that link is the team, more specifically trust in the team lead. ADPRI’s research surfaced that trust in the team leader is the biggest differentiator between high- and low-performing teams. Teams that trust their leader are eight
times more likely to be fully engaged than those who don’t trust their leader. This research adds to this finding by pointing to how that trust is earned. The single most important factor of cultivating trust in the workplace is creating an environment in which all voices are heard. Additionally, employees need to personally experience equity — fairness and impartiality in all aspects of their work — and they need to witness the same equity among their coworkers across the organization. Well ahead of her time, Margaret Wheatley explored this concept in Leadership and the New Science in 2000. Explaining how quantum theory supports the need for interconnectedness in the workplace Wheatley wrote:

To live in a quantum world, to weave here and there with ease and grace, we need to change what we do. We need fewer descriptions of tasks and instead learn how to facilitate process. We need to become savvy about how to foster relationships, how to nurture growth and development. All of us need to become better at listening, conversing, respecting one another’s uniqueness, because these are essential for strong relationships. The era of the rugged individual has been replaced by the era of the team player. But this is only the beginning. The quantum world has demolished the concept that we are unconnected individuals. More and more relationships are in store for us, out there in the vast web of life.

This sense of interconnectedness is explained by Donna Hicks Ph.D. in her book, Leading With Dignity: How to Create a Culture That Brings Out the Best in People, as “dignity consciousness” — a connection to one’s own dignity, a connection to the dignity of others, as


well as a connection to the dignity of something greater than one’s self. Hicks explains that the connection to something greater than one’s self may take on different interpretations, including a connection to a purpose that contributes to the greater good and that gives meaning to the human experience. As individuals become increasingly focused on purpose-driven work, a leader who authentically aligns corporate mission and vision with dignity consciousness will engender trust because dignity consciousness honors the interconnected nature of the human experience, and inherently holds space for all voices to be heard and honored. When individuals experience their voice being heard and when they experience equity in the workplace, this research shows that the basic human need for belonging is met. In Brené Brown Ph.D.’s book, *Braving the Wilderness: The Quest for True Belonging and the Courage to Stand Alone*, she explains that in order to experience true belonging, individuals must satisfy their biological need for connection. To this point, it is of paramount importance that individuals’ efforts to connect are aligned with basic human needs and dignity needs for safety (physical and emotional) and in order to accomplish that, people must establish and honor boundaries. Utilizing empathy, compassion, and humanizing language that honors dignity for one’s self and others fosters relationships that allow for connection and trust. The interconnected nature of the human experience is an unbreakable connection that flows between each person. Leaders who honor this human connection and can align it to work, build trust.


194 Ibid.
Creativity and Employee Engagement

Gallup found that when organizations orient performance management systems around basic human needs, including psychological needs such as acceptance, acknowledgment, recognition, fairness, and emotional safety, employees experience more engagement and contribute to the organization at higher levels. This translates directly to increased productivity and improved bottom-line profit. This research supports that finding and elaborates on it. In order for employees to contribute at their highest level, they need to experience having their identity fully embraced so that they have the freedom to be fully present. They need the psychological safety to authentically self-express. Employees need to be trusted to act autonomously. And, they need a consistent and targeted feedback loop of acknowledgment to affirm that their contributions are valued. When these core dignity needs and basic human needs are met, individuals are able to more effectively engage in a creative process. Innovation and the freedom to be fully present are directly related. This idea is supported in the research Robert Kegan, Ph.D. and Lisa Laskow, Ph.D. presented in their book, An Everyone Culture: Becoming a Deliberately Developmental Culture. Deliberately developmental organizations embrace love, dignity, and community. The deliberately developmental organization seeks to realize organizational potential as well as human potential. Deliberately developmental organizations create cultures where people are able to bring their whole selves into the workplace and develop their individual capabilities. They recognize growth occurs when individuals experience a sense of belonging in a workplace community and that this sense of belonging is how people

experience their inherent value not just as workers or contributors but also as human beings. When individuals are able to lean in to the fullness of who they are and what has brought them together and invite wholeness and dignity into the workplace, they experience the very best of themselves. Innovation and creativity flourish.

Environmental Needs and Employee Engagement

In order to contribute at their highest level, this research found that employees need a work environment that allows them to connect with coworkers in a meaningful way while also allowing the space to work independently and autonomously. This means, the environment needs to provide dedicated space where employees can work uninterrupted in quiet solitude and also space for workplace collaboration and workplace fellowship.

Connecting with coworkers in a meaningful way is an exercise in building community and a culture of belonging. In her book, *The Gifts of Imperfection*, Brené Brown offers a definition of belonging, “Belonging is the innate human desire to be part of something larger than us.” In his book, *Community: The Structure of Belonging*, Peter Block explains:

First and foremost, to belong is to be related to and a part of something. It is membership, the experience of being at home in the broadest sense of the phrase. Belonging is best created when we join with other people in producing something that makes a place better.

It is the opposite of thinking *I must do it on my own*. That wherever I am, it is all on my

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shoulders and that perhaps I would be better off somewhere else. The opposite of belonging is to feel isolated and always (all ways) on the margin, an outsider. I am still forever wandering, looking for that place where I belong. To belong is to know, even in the middle of the night, that I am among friends.

The second meaning of the word *belong* has to do with being an owner: something belongs to me. To belong to a community is to act as a creator and co-owner of that community. What I consider mine I will build and nurture. The work, then, is to seek in our communities a wider and deeper sense of emotional ownership and communal ownership and accountability, both in their relationships and in what they actually control.

Block agrees with Hicks and Brown that there is an interdependent and interconnected nature to the human experience, and for Block that is the essence of community. He writes, “Community is fundamentally an interdependent human experience given form by the conversations citizens hold among themselves. The history, buildings, economy, infrastructure, and culture are products of the conversations and social fabric of any community. The built and cultural environments are secondary gains of how we choose to be together.” Block, Peter. *Community: the Structure of Belonging*, 30–30. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Incorporated, 2018.
dignity. This research found that the open workspace, so prevalent in the modern offices, too often fails to accomplish this.

Open workspaces first came to organizations in the 1950s. The last seventy years have seen a consistent adoption of this work environment. A *Harvard Business Review* article described the modern work environment: 200

Open, flexible, activity-based spaces are displacing cubicles, making people more visible. Messaging is displacing phone calls, making people more accessible. Enterprise social media such as Slack and Microsoft Teams are displacing watercooler conversations, making people more connected. Virtual-meeting software such as Zoom, GoToMeeting, and Webex is displacing in-person meetings, making people ever-present. … But as the physical and technological structures for omnichannel collaboration have spread, evidence suggests they are producing behaviors at odds with designers’ expectations and business managers’ desires. In a number of workplaces observed for research projects or consulting assignments, those structures have produced less interaction — or less *meaningful* interaction — not more.

This study found that proximity to coworkers is vital to creating meaningful connections and aids in creativity, which leads to innovation. However, the ability to work in concentrated stretches of time in actual physical and mental solitude is equally important. Workers need the option to connect and collaborate with one another and also require the option to step away and work in quiet solitude. Too much of either places a burden on critical thinking and creativity and

negatively affects employee engagement. Striking the right balance is an exercise in meeting the mutual needs of the unique workforce and unique business needs of every organization. Therefore, it is something the organization’s members should have a voice in designing.

**Experiencing One’s Individual Worth and Value and Its Effect on Employee Engagement**

This research found that employees experience dignity in the workplace through genuine expressions of gratitude and acknowledgment, specifically when that feedback is tailored to their individual performance and contributions. This targeted feedback increases trust, helps employees grow as professionals, builds confidence, and sustains motivation. Acknowledgment paired with targeted feedback communicates to employees that their contributions are noticed and that they matter. When individuals experience their basic human needs for participation, personal fulfillment, self-esteem, belonging, and security, this produces positive emotions such as happiness and joy. The manifestation and expression of the positive emotions elicits oxytocin, the hormone responsible for creating trust, increasing loyalty, and promoting attachment and bonding. This triggers the mirror neurons in the brain, which creates a synching — at both a neurological and biological level — between the person giving the feedback and the person receiving the feedback, through mirror neurons. This mirror neuron activity is experienced as empathy, which elicits more oxytocin, causing a deepening of trust, loyalty, bonding, and attachment. When this empathy results in empathetic empathy, which involves the capability of understanding a person’s predicament and feeling with them along with the willingness to help if help is necessary, love — at a neurological and biological level — is experienced. It is this experience of love, that ultimately sustains high levels of employee engagement. When a person

consistently experiences his/her/zher dignity being honored in the workplace, this is akin to experiencing love. And, when a person experiences love, an ongoing and self-perpetuating bond of trust is formed. Trust, especially trust in leadership, is paramount to cultivating and sustaining high-performing teams and highly engaged workplaces.

**Business Paradigm and Employee Engagement**

This research found that organizations can operate within two contradictory business paradigms, causing a disconnect between how the organization functions procedurally and how the organization functions culturally. This disconnect may not be felt by all individuals within the organization similarly, but it can frustrate individual basic human needs and violate dignity needs and negatively impact trust in leadership, workplace processes, and employee engagement.

Organizations best suited to honor basic human needs and dignity needs align with the characteristics of a Teal organization. Teal organizations are fueled by the evolutionary power of life. The focus of a Teal organization is on allowing the organization to develop, evolve, and grow organically and in alignment with its own evolutionary purpose and that of the members. Teal organizations are living systems in which the system itself has its own inherent worth and value, and therefore, all essential elements of dignity should be honored with regard to the needs of the organization as well as the needs of the organization’s members.

Teal organizations honor employee needs for independence and autonomy by creating a self-managed structure and invite wholeness and authenticity from the organization’s contributors and from the organization itself. Healthy functioning Teal organizations incorporate strong feedback mechanisms that convey to employees the value of their contributions as well as offer opportunities for employees to convey the value of the organization.

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in their own individual evolutionary purpose. A well-functioning Teal organization focuses on creating opportunities for all voices to be heard and is committed to creating a work environment in which all individuals can show up as their full and authentic selves. And, in turn, the individuals are intentional about creating opportunities and spaces for the voice of the organization to be heard and for its authentic self to be represented procedurally and within the organization’s culture.

5.2 Transferability

This research was conducted with employees of a nonprofit, located in an urban area in the Southwest portion of the United States, that focuses on access and equity in education. At the time of the study, the organization had been in existence for less than ten years and operated similarly to a startup company with a founder CEO that was heavily involved in the day-to-day operations of the organization. Though this study was conducted with a small and fairly young organization, the results are transferable to startup organizations in both the nonprofit and for-profit spaces, highly mission-drive organizations, as well as teams across all functions in organizations of all sizes. This transferability is related to two primary conditions: the proximity of employees to leadership and the size of the organization.

The research found that proximity to leadership and proximity to one’s coworkers is of paramount importance to how people experience love and dignity in the workplace and how this impacts employee engagement. Additional research is necessary to gain an in-depth understanding about how employees who work in disparate locations across the country or globe experience love and dignity in relationship to employee engagement.

With regard to the size of the organization, the maximum natural size a group is able to create and sustain bonds utilizing interpersonal relationships as the bond-creating mechanism is
between one hundred and one hundred-fifty people. In his book, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, historian Yuval Noah Harari, Ph.D. explains that sociological research has demonstrated that groups are able to sustain strong bonds through interpersonal relationships only to about one hundred-fifty individuals — most people can neither intimately know nor communicate effectively with more than one hundred-fifty people. Additional research is necessary to explore the transferability of the research with organizations or teams beyond this size.

The research is also transferable to Teal organizations — organizations fueled by the evolutionary power of life that focus on developing, evolving, and growing organically and in alignment with its own evolutionary purpose and that of the members — of any size due to the fluidity in which Teal organizations operate and function. Agility and nimbleness are inherent to a Teal organization, which structures itself around emerging challenges and democratizes power to meet those challenges. For this reason, the research transfers well to Teal organizations.

5.3 Recommendations for Practice

The primary recommendations for practice surfaced as a result of this research: the need for intentionality with regard to designing the business paradigm and the importance of cultivating a culture of love. Both of these are given detailed attention in the following sections.

Building a Business Paradigm


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Frederic Laloux opens his book with the following questions: “Can we create organizations free of the pathologies that show up all too often in the workplace? Free of politics, bureaucracy, and infighting; free of stress and burnout; free of resignation, resentment, and apathy; free of the posturing at the top and the drudgery at the bottom? Is it possible to reinvent organizations, to devise a new model that makes work productive, fulfilling, and meaningful? Can we create soulful workplaces — schools, hospitals, businesses, and nonprofits — where our talents can blossom, and our callings can be honored?” This research demonstrates that the answer to this question is an emphatic “yes.” Yes, we can create organizations that embrace and honor the basic human needs and dignity needs of stakeholders, and to do so leaders must be intentional about designing a system that honors basic human needs and dignity needs at the paradigm level and as well as at cultural level.

The organizational paradigm is the overarching approach to conducting business that underlies all theories and methodologies that inform the way the organization conducts business, builds culture, and sustains innovation and growth. While organizations are, generally, intentional about how they conduct business, build culture, and sustain innovation and growth, they are generally unaware of the underlying paradigm that informs it. This lack of intentionality at the paradigm level sets into motion an organizational system that serves as a silent engine fueling all other organizational activities. Because it is silent and leadership at the highest level remains unaware of it, the paradigm can be in contradiction to all aspects of business it is informing.

When business leaders are not intentional about the organization's paradigm, it can set into motion a series of contradictions that drive conflict throughout the system but that rarely shows up in a recognizable manner until it manifests through the interpersonal relationships of the organization's members. Too often organizational founders and early leaders unintentionally put into motion an organizational paradigm that is so familiar to them based off industry practices and social and cultural norms that they are unaware they are replicating ideas and behaviors. The perspective may be that they are simply conducting business the way business is done. In the same way that people breathe air without having awareness that they are breathing. Air is so familiar; it goes unnoticed. Red, Amber, and Orange business practices and organizational norms are the same. Organizational founders and leaders design mission, vision, and value statements in line with organizational trends — ideas and concepts born out of deep research and industry best practices that are current with ideas regarding human development and basic human needs. These are often ideas grounded in advanced paradigms such as Green and Teal. Very often, there is a lack of alignment with regard to leadership styles. So, while the mission, vision, and values statements outlined by the organization are progressive in terms of human development and informed by organizational business trends regarding employee engagement research, the leadership style is disparate in approach and pulling from various paradigms based on the individual ideologies of the organization's leadership at any given time. Normal business disruptions such as market changes and the strategies that support them; mergers and acquisitions; new lines of business; and the organizational restructuring that accompanies all of these create disruptions in the system. These normal disruptions can be experienced as volatile and psychologically unsafe when they occur inside a system that is in conflict with itself. Ultimately, the inconsistencies in the system manifest at the interpersonal
Conflicts emerge at the employee-to-employee level, employee-to-leadership level, and leadership-to-leadership as the individual members actively seek to secure their basic human needs and dignity needs within this conflicting system.

Figure 6 portrays the way an organizational paradigm within a conflicting system can drive conflict and depravation of basic human needs and dignity violations at the individual contributor level.
Building organizational systems that honor the dignity needs of stakeholders requires that organizational leaders, and ideally organizational founders, are intentional about establishing an organizational paradigm that can authentically cultivate and sustain the basic human needs and dignity needs of its stakeholders. The paradigm that is most amenable to this is the Teal paradigm because Teal organizations are fueled by the evolutionary power of life. The focus of a Teal organization is on allowing the organization to develop, evolve and grow organically and in alignment with its own evolutionary purpose and that of the members. Teal organizations function as a living system, and living systems are agile to the needs of all the living organisms within it. Teal organizations inherently honor the interconnected and interrelated structure of life and recognize the fulfillment of the organization’s greatest potential is directly related the fulfillment of its members’ greatest potential.

With a Teal paradigm in place, organizational leaders need to drive consistency throughout the system. The mission, vision, and values of the organization need to align to Teal ideology. Leadership must all function from one singular ideology — an ideology grounded in the preservation of basic human needs and the honoring of dignity. This will require hiring leadership who hold this inherent worldview and have the desire to do the work. It will require on-going and consistent training to ensure leadership practices are consistent and in alignment with Teal practices. It will require that leadership is prepared to face organizational disruptions with dignity and have the capacity to hold equal space for the dignity needs of its stakeholders as well as mutual care for the dignity needs of the organization. And, it requires that when conflict emerges at the interpersonal level, that conflict resolution practices such as restorative practices that include humanistic mediation and dialogue practices that engage both the heart and mind are in place to ensure that basic human needs and dignity needs are honored in the midst of conflict.
Cultivate a Culture of Love

Love, from a behavioral perspective, can be understood as *willing the good of another and offering active care for the whole person*. Love, in the language of emotional intelligence, is empathetic empathy in action; it is the capability of understanding a person’s predicament and feeling with them along with the willingness to help if help is necessary. Love, from a biological perspective, is a prosocial emotion that is present when basic human needs are met and when dignity needs are honored. From a neurological perspective, love is positivity resonance, which is defined as, “The momentary upwelling of three tightly woven events: first, a sharing of one or more positive emotions between you and another; second, a synchrony between your and the other person’s biochemistry and behaviors (i.e., feeling emotionally connected); and third, a reflected motive to invest in each other’s well-being that brings mutual care.”

Cultivating a culture of love, requires that organizations honor the dignity needs and basic human needs of its members; it requires that the organization intentionally create opportunities for syncing members’ biochemistry (i.e., creating opportunities to experience the interconnected structure of belonging); and it requires that organizations *pour into* its members through intentional acts designed to assist their development as both humans and professionals. When

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these three things occur, employees experience love at the behavioral, emotional, biological, and neurological levels.

**Honoring Basic Human Needs and Dignity Needs**

As organizations seek to cultivate organizational systems that honor the dignity needs of all stakeholders it is important to remain cognizant of the core dignity requirement of experiencing dignity in the workplace: having one’s voice genuinely heard and the experience of having one’s authentic self fully embraced and honored. This concept of having one’s voice genuinely heard and the experience of being fully embraced in the workplace came forward in how the participants of the study spoke about the essential elements of dignity that most resonated for them in their professional roles. Five essential elements of dignity emerged as the most resonant and each of these were grounded in the concepts of having one’s voice genuinely heard and having one’s authentic self fully embraced and honored. These are the dignity superstars and how participants described them:

- **Acceptance of Identity** is embracing those elements that truly define a person
- **Psychological Safety** is creating space where people can present their ideas and thoughts without fear of humiliation or retribution, and creating space where people can work autonomously and independently
- **Acknowledgment** is providing targeted feedback and affirming contributions
- **Fairness** is the organization and its leaders operating equitably and with impartiality
- **Benefit of the Doubt** is assuming good intent and extending trust without it being initially earned so that individuals are able to operate autonomously and independently
Organizations need to focus on how each of these five dignity superstars allow individual contributors to experience the fullness of who they are as individuals so that they, in turn, give from the fullness of who they are back to the organization. There is a reciprocal nature to honoring basic human needs and dignity. When employees experience dignity, they are able to work with all their defenses down. When individuals are not in a self-protective stance, they have the freedom to create and innovate. They are able to thrive. And this is the energy of progress and growth. This fuels bottom-line growth.

This research found that organizational leaders need to structure all organizational procedures, policies, and practices around these five dignity superstars. From hiring, to on-boarding, to day-to-day operations, and promotions, to work product development, and service delivery, etc., embedding structures and practices that bring these dignity superstars to life in real and tangible ways is paramount to creating and sustaining an organizational system that honors the dignity needs of stakeholders.

Create Opportunities for Syncing of Biochemistry

The syncing of biochemistry is what empathy looks like at a neurological perspective. It is the activity of mirror neurons. Mirror neurons are a class of brain cells that fire when an individual performs an action and also when the individual observes someone else performing the same action.207 Connectivity is core to the fulfillment of basic human needs and dignity needs, and, as quantum theory demonstrates, humans gain an understanding of themselves in relationship to one another. Mirror neurons are the instrument of this behavior. Mirror neurons send messages to our limbic system allowing us to experience what others feel. They allow for

the deepening of prosocial behavior because they allow individuals to have intensely shared emotional experiences. Mirror neurons are the birthplace of empathy. The following behaviors should be implemented in the workplace because they activate empathy through mirror neuron activity:

- In all workplace conversations, give people your complete attention (make eye contact)
- Be intentional about gratitude: give gifts of appreciations (thank you notes and other tangible forms of acknowledgment)
- Create opportunities for shared meals: ensure there is an inviting space for meals and positive, prosocial incentivization for using it
- Create meditation and self-reflection spaces and make guided meditations available to encourage employees to focus on the well-being of others (encourage leadership to model the appropriate use of these spaces)
- Create pet policies that encourage well-behaved dogs to join their humans in the workplace (the presence of dogs increases the flow of oxytocin)
- Use affirming words: In all workplace interactions, use words that honor and accept a person’s identity; that honor the authenticity of a person’s feelings and emotions; and that allow each person the experience of having his/her/zher authentic self fully embraced and honored

Pour into the Organizations’ Members

“Pouring into the organizations’ members” means implementing workplace practices that consistently bring the behavioral definition of love to life — willingness the good of another and offering active care for the whole person. When organizations focus on this element of a love culture, they are ensuring the organization’s members are able to remain connected to the organization and their work with both their hearts and minds. The following behaviors are examples of how organizations can pour into their members.

- Weekly one-on-ones: Weekly one-on-ones should be considered a high priority and should not be used as rote meetings or meetings that can easily be canceled when schedules are tight.
  - Start with an emotional check in: A question such as, “How are you feeling, really?” invites emotional authenticity and psychological safety
  - Hold meetings in person: Proximity is an important element to experiencing the powerful impact of mirror neurons and the cultivation of empathy
  - Use this as opportunity to get feedback on how the person leading the meeting (i.e., the leader, manager, supervisor, project lead, etc.) can improve
  - Use this as an opportunity to get feedback on how leadership can help direct reports grow as professionals
  - Act on the feedback: Not acting on feedback will break trust in the relationship and in the integrity of the meeting
  - Remember, “being heard is so close to being loved, the average person can’t tell the difference.”

• Bi-weekly team meetings: Create frequent opportunities for the entire team to come together as well as opportunities for cross-functional teams and companywide teams to come together to create opportunities for organizational transparency and to celebrate successes.
  o Use this as an opportunity to celebrate and recognize employees
  o Develop a shout-out system to deliver targeted, peer-driven recognition
  o Show gratitude, recognition, and show-case the big and little wins
  o Encourage participation
  o Be transparent — report what is happening within the organization, so no one is ever left in the dark

• Recognize & Praise Accomplishments
  o Host frequent team lunches (sharing meals increases trust)
  o Post gratitude notes that are frequent and name specific contributions, accomplishments, and wins
  o Send group emails that highlight team wins
  o Send group emails that highlight individuals who have gone above and beyond
  o Be authentic

An intentional approach to developing an organizational paradigm that honors basic human needs and dignity needs and driving this throughout the system by consistently aligning all aspects of the business model to the Teal paradigm paired with the specifics outline above on how to cultivate a culture of love are the core recommendations for how organizations can develop systems that honor the dignity needs of others. When organizations take these specific
measures, as Gallup’s research shows, employees experience more engagement and contribute at higher levels. This directly correlates to increased productivity and improved bottom-line growth.  

5.4 Recommendations for Research

Opportunities for future research emerged as a result of this study. One opportunity to explore is how organizational leaders can retroactively transform Red, Amber, Orange, and Green organizations and bring them into a Teal paradigm where basic human needs and dignity needs can flourish. Another opportunity for further research that emerged from this study is the need to gain a deeper understanding of how to cultivate a culture of love in global organizations where individual contributors have little to no proximity to one another, as well as implications on teams in which individual contributors work remotely.

5.5 Conclusion

Much research, including this study, focuses on what organizations can do to increase employee engagement. This study surfaced the need to explore the concept of organizational reciprocity. What can an organization’s members do to ensure that the living system, that serves as a pivotal container for individual and collective belonging, creativity, and innovation, experiences its dignity and that its basic needs as a living system are met? This research begs the questions: Are we willing to love the living system as much as we want the living system to love us? And, how might this organizational reciprocity advance the human condition and lift up the collective human experience?

Appendix A: Interview Protocol

1. Introduction and Welcome

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research study. The study is designed to gather information and deepen understanding about the role of dignity as an attribute of organizational systems design. Throughout this interview, please limit your answers exclusively to your experiences as contributor and employee of this organization. As a reminder, your participation in this study is voluntary. If you agree to take part and then change your mind, you can withdraw for any reason. There are no penalties if you withdraw, decline to participate, or skip any parts of the study. This interview will take about two hours and there are no known risks associated with participating in this study. The benefits to the study are to increase understanding about the interconnected nature of dignity and employee engagement in non-hierarchical, self-managed organizational systems.

2. Debrief *Friendly Style Profile*

- Review the elements of the *Friendly Style Profile*
  - What influences conflict
  - The four conflict styles and their differences
  - The Purpose, Pace, and Process associated with each style
  - The participant’s conflict style, including strengths and possible excesses
  - Communication strategies for achieving positive outcomes in the workplace

3. Present and review the Ten Essentials Elements of Dignity (10EED)
4. Researcher provides a document where participants can rank the 10EED in order of most resonant to least as a professional at the organization.

5. Behavioral Interview Questions: Questions designed to elicit feedback regarding dignity and its role in the workplace culture of the organization will be asked. These include the following questions:

   - Please share a time when (insert most resonant 10EED) was honored. How did this affect your ability to …
     - Trust your coworkers?
     - Trust in the organization’s leadership?
     - Trust in workplace processes?
     - Experience your own individual creativity?
     - Experience collective creativity from your team members?
     - Collaborate with team members?
     - Experience motivation?
     - Engage in critical thinking?

   - How did the honoring of your dignity impact your wellbeing?

   - Present the wheel of conflict and inquire about which basic human need was met as a result of the honoring of dignity.

   - Please share a time when (insert most resonant 10EED) was violated. How did this affect your ability to …
     - Trust your coworkers?
     - Trust in the organization’s leadership?
     - Trust in workplace processes?
o Experience your own individual creativity?

o Experience collective creativity from your team members?

o Collaborate with team members?

o Experience motivation?

o Engage in critical thinking?

- How did this dignity violation impact your wellbeing?

- Present the wheel of conflict and inquire about which basic human need was *not met* as a result of the dignity violation.

- When you consider your individual contributions to in your workplace, what feedback mechanisms are in place that convey to you that these contributions are valued?

  o How does this make you feel?
    - If there are no feedback mechanisms in place, how does this make you feel?

  o How does the feedback mechanism support the 10EED that is most resonant for you?
    - If there are no feedback mechanisms in place, how does this affect your sense of dignity in the workplace?

  o How does this impact your desire to contribute at your highest level?
    - If there are no feedback mechanisms in place, how does this impact your desire to contribute at your highest level

- Describe the workplace conditions necessary for you to experience creativity?

- Describe the workplace conditions necessary for you to experience positive
connections with your coworkers?

- How would you define your inherent worth and value as it relates to your role at this organization?
  - Describe a time when your inherent worth and value was recognized and accepted at this organization.
  - How did this affect your ability to …
    - Trust your coworkers
    - Trust in the organization’s leadership
    - Trust workplace processes
    - Experience creativity
    - Collaborate with team members
    - Maintain motivation
    - Think critically
  - How did this impact your wellbeing
  - What basic human needs were met
## Appendix B: Trust Code Book

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<th>Major Theme</th>
<th>Sub Theme</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Sample Quotes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trust</td>
<td>Trust in Leadership</td>
<td>The belief that the words and actions of one’s leadership reliably align and are in the best interest of the organization’s members, mission and purpose</td>
<td>&quot;Me and my boss, I think, I have a very good rapport … So just hearing her say, 'oh, yes, we can use this or this is a good idea.' It's good enough for me.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;My manager provides an opportunity for me to have a safe place for me to just brain dump and get my ideas out there without judgment.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;I take the initiative to ask why or if not. I self-reflect and can put myself in their shoes and realize that I might probably do the same. But overall, I have a really high level of trust that they will always make decisions that are best for the organization both in hiring to strategic direction, which the organization is going.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;I just never feel like I'm in the dark. I always feel like I know what's going on in the organization, even though I'm just part-time and I'm not there all the time.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;It definitely increases my trust for leadership to know that they're noticing things that employees are doing.&quot;</td>
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| Trust       | Trust in Workplace Processes | The belief that workplace processes will produce results that are in the best interest of the organization’s members, mission and purpose | "I think like they’ve worked hard to try to show that they don't expect us to be perfect. When we're not perfect, it's okay so long as we use it as a growing experience. But at the same time, it has been hard in the past to be innovative and creative and try new things because there is such a culture of perfectionism here."

"I feel much more confident about if we have an emergency now, we just have to have a fire drill. And so, I definitely felt like my need for safety, that might not initially have been met, was when I raised that concern."

"I can trust that if I bring something up or anyone brings something up that it will at least be considered and brought into the decision-making process and will be very thoroughly vetted as evidenced by everybody else. We really consider as many perspectives as possible to make the best decision. I would say that is a strength of the organization in my view, because I think that contributes to people feeling more accepted."

"There is a conversation that happens before a conversation and then a follow-up debrief conversation about the conversation. They're very clear about deliberating about processes."

"I think it influences a lot, because there have been very few experiences where I haven't trusted the process or the decision."

"If I am confused, or I don't see the light at the end of the tunnel for like a specific project, I've grown it to trust that it'll get there...things will fall into place."
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<th>Major Theme</th>
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| Trust       | Trust in Coworkers | The belief that the words and actions of one’s coworkers reliably align and are in the best interest of the organization’s members, mission and purpose | "I want to enjoy coming to work, and I do. Being safe is being about to be myself and to express my thoughts."<br>"I have a lot of trust in my team. I think the times where the trust isn't there has been times we have brought on people who are Mission and Vision aligned, and we plan to coach them in a skill and then realized we don't either have the time or the knowledge to actually coach them and then they do not succeed in their role."<br>"If I know the team believes in me or trusts me, it will probably help me not be as critical on myself."<br>"I connect those two very frequently in my mind, because I don't think you can trust someone you don't value. And do you value someone you don't trust? No, I don't."<br>"Trust is developed at an interpersonal level, and then I think it trickles out into the organization. What I've noticed is that folks may see what happens in a different relationship and then that may affect the way that they experienced trust in the organization."
### Major Theme | Sub Theme | Definition | Sample Quotes
--- | --- | --- | ---
Creativity | Individual | A process that begins with one individual and a genuine encounter with a business need that involves an intense absorption into an idea, thought, and/or desire | "I think it's really hard. You have to be willing to take a big risk to be creative because there is the risk of getting shut down and having a million holes poked in what you're doing."

"It allows me, if I know that trust is there, it allows me to really think differently about the issue rather than take the charted path because a lot of times the charted path is maybe not the path to take."

"I think it definitely depends on the context. I definitely get a lot of validation and encouragement from the four people who are my peer. But then when it comes like bigger things, it feels like we haven't done before or it might not necessarily fall into like the vision of where the leaders want to take the organization."

"And having my idea move forward into action and then seeing the lasting impact of it demonstrates the fairness around giving me space to do that in first place."

"...especially when it seems like the things I get recognized for most are things that I took initiative on and that I had freedom to be creative with."
Creativity Code Book, Continued

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<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Collective</td>
<td>A collaborative process that begins with a group of individuals and a genuine encounter with a business need that involves an intense absorption into an idea, thought, and/or desire</td>
<td>&quot;I believe in innovation. I believe in iterations and trying and not being afraid to fail. However, because I work with individuals who fall in that category. The fear of failure keeps them stuck.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;I think the places that we're trying to go, we'll get there eventually and maybe there more successfully. But if we were more strategic about what we are thorough with, we might get there a little more quickly.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;I think that when people have a mutual shared love — and for us it's a love of kids and a love of success for our communities — I think that really allows us to ground ourselves in a collective why and really allows us to assume best intent to show up as our authentic selves. To make sure that we're bringing our very best to work every single day because we're all hoping to change this one portion of very interesting landscape.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;I think creativity is something that is wanted, but I don't think it is wanted on a larger scale. I don't think that's wanted at all.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;If someone comes up with an idea, the expectation is that they have a proposal. Rather than just like coming up with an idea. I want to do this. Right? You have to have something to back it up. I don't know if this expectation of process has been explicitly stated, but it' suggested any time someone brings an idea.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;The meeting topic differs, but once a month, so every other team meeting it's a whip around of everyone talking but giving an update of their success, a growth, a goal, and then a request for everybody. Everybody does that whip around.&quot;</td>
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## Appendix D: Contribute Code Book

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| Contribute        | Collaboration with team members | The ability to join together with coworkers in the sharing of intellectual and emotional resources, skills, and talents to support an organization’s mission and purpose | "I know that what we do is valuable. And I know that what we do is changing lives."  
"I always see it as like a group effort."  
"When I feel like acknowledged by them, I definitely feel comfortable collaborating with anyone on my team."
"I would put up everyone in the organization up against anyone else anywhere else, and I would be able to say 'I think this person is trustworthy, loving, supportive, and all of those things.' That is a very rare thing in a workplace. And I do mean every single person."
"I've got this. I'm doing what I am supposed to be doing."
"I feel like just being inclusive and being very open and being very accepting of everyone. And I feel like it's a place where if you mess up you can immediately be like...I messed up and I need help. And you will not be shamed or belittled for it." |

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<tr>
<td>Contribute</td>
<td>Motivation to perform at highest level</td>
<td>The desire to join together with coworkers in the sharing of intellectual and emotional resources, skills, and talents to support an organization’s mission and purpose</td>
<td>&quot;I love the work that we do. I completely stand behind the organization and the change that we make for kids. I remember my first site visit and there was an eight grader there who had taken the program in 7th grade, and he was telling us about how he was helping his older brother fill out the FAFSA.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;But I know what we do … is affecting people's lives. And not just, you know a few, we are talking thousands of lives every year. So, I enjoy having that sense.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;I think like respect, empathy, and the mutual understanding who I am as a person. Love is relational. It's knowing you are truly cared for or about. It's the humanness of each other … appreciating that we're each human first. And so, it's kindness. It's all of those things to me. It just feels supportive. It feels like the human element.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;Generally speaking, when it comes to generating work product … in the work that we do for kids...everyone is aligned. And that's so hard to find like … no ego.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;I would say that when I am poured into, I am the most motivated. When I feel acknowledged, and when I am recognized and praised.&quot;</td>
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<td>&quot;If I didn't feel included, I would just show up, do the task, and leave. But been included and feeling like I have a voice, I definitely feel more motivated to push myself and to figure out different ways to make this job better.&quot;</td>
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| Contribute  | Critical thinking skills| Enhancement of intellectual and emotional resources and skills applied toward the advancement of the organization’s mission and purpose.                                                                 |  "When I trust my voice carries equal weight, I can be more creative, comfortable and confident.”  
"I have the time and space to process information.”  
“I am trusted to problem-solve and innovate.”  
“When my opinion is sought, it pushes me to expand my thinking, which helps me grow as a professional.”  
“I have time to internalize, process, set strategy, and evaluate independently.”  
“When I experience acknowledgment and hear input from others, it helps me to think more critically.”  
“When I experience benefit of the doubt, it positively affects my critical thinking because the trust that flows from it supports creativity and pushing past the charted path.”  
“Acceptance of identity fuels my critical thinking because there are not insecurities taking up space in the mind. I am able to think more introspectively.”  
“When I experience acknowledgment, it can lead to effective brainstorming but then nothing tends to come from that (no action taken).” |
## Appendix E: Experiencing Worth and Value Code Book

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| Experiencing worth and value | Feedback mechanisms | The feedback mechanisms established by an organization that convey to its members that their individual contributions are valued and support the individual in his/her/their personal and professional growth. | "When a sense of acknowledgment is happening, and understanding I am being given a change to share and be heard."  
"What I often see happen is there's always an acknowledgment of something done well, and then there's often a statement such as … 'I'm curious' or 'I have a wondering.'"  
"...rediscovering, reinventing, learning yourself in new ways, stretching yourself, shrinking yourself, if necessary, creating more space of taking up space and really testing those things out and learning myself in new ways."  
"It like makes me feel like I did something right. When I have the feeling of doing something right, it not only gives me the motivation to keep going, but I think it like gives me like a confidence boost that makes me feel more sure of myself. I can feel like more settled."  
"People really desire to grow and to be fed personally and professionally, and so I think that's a really important value for the people that we’re attracting into the organization. I think folks experience more dignity when they feel more poured into."  
"You're able to check in emotionally and professionally with your manager and talk through what you've done this past week, what you're hoping for next week, feedback for your manager, feedback from your manager and then like input on a couple projects that they can give you real quick." |
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