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The Inaugural Issue of Dignity

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THE INAUGURAL ISSUE OF *DIGNITY*

Donna M. Hughes
Editor-in-Chief

Thank You to Contributors to the Inaugural Issue of *Dignity*

When *Dignity* was proposed in 2015, many scholars, professionals, and advocates immediately gave their support to this journal. No other scholarly journal existed that combined all the features of *Dignity*: a focus on all forms of exploitation and violence under the universal human rights banner of dignity; a peer-review system that ensures that all articles have been professionally reviewed; open access publishing that allows all articles to be downloaded and read free of charge; and a non-profit publishing model that requires no author processing charges (APC). *Dignity* is a forum for academics, service providers, and advocates to publish research and theoretical articles, reports from the community, personal narratives, editorials, and books and media reviews.

I want to give my sincere thanks to all the authors in this inaugural issue of *Dignity*. They believed in the *Dignity* publishing project and were willing to submit their work when we were just an idea, a website, and a call for papers. *Dignity* is pleased to publish these articles, reports, and reviews which come from all parts of the world and address major issues of concern to those who oppose exploitation and violence. They have made *Dignity* a truly scholarly international, multidisciplinary project.

I also want to give my sincere thanks to the editorial board members, many of whom were the first to see the need for a journal such as *Dignity*. They have provided guidance, reviewing, and editorial support.

Acknowledged Peer Review

With its inaugural issue, *Dignity* introduces a new model of peer review called *acknowledged peer review*. The new system aims to increase transparency and integrity to the peer review process and give credit to those involved.

Over the past several years, accompanying the new open science movement, there has been increased documentation and discussion about the "brokenness" of the scholarly peer review system. The failures of peer review have been the focus of editorials (Paternoster & Brame, 2015), conference presentations (Chan, 2016) and blog posts (Cohen, 2015). Some documented problems include: attempts to manipulate impact factors by journal editors (Hemmingsson, Mygind, Skjennald, & Edgren, 2002; Matthews, 2015, Retraction Watch, 2015a), fake reviewers (Retraction Watch, 2015b), and "peer review rings" involving authors who support publication of each other's papers. As a result of these fraudulent practices, dozens of papers have been withdrawn from publication (Springer, 2015; Swaine, 2014).

Another problem that has been raised is the bias of gatekeepers at some journals (Pinhoster, 2016; Paternoster & Brame, 2015). There are some indicators of how bias is introduced in recent studies on the shrinkage of the pool of reviewers. Only a minority of academics serve as reviewers for scholarly publications. In the biomedical literature, only 20 percent of reviewers perform 69 to 94 percent of the reviews for a journal (Kovanis, Porcher, Ravaud & Trinquart, 2016). This decrease in the number of reviewers has enabled a growing gatekeeper bias in some areas of research and scholarship in which a small number of reviewers can control what gets published. Also, the anonymity of reviewers enables the bias to remain invisible to the community.

Reviewers read and evaluate papers because they want to give back to the community. They most value recognition for their work in the form of acknowledgments (Warne, 2016). Recently, 80 percent of researchers said they thought there was not enough recognition for the professional work involved in peer review (Warne, 2016), and academics said they'd like to include the work of peer review as part of their professional service (Nicholson, 2016).

Double-blind peer review, in which the author(s) and the reviewer(s) are unknown to each other, has long been the gold standard for review of academic papers. However, the problems created by the opaque system of peer review call for reform. Scholars are still committed to a professional system of review. Although recently, there has been a call for "democratization of the review process" (Paternoster & Brame, 2015).

With the publication of the inaugural issue, *Dignity* has adopted a peer review system that enables greater transparency, integrity, and acknowledgment for the important professional work of peer review. *Dignity* preserves the double-blind review system. It then adds another level of transparency. Following the double-blind review revision of the paper, and before publication, *Dignity* asks reviewers if they would like to be thanked in the acknowledgments section. With the permission of the author(s), the names and affiliation of the reviewers are published.

The aim of acknowledged peer review is to improve transparency of the review process and enable reviewers to get credit for this important professional contribution to the community. Participation in the acknowledged peer review system is an option. In the first issue of *Dignity*, several reviewers chose to be publicly acknowledged, while several others chose to remain anonymous.

Dignity believes that acknowledged peer review will improve the quality and integrity of the review process by encouraging reviewers to give candid, but constructive, feedback to the author(s) and editors.

As part of the open science movement, *Dignity's* new publishing model and policies aim to challenge entrenched systems, paradigms, and gatekeepers to further our understanding and response to exploitation and violence.

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RECOMMENDED CITATION

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