

# **An Analysis of the Coverage of Cooperatives in U.S. Introductory Business Textbooks**

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*In the United States, cooperatives are an important form of business with an estimated 30,000 cooperatives operating and annual sales in excess of \$654 billion. In spite of cooperatives importance to the U.S. economy, little is known about the coverage of cooperatives in textbooks used in introductory-level business classes. The purpose of this study is to provide the first comprehensive analysis of the coverage of cooperatives in introductory-level business textbooks used in principles-level business courses by discipline (e.g., accounting & management) at U.S. colleges and universities, and; critically analyze authors' examples used to illustrate the cooperative form of business. Findings suggest a very small percentage of introductory-level business textbooks include a discussion about cooperatives along with other forms of business. Furthermore, where cooperatives are discussed, the coverage is limited and cooperative examples are not representative of the majority of cooperatives.*

*Keywords: business form, cooperative, co-op, introductory-level business, textbooks*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The World Cooperative Monitor (2021) reported there are approximately three million cooperatives globally employing around 280 million people, or ten percent of the world's workforce with the 300 largest cooperatives reporting sales of \$2 trillion dollars. The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) (2021) defines a cooperative as "an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise." Cooperatives can be classified into four categories with ownership and control vested to the member-owners named in the respective description: producer cooperatives (e.g., Ocean Spray; Sunsweet; Agri-Mark); consumer cooperatives (e.g., REI; Liberty Mutual; credit unions); worker cooperatives (e.g., Equal Exchange) and purchasing cooperatives (e.g., Ace Hardware; Ground Round) (National Cooperative Bank, 2019). The distinctive features of member ownership, member usage of cooperative services, and democratic control differentiate the cooperative from investor-owned corporations.

Cooperatives are well represented in the U.S. economy with an estimated annual revenue of \$0.7 trillion (Deller, Hoyt, Hueth and Sundaram-Stukel, 2009) compared to sole proprietorships (non-farm) with \$1.2 trillion in annual revenue (Paninos and Hollenbeck, 2011). In spite of the importance of both cooperatives and sole proprietorships, authors only cover sole proprietorships extensively in introductory-level business

textbooks in spite of data about the prevalence of cooperatives. “Cooperatives are not a passing phase in the business world. They are here to stay and business should learn to understand them. With understanding will come appreciation” (Miller, 1964, p. 25). “The worth of cooperatives to the nation as a whole cannot be too strongly emphasized” (Miller, 1964, p. 27). The purpose of this study is to provide the first comprehensive analysis of the coverage of cooperatives in introductory-level business textbooks by discipline (e.g., accounting & management) in the U.S. and to critically review the examples used to illustrate the cooperative form of business. Introductory-level business courses are designed to cover key concepts or models in a given discipline (e.g., accounting). Typically, introductory-level business courses in the U.S. are denoted with principles in the course title (e.g., principles of accounting) and are the first course taught for a discipline.

Prior attempts to assess the coverage of cooperatives in textbooks have included a deep sampling of contemporary introductory-level Canadian microeconomics textbooks (Hill, 2000) as well as a longitudinal study of the decline in the coverage of cooperatives in economics textbooks from 1905-2005 (Kalmi, 2007). Chamard (2004) and Schugurensky (2007) surveyed textbooks used “Introduction to Business” courses in Canadian colleges and Ontario high schools, respectively. Prior research found coverage of cooperatives lacking in “Introduction to Business” textbooks, but only provided surface level analysis of this one course type, without examining introductory-level business courses, by discipline, that comprise the core curriculum of undergraduate business programs in the U.S.

This study was motivated by the authors’ firsthand work experience as accounting practitioners with producer cooperatives: Tri-Valley Growers and Ocean Spray. In his 15 years prior food industry experience, the first author had no formal education and/or experience with cooperatives. When he attempted to learn about cooperatives through university textbooks, he was frustrated by the scant coverage of cooperatives. The second author worked for 10 years in finance and new product development roles at Ocean Spray, a producer owned cooperative. After years of experience at publicly-traded companies, he was initially confounded by the dialectic of maximizing both the quantity used and the “purchase price” of the cooperative’s primary raw material. During his time at Ocean Spray, he helped develop and deliver a new employee training program to educate those, who like the first and second authors, had never encountered cooperatives in their business education.

This study contributes to existing literature to include a wide array of business disciplines and is the first study of cooperative coverage in introductory-level business textbooks used at colleges and universities in the U.S. This study extends prior research beyond microeconomics textbooks by examining introductory-level business textbooks used in a wide array of first business courses including accounting, business law, business management, and small business management and entrepreneurship. A critical analysis of the textbook authors’ examples of cooperatives provides insight into the lack of importance placed on cooperatives in introductory-level business textbooks.

This paper is divided into four sections. In the first section, a profile of cooperatives in the U.S. is presented along with a literature review of previous studies regarding business textbook coverage of cooperatives. The research methodology is covered in the second section followed by a discussion of the findings in the third section. A closing summary outlines recommendations for further research and a call to action for introductory-level business textbook authors.

## **COOPERATIVES AND TEXTBOOKS**

### **Cooperatives**

Internationally, cooperatives account for about 12% of employment in G20 countries (Roelants, Hyungsik and Terrasi, 2014). The economic significance of the sector was recently underscored when the United Nations declared 2012 as the year of the cooperative, and the consulting firm McKinsey and Company (2012) published an extensive report on the sector and signaled its intent to increase its consulting activities with cooperatives. In the U.S., there are approximately 30,000 cooperatives which provide services to 350 million members, create employment for over 2 million people, and generate approximately \$0.7 trillion dollars in annual revenue (Deller et al., 2009). Perhaps due to an increased awareness of

cooperatives, in 2015 the outdoor retailer Recreational Equipment, Inc. (REI), which has been a cooperative since inception, began branding itself as REI Co-op.

Commercial sales and marketing cooperatives include some of the most recognizable names in the U.S. consumer products and retail sectors such as Land 'o Lakes, Sunkist, Welch, True Value, and Ace Hardware. Financial services cooperatives include credit unions, mutual insurers such as Nationwide, Amica, USAA, and Liberty Mutual, and cooperative banks. Utility cooperatives own 42% of U.S. electricity lines and supply power to 10% of the country's consumers (Deller et al., 2009). Other well-known cooperatives include The Associated Press and the Best Western hotels. There are 300 worker cooperatives in the U.S.; the largest is Cooperative Home Care Associates which employs 2,300 worker-owners (Flanders, 2014). The top 100 cooperatives in the U.S. posted revenue of approximately \$228.2 billion with the largest cooperative, CHS, an agricultural cooperative ranking just outside of the Fortune 100 reporting sales of \$32.7 billion dollars with nearly 11,000 employees (National Cooperative Bank, 2019). No U.S. cooperative achieved the same scale as Mondragon, a worker cooperative headquartered in the Basque region of Spain, which employs over 70,000 with annual revenue exceeding €12 billion, or approximately \$14.5 billion dollars (Goodman, 2020).

Cooperatives run the gamut from small to large in a wide array of industries and sectors. Presented below is a summary of representative cooperative types in the U.S. from the organization International Cooperative Alliance (n.d.).

- **Worker co-ops:** Worker cooperatives are owned by the people who work for the company. Workers contribute to the co-operative through their labor and the work they do for the organization. Although worker co-ops can be in any industry or sector, many are in the retail and service industries.
- **Producer co-ops:** Producer cooperatives are owned by the producers of products who have joined together to market their products better or to streamline the production process.
- **Consumer co-ops:** Consumer co-ops are owned by the customers who then purchase goods and services from the cooperative. Grocery co-ops are a well-known example of consumer cooperatives.
- **Purchasing co-ops:** Purchasing co-ops are typically made up of several small businesses who have joined together to improve their purchase power and to get better discounts and offers on products and services.

This summary suggests that cooperatives operate in nearly all sectors of the U.S. economy and should be widely represented in introductory-level business textbooks.

## Textbooks

Prior research on the coverage of cooperatives in textbooks primarily focused on introductory economics textbooks. Lynch, Urban and Sommer (1989) examined 114 books published in the 20th century finding 67 % of economics textbooks published from 1920-1949 referenced cooperatives compared to 22% published since 1970. No reference to cooperatives was found in the index of any of the 44 microeconomics and macroeconomics textbooks. Lynch et al. (1989) speculated that the transition toward teaching economics as a two-course sequence of microeconomics and macroeconomics contributed to the decrease.

Hill (2000) found similar under-representation in a study of 17 economics textbooks and argued cooperatives warrants coverage based upon pedagogical significance. For instance, economics textbooks describe the behavior of the firm, but almost monolithically assume it to be an investor-owned, profit maximizing entity. Hill (2000) contends this assumption sidesteps examination of moral and economic questions about who owns the firm and possible alternatives like cooperatives, the possibility of workplace democracy and its impacts upon business decision-making, and how a business's costs and productivity might be affected by who owns it (e.g., employee-owned vs. investor-owned).

In a longitudinal study of economics textbooks, Kalmi (2007) examined the “eclipse of a subject” by reviewing the decrease in coverage of cooperatives in 24 introductory titles shelved at the University of Finland from 1901-2000. Kalmi (2007) findings are comparable to Lynch et al. (1989), with more coverage

of cooperatives observed in the first half of the century with a significant reduction in the second half of the century. After surveying available data over the period, Kalmi (2007) found no evidence of a reduced economic role of cooperatives to justify reduced coverage in textbooks. Instead, Kalmi's (2007) line-by-line analysis of the post-World War II decline of coverage of cooperatives in textbooks is broadly attributed to the shift in focus of economists from institutional analysis to neoclassical analysis. Leading the way in the exclusion of cooperatives from the list of available business organizations is the most prominent U.S. textbook of the period – Samuelson (1957). Kalmi (2007) contends the transition to neoclassicism has moved economists en masse toward helping fashion top-down policies for government intervention to address social problems. Kalmi (2007) concluded the movement away from institutional analysis has largely de-emphasized the possibility that bottom-up, self-help approaches like cooperatives and credit unions can help address social problems.

Comparatively little analysis has been done of introductory-level undergraduate business textbooks. Chamard (2004) in a review of 24 (6 Canadian & 18 on file with the United States Library of Congress) textbooks used in introduction to business courses concluded the treatment of cooperatives in Canadian textbooks ranged from “non-existent to hostile” and found similar results for the U.S. Chamard (2004) contends the lack of curricular recognition of cooperatives contributes to an undersupply of managers who simultaneously embrace cooperative principles and possess classical business training, and that the undersupply creates a hiring conundrum for cooperatives. The launch of a master's level program in cooperative management studies at St. Mary's University, Halifax, helped bridge the gap (Chamard, 2004).

Another study examined the coverage of cooperatives in high school textbooks within the context of a broader analysis of the coverage of the social economy found cooperatives receive minimal coverage (Myers & Stocks, 2010). No research explored the coverage of cooperatives in introductory-level business textbooks beyond economics. Because business schools, majors, and courses are relatively young at most institutions comparatively few introductory-level business textbooks existed prior to World War II when economists emphasized the economic importance of cooperatives.

Arguments for the inclusion of cooperatives in introductory-level business textbooks – whether based upon their economic size, social significance, importance to the future hiring needs of the cooperative sector, or their pedagogical value - presuppose their inclusion would be impactful upon students. What, if any, evidence exists that this would be so? McKee and Duffield (2011) conducted an empirical study of North Dakota high school students who were exposed to a supplemental curriculum about cooperatives found a statistically significant increase in positive attitudes toward cooperatives.

## **METHODOLOGY & SAMPLE**

The sample includes textbooks used in introductory-level business classes of business law, accounting, introduction to business, management, microeconomics, and small business management and entrepreneurship. Introductory-level business classes are defined as the first class in a business discipline (e.g., principles of accounting 1). Textbooks used in introduction to marketing classes were considered, but determined not to typically provide coverage of business form, and thus excluded from the study.

The intent of this study is to include introductory-level business textbooks with high volume adoption. Since textbook market share data are not publicly available, the authors requested electronic copies of top-selling introductory-level business textbooks from the four largest university textbook publishers (Pearson, McGraw-Hill, Cengage, & Wiley) who control an estimated 80 percent of the textbook market share in the U.S. based on publically available information (Echevarria and Bowman, 2018). With nearly 4,000 colleges and universities in the U.S. (Moody, 2021), it was not possible to independently verify if other publishers beyond the top four published introductory-level business textbooks with widespread adoption. Accordingly, only the top four publishers were included in this study. If the publisher had two books with comparable sales volume within a discipline, they provided access to both. In the case of the small business and entrepreneurship textbooks, if the publisher had distinct offerings for each sub-type, both were requested. This methodological approach resulted in a range of four to six textbooks reviewed per discipline. The list of textbooks with copyright dates from 2013-2016 is presented in Appendix 1.

In most cases, the options for business form are generally presented in one section of one chapter where a general description of the characteristics of available business forms is presented and often accompanied by a comparison that contrasts them based upon features like whether the form: allows for multiple owners; is a separate legal and taxable entity; provides for limited liability; etc. Occasionally, the primary coverage is supplemented with secondary discussions elsewhere in the textbook. For instance, an accounting textbook might not include a discussion of Sub-Chapter S corporations in the chapter on business form, but may cover Sub-Chapter S corporations in a subsequent chapter that focuses upon corporations and equity.

Content analysis involved determining whether the textbook featured a discussion regarding business form options, and if so, the textbook discussion was reviewed to determine which of the six U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) identified business forms were included. (Note: the SBA includes cooperatives as one of the six options.) The glossary and index for all textbooks were reviewed to determine if the authors deemed cooperatives of sufficient importance to be referenced. All textbooks were searched electronically using the keywords “cooperative,” “co-operative,” “co-op,” “coop” and “credit union” to locate all references in the textbook, including incidental mentions.

By focusing upon the major publishers, this study may be limited in scope or exhibit a “bigness bias” that excludes smaller textbook market participants – the very same kind of bias that a textbook author might use to rationalize why cooperatives, a smaller market participant, are not included in their textbook.

## FINDINGS

Eighty six percent of the 28 textbooks sampled feature a centralized discussion regarding the available choices for business form (Table 1). None of the sample featured cooperatives prominently alongside the other business forms. All of the textbooks that include a centralized discussion of business form covered sole proprietorships, partnerships and corporations to varying degrees. Only ten percent (three textbooks) feature a supplemental and subordinated discussion about cooperatives ranging from two paragraphs to one page as part of the centralized coverage of business form – in introduction to business textbooks Boone, Louis and Kurtz (2015) and Nickels, McHugh and McHugh (2016), and in business law Kubasek, Browne, Herron, Dhooge, and Barkacs (2016). Only one textbook (Kubasek et al., 2016) – a business law textbook – provides a substantive discussion of cooperatives for a course commonly included in four-year undergraduate business curriculum.

**TABLE 1**  
**SUMMARY OF COVERAGE OF COOPERATIVES, AND OTHER BUSINESS**  
**FORMS BY DISCIPLINE**

	ACCT	MGMT	BLAW	SBE	Micro- economics	Intro to Business	<b>Total</b>
Textbooks sampled	6	4	4	6	4	4	<b>28</b>
Texts with centralized discussion of business form	6	3	4	5	2	4	<b>24</b>
Cooperative <i>Other co-op references:</i>	0	0	1	0	0	2	<b>3</b>
Referenced in glossary	0	0	2	1	0	2	<b>5</b>
Referenced in index	0	0	3	0	0	2	<b>5</b>

Discussed as business from outside of centralized discussion	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
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The coverage of cooperatives is included toward the end of the chapter describing available business forms. One introduction to business textbook, Nickels et al. (2016) (p. 143) recognizes franchises and cooperatives as “special forms” of organizations and devotes almost a full page to cooperatives (see Table 2). The coverage details features like joint ownership and democratic control, describes types of cooperatives, provides membership statistics, and even lists the phone number of the National Cooperative Business Association. By far, this textbook represents the most extensive and complete coverage of cooperatives. Another introduction to business textbook, Boone et al (2015) (p. 148), features two paragraphs that provide basic information about cooperatives in a section of the chapter covering “public and collective ownership of business.” In the Kubasek et al (2016) (p. 780) business law textbook a discussion of cooperatives similar in size to that of Boone et al., (2015) is included in a section that discusses “specialized business forms.”

**TABLE 2**  
**SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTING TEXTBOOKS COVERAGE OF COOPERATIVES**

<i>N</i> = 6	Accounting Textbook by First Author					
	Harrison	Miller-Nobles	Libby	Wild	Warren	Weygandt
Cooperative	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO*
<i>Other co-op</i> references:						
Glossary	NO	NO	N/A	NO	NO	N/A
Index	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO
Keyword search; any reference	YES	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES

\*Discussed outside of primary discussion of business form

Only one accounting textbook embeds information about cooperatives in a chapter about accounting for merchandisers as part of an opening vignette about REI (Weygandt, Kimmel and Kieso, 2014, p.220). The feature references REI’s joint ownership and democratic control, and acknowledges that profit maximization is not its primary goal. The vignette asks whether the cooperative form has been working well for REI, and answers with the following fact - REI was ranked eighth on Fortune’s list of best places to work in the U.S.

A secondary indicator of the prominence of a topic in a textbook is the inclusion of the topic in the glossary. Glossary definitions for cooperatives are found in five textbooks, including the introduction to business and business law textbooks referenced above. In addition to glossary references in Nickels et al. (2016), Boone et al. (2015), and Kubasek et al. (2016), the glossary of a small business and entrepreneurship (Bygrave and Zacharias, 2014) include the exact ICA definition of cooperatives. Yet, a keyword search of Bygrave and Zacharias (2014) reveals only one sentence that uses the word cooperative in a discussion about a business that sources ginseng from the Wisconsin Ginseng Cooperative (p. 183). Finally, the glossary of another business law textbook, provides a narrow definition of cooperatives in the context of housing cooperatives (Cheeseman, 2016).

A tertiary indicator of the prominence of a topic in a textbook is the presence of the topic in the index. Index references to cooperatives are found in Nickels et al. (2016), Boone et al (2015), Kubasek et al. (2016) and Cheeseman (2016) as well as another business law textbook – Mallor, Barmes, Langvardt, Prenkertand and Martin (2016). Keyword searches find incidental non-indexed references to cooperatives in the majority of books sampled. One management textbook, Daft (2016), includes references to cooperatives in a one-page feature on the emergence of “bosslessness” around the globe (p. 113). The feature includes a one

paragraph discussion of Mondragon that describes worker ownership and the 6.5 actual multiplier between the highest and lowest paid employees, and a one sentence reference to Yoplait being partially owned by the French dairy cooperative Sodiaal. A two-word reference to “farm cooperatives” includes them alongside political parties as examples of mutual benefit organizations in another management textbook, Kinicki and Williams (2016) (p. 21). A third management textbook, Schermerhorn (2014) (p. 402), includes a two-word reference to “work cooperatives” in the context of a profile of Fair Indigo and mentions that company’s fair trade sourcing strategies, but provides no definition of a cooperative.

In a small business management/entrepreneurship textbook, Hisrich, Peters and Shepherd (2013) include a discussion about the bankruptcy of the Ground Round restaurant chain and the re-emergence of former franchises as a cooperative, though again no definition of a cooperative is provided. A business law textbook, Cheeseman (2016), includes a discussion of real estate cooperatives as part of a discussion of real estate law. A number of textbooks reference the word cooperative as part of the mythical company name for a chapter-end homework problem. The most ironic referencing is found in an introduction to business textbook, Pride, Hughes and Kapoor (2015). The chapter makes no reference to cooperatives, but nevertheless a review question describes a mythical business being established, and based upon the information provided asks the student to select the best business form from a list that includes sole proprietorship, corporation, two types of partnerships, and cooperative (p. 124).

Several textbooks include references to credit unions, most often describing them as cooperative financial institutions. Finally, a keyword search for “benefit corporation” (B corporation) reveals that this very new form of organizing is described as a potential form in seven of the textbooks surveyed, primarily within the introduction to business, management, and small business and entrepreneurship course types. Six of these textbooks include B corporations in the chapter that focuses upon the choice of business form, and one other in a chapter on social entrepreneurship. The benefit corporation designation has only existed in the U.S. since 2010.

It is evident from the proceeding summary that U.S. textbook authors provide little insight into cooperatives as a form of business. The terms used to describe cooperatives indicate authors’ knowledge of the cooperative form of business is cursory at best. The language and classifications used in introductory-level business textbook to describe cooperatives is scant and incongruent with how the ICA and other cooperative associations describe the business form including worker, producer, consumer, and purchasing. Terms to describe cooperatives include worker ownership (Daft, (2016), farm cooperatives (Kinicki and Williams, 2016), work cooperatives (Schermerhorn, 2014), and real estate cooperatives (Cheeseman, 2016). Surprisingly not one textbook author included any of the four common classifications to describe cooperatives suggesting a lack of knowledge of cooperatives as a form of business in the U.S.

### **Detailed Analysis of Cooperative Examples**

Cooperatives are viewed as a distinct form of a corporation; cooperatives are a type of corporation (NCBA, 2022). Understanding the similarities and differences between corporations and cooperatives is essential to analyzing their inclusion in introductory-level business textbooks. Corporations and cooperatives have common benefits of shared governance and limited liability. Beyond that they are very different. Corporations exist to maximize shareholder value whereas cooperatives exist to serve members. While shared governance is common, the identity of board membership is different between corporations and cooperatives. Appointed or elected corporate board members are generally from outside of the corporation and non-shareholders whereas cooperative board members are members of the cooperative. Voting rights are apportioned differently. For corporations, the number of shares owned equates to the number of votes given. For cooperatives, each member gets one vote. Finally, cooperatives serve their members while corporations serve the interests of their largest shareholders.

These distinctions are crucial to the analysis of coverage of cooperatives in introductory-level business textbooks. To review, introductory-level business textbooks are those used in the first course taught by business discipline at colleges and universities. The introductory-level business disciplines covered in this study can be categorized as technical (e.g., accounting) or conceptual (e.g., management). It is expected for technical disciplines where students are learning the foundations of a discipline (e.g., debits & credits)

would be less than in conceptual disciplines (e.g., organizational structure). Because of their different missions of serving membership (cooperatives) and generating wealth (corporation), and different governance, it is expected that the coverage of cooperatives would be extensive in introductory management and entrepreneurship textbooks where those concepts are covered.

What follows is a discipline-specific discussion about the coverage of cooperatives. Examples authors use to illustrate cooperatives are presented by business discipline. Only two groups of authors of the technical disciplines of accounting (Weygandt, Kimmel and Kieso, 2014), and business law (Kubasek et al., 2016) mentioned cooperatives. No mention was made of cooperatives in introductory-level economics textbooks. This is not surprising, since from an accounting and law perspectives beyond the distribution of profits for accounting and the articles of incorporation for law, the differences between cooperatives and corporations are not discernible.

For the conceptual disciplines, primarily management, the coverage of cooperatives is slightly more expansive with two introduction to business textbooks (Nickels et al., 2016); Boone et al., (2015) and one management textbook (Daft, 2016) covering cooperatives. This finding is consistent with what would be expected, but in a disproportionately small way, since the study of management is concerned with understanding how people behave in organizations. Members and boards of cooperatives and shareholders and members are distinctively different (serving members vs. wealth maximization) suggesting coverage of cooperatives in introductory management textbooks should be richer than other disciplines.

While understanding the coverage of cooperatives by discipline is interesting, a deeper analysis of the examples authors used to illustrate the cooperative form of business in the U.S. illuminates a lack of appreciation for cooperatives. The examples using U.S. based cooperatives include a producers cooperative, Wisconsin Ginseng Corporation (Bygrave & Zacharias, 2014), a consumers cooperative, REI (Weygandt, Kimmel and Kieso, 2014), and a purchasing cooperative, Ground Round (Hisrich, Peters and Shepherd, 2013). Fair Indigo, discussed within the context of worker cooperatives is not a cooperative (Schermerhorn, 2014). Two non-U.S. based cooperatives featured were Mondragon Corporation (Spanish worker cooperative) and Sodiaal (French producer cooperative). Although Mondragon is considered the second largest cooperative in the world, its inclusion is puzzling considering worker cooperatives are extremely rare while other types are quite common. Another puzzling finding is the lack of inclusion of any of the largest U.S. based cooperatives included on the Fortune 500 including CHS (producers cooperative) with annual revenue of \$28.6 billion (103<sup>rd</sup>), and producers cooperatives Dairy Farmers of America (159<sup>th</sup>) and Land'O Lakes (232<sup>nd</sup>). The lack of inclusion of the largest U.S. based cooperatives suggests authors of introductory-level business textbooks are not aware or interested in the inclusion of domestic cooperatives in their textbooks or perhaps are a product of the U.S. education system where little emphasis is given to cooperatives. Accordingly, it is possible their lack of knowledge and experience is causal to the scant coverage of cooperatives in introductory-level business textbooks.

## **CLOSING SUMMARY**

The paucity of discussion about cooperatives in introductory-level business textbooks suggests U.S. textbook publisher and authors alike made a conscious decision to exclude cooperatives in spite their importance to the U.S. economy. The importance of cooperatives merit inclusion of cooperatives in introductory-level business textbooks consistent with discussions of other forms of business. Further, based on the illustrative examples of cooperatives, textbook authors' knowledge of U.S. based cooperatives is limited. With several well recognized producer cooperatives (CHS, Dairy Farmers of America & Land O'Lakes) included on the U.S. Fortune 500 list, it is curious why authors elected to highlight European cooperatives in U.S. introductory-level business textbooks.

In an era faced with increasing economic uncertainty, business ethicists (Kohls & Christensen, 2002) have argued that in the face of widening income and wealth disparities, notions of social responsibility extend beyond political regulators to the business organizations themselves to consider their impact upon the common good. Do such ethical obligations also fall upon business textbook authors? Many authors appear to take seriously their role as stewards of the future economy. Evidence of this exists in content



devoted to emerging topics like corporate social responsibility, sustainability, and social entrepreneurship. The recent inclusion of B corporations represents an example where textbook content appears driven by potential impact versus proven results. Given the demonstrated contributions cooperatives make to the economic portfolio, extending discussions about the choice of business form to recognize cooperatives, a time-tested business form that has drawn praise from both ends of the political spectrum, represents an opportunity for textbook authors from all business disciplines to enhance student learning and critical thinking. Simultaneously, we are at a moment when remote work is further challenging hierarchical command-and-control structures and driving work toward more cooperative, nonhierarchical interdependence. Here again, the study of cooperatives holds lessons for the future managers being trained in business schools.

Finally, this study moves toward publication at a geopolitical moment where rising trade protections, nationalist movements, a global pandemic, and the prospect of a new Cold War are reshaping the global business environment. Concurrently, movement toward locally made and locally sourced goods, and locally owned businesses, can be observed in both consumer and producer practices. Amidst these profound changes, the “plain vanilla” playbooks for multi-national business practices that have become the norm in business textbooks across all disciplines are beginning to appear outdated and too simplistic for an increasingly dynamic business environment. Against this uncertainty, the cooperative business structure, with a focus on producer, consumer, and often local communities offers a durable pedagogical and economic contrast. The U.S. Small Business Administration has long recognized this. All of the above uncertainty is forcing business textbooks authors to realize that the stable multi-national business environment they have, in their editorial decision making, long assumed would remain static is indeed passing into a new phase. As the ground moves beneath their feet, we may be at a moment where these authors will at last see value in discussing cooperatives, as a business form that is not a passing phase.

Given the demonstrated contributions cooperatives make to the economic portfolio, extending discussions about the choice of business form to recognize cooperatives represent an opportunity for textbook authors from all business disciplines to enhance student learning and critical thinking. Just as authors of business textbooks have realized the importance of embracing contemporary business topics of diversity, sustainability, and corporate social responsibility, they should embrace a historical business topic with U.S. origins dating to the eighteenth century, the cooperative form of business.

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## **APPENDIX: TEXTBOOKS BY DISCIPLINE**

### **Accounting**

- Harrison, W.T., Horngren, C.T., & Thomas, C.W. (2015). *Financial Accounting* (10<sup>th</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson. Retrieved June 10, 2015, from [www.coursesmart.com](http://www.coursesmart.com)
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- Weygandt, J.J., Kimmel, P.D., & Kieso, D.E. (2014). *Financial Accounting* (9<sup>th</sup> ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. Retrieved July 2, 2015, from [www.coursesmart.com](http://www.coursesmart.com)

Wild, J.J., Shaw, K.W., & Chiappetta, B. (2015). *Fundamental Accounting Principles* (22<sup>nd</sup> ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill. Retrieved June 19, 2015, from [www.coursesmart.com](http://www.coursesmart.com)

### **Business Law**

Cheeseman, H.R. (2016). *Business Law: Legal Environment, Online Commerce, Business Ethics, and International Issues* (9<sup>th</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson. Retrieved July 5, 2015 from [www.coursesmart.com](http://www.coursesmart.com)

Cross, F.B., & Miller, R.L. (2015). *The Legal Environment of Business: Text and Cases* (9<sup>th</sup> ed.). Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning. Retrieved July 5, 2015, from [www.coursesmart.com](http://www.coursesmart.com)

Kubasek, N.K., Browne, M.N., Herron, D.J., Dhooge, L.J., & Barkacs, L.L. (2016). *Dynamic Business Law: The Essentials* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill. Retrieved July 31, 2015, from [www.coursesmart.com](http://www.coursesmart.com)

Mallor, J.P., Barnes, A.J., Langvardt, A.W., Prenkert, J.D., & McCrory, M.A. (2016). *Business Law: The Ethical, Global, and E-Commerce Environment* (16<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill. Retrieved July 31, 2015, from [www.coursesmart.com](http://www.coursesmart.com)

### **Introduction to Business**

Boone, L.E., & Kurtz, D.L. (2015). *Contemporary Business* (16<sup>th</sup> ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. Retrieved July 2, 2015, from [www.coursesmart.com](http://www.coursesmart.com)

Bovee, C.L., & Thill, J.V. (2015). *Business in Action* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson. Retrieved June 10, 2015, from [www.coursesmart.com](http://www.coursesmart.com)

Nickels, W.G., McHugh, J.H., & McHugh, S.H. (2016). *Understanding Business* (11<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill. Retrieved June 19, 2015, from [www.coursesmart.com](http://www.coursesmart.com)

Pride, W.M., Hughes, R.J., & Kapoor, J.R. (2015). *Foundations of Business* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning. Retrieved June 24, 2015, from [www.coursesmart.com](http://www.coursesmart.com)

### **Management**

Daft, R.L. (2016). *Management* (12<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Cengage Learning. Retrieved June 24, 2015, from [www.coursesmart.com](http://www.coursesmart.com)

Kinicki, A., & Williams, B.K. (2016). *Management: A Practical Introduction* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill. Retrieved June 19, 2015, from [www.coursesmart.com](http://www.coursesmart.com)

Robbins, S.P., & Coulter, M.K. (2016). *Management* (13<sup>th</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson. Retrieved June 10, 2015, from [www.coursesmart.com](http://www.coursesmart.com)

Schermerhorn, J.R. (2014). *Exploring Management* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. Retrieved July 2, 2015, from [www.coursesmart.com](http://www.coursesmart.com)

### **Microeconomics**

Browning, E.K., & Zupan, M.A. (2015). *Microeconomics: Theory & Applications* (12<sup>th</sup> ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. Retrieved July 2, 2015, from [www.coursesmart.com](http://www.coursesmart.com)

Hubbard, R.G., & O'Brien, A.P. (2015). *Microeconomics* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson. Retrieved June 11, 2015, from [www.coursesmart.com](http://www.coursesmart.com)

Mankiw, N.G. (2015). *Principles of Microeconomics* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning. Retrieved June 24, 2015, from [www.coursesmart.com](http://www.coursesmart.com)

McConnell, C.R., Brue, S.L., & Flynn, S.M. (2015). *Microeconomics: Principles, Problems, and Policies* (20<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill. Retrieved June 19, 2015, from [www.coursesmart.com](http://www.coursesmart.com)

### **Small Business and Entrepreneurship**

Allen, K.R. (2016). *Launching New Ventures: An Entrepreneurial Approach* (7<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Cengage Learning. Retrieved June 24, 2015, from [www.coursesmart.com](http://www.coursesmart.com)

Bygrave, W.D., & Zacharias, A. (2014). *Entrepreneurship* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. Retrieved July 2, 2015, from [www.coursesmart.com](http://www.coursesmart.com)

- Hatten, T.S. (2016). *Small Business Management: Entrepreneurship and Beyond* (6<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston: Cengage Learning. Retrieved June 24, 2015, from [www.coursesmart.com](http://www.coursesmart.com)
- Hisrich, R.D., Peters, M.P., & Shepherd, D.A. (2013). *Entrepreneurship* (9<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill Irwin. Retrieved June 19, 2015, from [www.coursesmart.com](http://www.coursesmart.com)
- Mariotti, S., & Glackin, C. (2016). *Entrepreneurship: Starting and Operating a Small Business* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson. Retrieved June 10, 2015, from [www.coursesmart.com](http://www.coursesmart.com)
- Spinelli, S., Jr., & Adams, R.J. (2016). *New Venture Creation: Entrepreneurship for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (10<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill. Retrieved June 19, 2015, from [www.coursesmart.com](http://www.coursesmart.com)