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Leadership in a humane organization

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore the way leadership influences an organization to become humane through its features and behaviors; as well as the organizational circumstances in which humane leadership can be nurtured. The first empirical case study, in the fields of Human Resource Development (HRD) and hospitality management, to explore the way employees from different national cultures (as measured by their individualistic/collectivistic values), in a US-based hotel, perceive their workplace to be a humane organization (HO), as defined by Chalofsky (2008), was the one made by Dimitrov (2009, 2010). More specifically, the example set by leadership in the studied hospitality organization is the focus of the present descriptive manuscript. The importance of HRD concepts such as the HO for the academic study and practical development of leadership in organizations is significant, through the effects leadership has on employee satisfaction and engagement at the workplace.

Design/methodology/approach – The exploratory research mentioned above used a single embedded case study with 17 participants, selected via purposeful convenience sampling, who represented management, supervisory and professional line-level employees from a culturally diverse full-service hotel in a major metropolitan area. The instrument of Singelis *et al.* (1995) for horizontal and vertical individualism (I) and collectivism (C), as well as the instrument of Triandis and Singelis (1998) for I and C, was applied to every respondent to determine their cultural belonging. One-on-one interviews, written reflections and documentary analysis, as well as observations of the social and physical aspects of the participants' workplace, were conducted.

Findings – Five leadership sub-themes were observed to the general theme "Setting the Example" of the study's findings: company values for leadership styles and employee treatment; the legacy of one charismatic leader (the previous general manager); leader–follower communication; how the workplace feels intrinsically; and how the work environment becomes negative. The study led to the formation of two new characteristics of the HO (Dimitrov, 2009), of which one could be recommended as the main focus of leadership in an HO: being cognizant and understanding of individuals as human beings, not just as employees. The traits and behaviors of some modern leadership theories such as authentic leadership, transformational leadership and charismatic leadership were combined under the concept – humane leadership.

Research limitations/implications – The research of more culturally diverse organizations in different counties, brand cultures and economic sectors, under various research methodologies, and in the context of classical and recent leadership theories, was recommended to establish further weather I and C employees' expectations of their leadership would make a difference for the sustenance of an HO.

Practical implications – Furthermore, organizations and HRD practitioners are encouraged to invest more time, efforts and resources into leadership development programs that create such humane leadership skills and prepare quality leaders who are well-perceived and trusted by their culturally diverse workforce.

Originality/value – The importance of HRD concepts such as the HO for the academic study and practical development of leadership in organizations is significant, through the effects leadership has on employee satisfaction and engagement at the workplace. Humane leaders can be nurtured in a humane organizational culture.

Keywords Leadership, HRD, Hospitality, National culture, Humane organization

Paper type Research paper

Purpose statement and research question

The purpose of this manuscript is to lay the foundation of a research stream attempting to establish how leadership behaviors should be conceptualized in humane organizations (HOs). The research question is: What are the expectations of employees regarding the behavior of leaders in a humane organization? In addition, the expectations of the behavior requisite for effective leaders will be reviewed through the prism of participants' scores of individualistic and collectivistic values as intended by the original study (Dimitrov, 2010).

Background and significance to the field of HRD

Little research exists on the concept of the HO, and none is found in the extant leadership theories. Thus, the study of leadership behaviors, as perceived by employees from different cultural backgrounds in a hospitality organization, will inform the practice of Human Resource Development (HRD) professionals responsible for leadership development programs and cultural change interventions. In addition, a review of employees' perceptions of how leadership should model behavior in an HO will contribute to better understanding of what it means to lead in an HO across cultures. The study of expected and existing leadership behaviors, such as should exist in a humane organization, is also significant for HRD because it will provide information about the sources of engagement for the workforce in the workplace. This will strengthen the suggestion of previous studies on the HO that employee engagement is an outcome of the humane organization in action; that is, an HO is the place where workforce engagement is augmented. Furthermore, leadership is distinct in those organizations that are humane, just like all other characteristics of such organizations stand out in comparison with other company cultures (see Chalofsky, 2008 and Dimitrov, 2009 for a detailed list of the features of the HO).

Conceptual framework

Humane organization

The concept of the HO was reviewed in an HRD context by Chalofsky in 2008 and empirically studied by Dimitrov in 2009. One of the characteristic features of an HO, mentioned by Chalofsky (2008) and confirmed in Dimitrov's (2009) study, was caring about employees and treating them as true assets through the provision of a supportive work environment, management that lives the organizational culture and executives that model the organizational values. In addition, Dimitrov (2012) offered a detailed conceptual background and associated the HO concept with other concepts such as meaningful work, meaningful workplace, best places to work for, employee engagement and national culture; however, the hospitality organization Dimitrov (2009, 2010) studied was not confirmed to be an HO, but possessed some HO characteristics.

Cultural differences

As already stated, the present manuscript is based on a previous study conducted in 2008 and published in 2010. Considering the fact that the latter was interested in the perceptions of individualistic and collectivistic employees, national cultural differences are reported here as well as in relation to participants' views on leadership. The purpose of the manuscript does not extend to compare these culturally determined qualitative data with past cross-cultural literature on leadership. The cultural values of participating employees were assessed using the following instruments of cultural differentiation:

- Singelis *et al.* (1995) for horizontal and vertical individualism (I) and collectivism (C).
- Triandis and Singelis (1998) for I and C; also, collectively referred to as SINDCOL (Dimitrov, 2010).

A detailed report of respondents' scores and their cultural profiles as individualists (I) or collectivists (C) was further described by Dimitrov (2010).

Leadership

The vast body of leadership literature contains a plethora of studies on trait, behavior and contingency approaches. This paper does not aim at conducting an exhaustive literature review on those; however, it finds it necessary to mention some nascent leadership theories such as authentic, transformational, and charismatic leadership.

Authentic leadership. Starting with Terry's (1993) action-centered model, which asserts that leaders should always strive to do what is right, through George's (2003) five characteristics of authentic leaders (understand their purpose, have strong values, trusting relationships, strong discipline and act from the heart) to Walumbwa *et al.*'s (2008) definition that entails greater self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced information processing and relational transparency that leaders should display.

Transformational leadership. Another relevant concept is transformational leadership, traced in the works of Bass and Riggio (2006) and Riggio (2009), who expanded on the original ideas of Burns (1978). Transformational leaders have the following 4I's:

(1) idealized influence (being the role model for followers);

(2) inspirational motivation (inspiring and motivating followers);

(3) individualized consideration (showing genuine concern about the needs and feelings of followers); and

(4) intellectual stimulation (challenging followers to be creative and innovative).

Charismatic leadership. Yet another stream of literature that demonstrates concern with the human issues in organizations is the charismatic leadership concept. Howell and Avolio (1992) differentiated between ethical and unethical charismatic leaders. The ethical ones use power to serve others; align their vision with the followers' needs and aspirations; consider and learn from criticism; stimulate followers to think independently and to question the leader's decisions; foster open, two-way communication; coach, support, develop and convert followers into leaders; share recognition with others; and have moral standards and values that benefit the organization and society. In other words, ethical charismatic leaders do what McPree (2004) called the essence of leadership – liberates people to do what they need to do in the most humane way possible.

Affective and emotional leadership traits. The present manuscript also tracks some leadership traits and behavior literature that discussed the features of humanity, emotion and affect as essential for good leaders. Starting with Thorndike (1920), who suggested that social intelligence (interpersonal effectiveness) is vital for the success of leadership, this work moves to Northouse's (2004, p. 37) thoughts that, "Human skills are people skills. They are the abilities that help a leader to work effectively with

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subordinates, peers, and superiors to successfully accomplish the organization's goals". Goleman (2006) insisted that leadership is more emotive than cognitive. Denchardt and Denchardt (2006) stated that leaders connect with others emotionally to energize and move toward action. Newman *et al.* (2009) talked about affective leadership in practice by examining the work days of civil servants such as 911 operators, detectives, corrective officers and child guardians. The authors' conclusion was that these leaders face the challenge of making work more humane and caring. In addition, empathic emotion was tested as a meaningful component of leadership across 38 countries by Sadri *et al.* (2011).

Leadership in an HO. Finally, Butler (2012) said that humane leadership practices includes those of a leader who forgives mistakes, perseveres in the face of failure and encourages subordinates to press on and never give in. Even though these leadership lessons came from the US Marine Corp, they still find applicability in the organizational world where passing chances along to other people is necessary, especially in industries that serve customers. Yet, despite Butler's (2012) use of the term "humane leadership", and throughout the above enumerated works, there was no previous research found specifically on the features and behaviors of leaders in a humane organization. Howell and Avolio (1992) who suggested that one of the key factors for increasing the probability of emergence of charismatic leaders is their training in ethical skills congruent with the company's culture. Hence, it is the argument of this manuscript that the humane organization provides a culture where such authentic, transformative, charismatic and humane leaders will thrive.

Methodology summary

The method of data gathering, processing and analysis of the case study was summarized by Dimitrov (2010, 2012). Triangulation of data was achieved through, interviews, written personal reflections, organizational documentary analyses and observations. Dimitrov (2009) interviewed 17 hospitality employees from different management levels and administrative positions, as well as from different cultural backgrounds (for details about the sample choice see Dimitrov, 2009 or Dimitrov, 2012). Seven participants were determined as representatives of horizontal collectivism (HC) and ten as representatives of horizontal individualism (HI), using SINDCOL; there were seven countries representing the national cultural backgrounds of all participants (Dimitrov, 2010). A profile of the 17 participants can be found in Table I.

Summary of findings

Based on all data, five themes emerged that classified the findings of the study in the categories and sub-categories illustrated by Dimitrov (2012). Among these categories, the theme of "Setting the Example," contained five sub-themes relevant to the impact of leadership on employees' perceptions of meaningfulness and humanness of their workplace. This theme also includes all ideas referring to the leadership style and values of corporate executives, local higher-level management (General Manager and Executive Committee), and middle hotel management (direct supervisors). Under this broad category, five sub-themes were formed, as presented in Table II:

1. company values for leadership styles and employee treatment;
2. the legacy of one charismatic leader (the previous general manager, GM);

No.	Name	Age	National background	Born and raised	HC/HI	Years in hotel	Education
1	Jocelyn Marie	25-34	West European	USA	HI	7	Bachelor's
2	Thomas Moore	35-44	Italian, English, Irish, Lithuanian	USA	HC	2	Bachelor's
3	Owen	35-44	East Asian	East Asia	HC	6	Some college & certificate
4	Ralph	35-44	South and Central European/	Southern Europe	HC	1	Some college & certificate
5	Sally Johnson	18-24	English, Hispanic, Greek, Ukrainian	USA	HC	Under 1	Associate's
6	Jack	45-54	African-American	USA	HC	1	Associate's
7	John	45-54	South & East European	USA	HC	7	Associate's
8	Kate	45-54	Italian	USA	HI	4	Some college & certificate
9	Bob	25-34	East Asian	South America	HI	Under 1	High school
10	Pat	25-34	Anglo-American	USA	HC	1	Bachelor's
11	Alexandra	25-34	South American	South America	HC	Under 1	Bachelor's
12	Mat	25-34	East Asian	East Asia and USA	HC	7	Some college & certificate
13	Stan	55-64	North African	North Africa & Europe	HI	1	Master's
14	Nora	25-34	African	USA	HI	2	Associate's
15	Trixie	45-54	Polish	USA	HI	1	Associate's
16	Veronique	55-64	Anglo-American	USA	HC	6	Bachelor's
17	Haefy	25-34	German, Irish	USA	HI	1	Bachelor's

Table I.
Participants' demographic profiles

Sub-theme no.	Theme 1: setting the example
1	Company values for leadership styles and employee treatment
2	The legacy of one charismatic leader
3	Leader–follower communication
4	How does the workplace feel intrinsically?
5	How does the work environment become negative?

Table II.
Sub-themes of theme "setting the example"

(3) leader–follower communication;

(4) how the workplace feels intrinsically; and

(5) how the work environment becomes negative.

Discussion: setting the example
Company values for leadership styles and employee treatment
According to 14 participants, the management company's leadership was very supportive of both associates' professional growth and personal development. The

studied hotel's management valued people and had the priority of keeping them even at the cost of more investment. In addition, innovativeness and fresh ideas were given a chance in this organization. Self-directedness and creativity were encouraged as well.

Individualistic participants (HI). Make employees happy and content. Individualists believed that good leadership is about making employees happy, joyful and content with what they do. Even though most participants regarded their direct supervision as generally sincere and in favor of friendly relationships with associates, they recommended improvement for a strong and supportive leadership starting at the top–down to the bottom levels of the hotel management hierarchy. According to Stan, and as Jocelyn Marie said in her written reflection, leaders did not pretend but sincerely cared for associates. According to Haefy's written reflection, "in a humane organization, you have strong leadership and meaningful relationships with your associates". Both Haefy and Bob thought that this was a reality in their organization. Understanding the important principles of the human motivation, Nora (supervisory level) also took care of her employees' personal needs and valued them as people:

> Well, like I said, and I try to set an example here at the X department, I try to listen to them and definitely just try to take care of their immediate needs. It's the little things that you can do to make a person realize that you value them and that you care about them. And I think that, as long as they do see that, they're going to do anything that they can for you and I think that's very important.

Support family-friendly values. Individualists, as a whole, did recognize the role of management for supporting the family-friendly values of the organization. Jocelyn Marie stated that the management of this hotel had a good sense of family values and always displayed work–life balance efforts benefitting employees. Both Trixie and Bob agreed that leaders were flexible about schedules and very understanding of personal emergencies. Corporate workplace values were not all about the money, according to Stan, either. There existed a strong family culture in the company from top down:

> They all have a family, starting from the top, they all work the hours they need to work and it started from the top and trickled down. When you talk to the president of the company he tells you about the time he has spent at work and with his family, so it's not just work, work, work. Even with the senior vice-president, he is a family man and this goes down the pipe to everybody.

Display personality-specific management. Hadley (HR representative) also wanted to see the expression of a personality-specific management style, where sensitive personalities are treated in a different way from non-sensitive ones. She encouraged the existence of as many management styles in the workplace as the number of employees. In addition, horizontal individualists saw the condition of the work environment as a result of organizational, leadership and employee efforts equally (Jocelyn Marie, Haefy, and Bob). As Jocelyn Marie said, the organization was only such as the employees made it. To be satisfied, people needed to desire happiness:

> You find many people in the world that if you gave them the keys to the brand new car they just won, it would be the wrong color. I think you have to want to be happy.

Haefy saw the organizational culture as a mutual effort of all management, not just separate departments or positions:

Human Resources cannot be the only area where associates receive compassion and understanding. Each individual manager needs to have confidence in their ability to maintain a solid working atmosphere with sensitivity to each and everyone's unique situations (Haefy's Written Reflection).

Forgive mistakes. The company also had an understanding attitude toward work-related mistakes. Trixie thought that situations were resolved at the lower management levels and did not have to escalate up. "Which is good," said the interim GM, "it puts managers back doing what they need to do". On the other hand, Nora described local leadership as self-serving, not taking responsibility, but shifting the blame and exhibiting no accountability. According to her, that was due to the mismatch between the corporate culture and the local hotel's cultural values.

Collectivistic participants (HC). Show positive attitude and attract employee participation. The idea that employees should give back to the organization to contribute to creating the meaningful work atmosphere was shared by most collectivistic respondents as well. Mat expressed how leaders should not be the only ones to demonstrate value, but that all people should help build the organizational environment with their positive attitude for work. Veronique's recommendation was that one should respect his/her job and treat it as a gift. In addition, Alexandra stated how workers could contribute to making the organization humane by giving their best and being committed.

Show support and provide job security. All HC participants, with one exception, also saw leadership in this hotel as being friendly, forming sincere and personal relationships with direct reports, using a relaxed and empowering management style, accommodating of personal needs (Thomas Moore, Pat and John), and tolerating mistakes (John and Ralph). Thomas Moore felt that support and job security were provided by the company's leadership. For the most part, he experienced a relaxed leadership style and no micromanagement. Veronique saw how leaders provided resources and tools for performing the job, how they valued people and how the formation of the HO started from the top with good leadership and outstanding employee friendliness.

Be understanding and personable. Sally shared that everything in this hotel was run well compared to her previous workplace. Her direct supervisor was always understanding and personable, which was confirmed by the researcher's direct observations from short interactions in the office. Furthermore, her supervisor often took Sally and her colleagues away from the office, which contributed to their productivity. Mat felt he received strong support from his direct superior:

Nora is very good and will ask, 'Do you need help?' and 'Well, I will go and help you guys,' because she likes going out helping. So far, she is one of my favorite managers.

Pat also had respect for leaders because they served as an example to her with their supportive attitude. They were flexible and did a good job in caring for employees and appreciating their positive qualities. In addition, Sally Johnson was impressed by the personable acts of kindness and respect demonstrated by the owners of the company:

Within the first three months that I have been here, I have met the owners and they personally introduced themselves and greeted me. Again, it doesn't take a lot to show someone that they are important to the organization (Sally's Written Reflection).

John felt appreciated and recognized by the corporate higher-ups, whereas Alexandra shared how she felt important to this company even from the selection interview. She valued her direct supervisor as a great leader because "I have been through some situations and I have seen my direct supervisor supporting me 100 per cent." According to her, a good leader stays more connected to people and should not have a strong personality that intimidates. Chain of command was a good thing for achieving focus and commitment, but, at the same time, the management style should remain focused on "taking care of people", said the acting GM.

Hadley also felt proud that the company and management took care of people personally, on an individual basis and in their unique situations. She mentioned sacrificing her personal likes and dislikes for associates' sake. As an HR leader, Hadley emphasized how the HR department cared about personalities at work:

> And I think that's important to me, and although we do not do this with every single one of our hourly associates, in the morning, I try to visit every department and say hello and good morning to everyone who is there. Then, I tried to do it in the evening when the shift changes, try to find out how everyone is. We put everyone's birthday in the newsletter, so we really try to make them feel good, although they have to work on that day. At least they know that someone has acknowledged them and it's their day. We do the same with the associates of the month, we do them every quarter. Again, I think acknowledging them and the value that they have is so important. So, we do really try to take care of people who work here - even the people that are not performing well.

Encourage work–life balance. In this respect, Thomas Moore expressed his views that leaders should show understanding for personal issues; encourage employees to spend time away from the organization in pursuit of other interests that contribute to their psychological and physical wellness; and set realistic goals and expectations, allowing employees the opportunity to achieve them:

> Dare I say it, but a good leader would actually force the employee to take breaks and spend time with pursuing other interests when it is recognized that the employee is putting in too much effort (Written Reflection).

According to Jimmy, to demonstrate friendliness and support, leaders also needed to be understanding of employees' problems and cover for them. As a natural extension of this corporate value, John's own management style was forgiving and accommodating of his people's preferences to encourage their work–life balance.

Tolerate mistakes. Executives were very understanding of employees' mistakes and encouraged them to accommodate the guest whatever it takes. Several collectivistic representatives (e.g. Sally Johnson and Ralph) demonstrated their appreciation of leaders who tolerated mistakes as a learning experience and valued humor. Ralph (middle-level manager) described his own management style of respect, politeness, tolerance for mistakes, appreciation and recognition. As a leader, he did not punish mistakes that resulted from people's lack of passion for the job.

Mentor and coach associates. Collectivistic participants expressed the need for knowledgeable and competent leaders that mentor and coach associates (Veronique, Jack and Nora). Additionally, Veronique called upper-level management conscientious and committed to diversity. Her vision of good leadership was to be coaching, encouraging and, most of all, a reflection of the employees. Furthermore, Owen thought that managers provided autonomy (even though his direct supervisor was demanding)

and empowered him for decision-making. In addition, John described the previous management's style as hands-on, letting people do what they deemed proper, and knowing everything. On the other hand, Ralph was the horizontal collectivistic representative who admitted that the values of corporate were to empower, but lamented the lack of structure, consistency and chain of command.

Company documentation. The results from the Associate Opinion Survey (AOS) conducted by the company in 2007 across all hotel departments reported the following results in relation to the discussed sub-theme. The statement "Rate your immediate supervisor or manager – treating you with respect" had an increase of nearly 24 per cent from 2006 to a total of almost 79 per cent of hotel associates who approved of it in 2007. The statement "Rate your immediate supervisor or manager – dealing fairly with everyone" received a total of 63 per cent approvals, which was slightly higher than in 2006 (60 per cent). The statement "Rate your immediate supervisor or manager – regular performance feedback" had a 4 per cent increase from 2006 to a rate of approval of 62 per cent in 2007. The statement "Rate your immediate supervisor or manager – providing recognition when you do a good job" met an 8 per cent increase of positive opinions since 2006 to a total of 68 per cent. Almost all of the surveyed associates in the AOS of 2007 agreed with the statement "I am committed to doing what I can to help my hotel be successful" to a total of 94 per cent positive responses, which demonstrated an increase of commitment with 22 per cent over 2006.

The legacy of one charismatic leader

All respondents, regardless of cultural belonging, time in the company, position or department mentioned the state of overall morale after the uniting figure of the previous GM left the hotel to become a regional Vice President for the management/owner company. Her role model and charismatic leadership style had left a positive mark on everybody throughout the hotel departments by creating a culture of trust and respect. A general disappointment and disorientation could be sensed because of the uncertainty from the change after her.

Individualistic respondents (HI). Be a role model. Kate described the ex-GM as a role model of a supportive leader who was work–life-balance friendly and encouraging to all associates. She was the one who wove personal attention into the culture and gave confidence to people to talk about their lives. She created the atmosphere of trust and family-friendliness on this property. She had also set an example among all managers with her work. The change of her leadership coincided with the data-gathering period of this study. The general confusion and uncertainty, which impacted the workplace, were observable as a result. Alexandra described it as a state of lost guidance:

> I believe she was a person who was driving everybody. She was able to be on top of every single detail – operation, sales, engineering, and she was on top of all, and the leaders were, and when she left everybody just lost control.

Trixie mentioned that Ms X's vivacious and personable leadership style was irreplaceable. Stan supported Kate on how it could not be the same after the GM had left, and described her legacy in the following way:

> All starts with the GM because she was very much into the associates, demonstrating value to the human being – just to ask them about their family and their personal life and that will

happen here. They are associate-oriented. X did that. She knew every housekeeper's names, their daughters' names, granddaughters' […]. She was very into personal level with them, not only housekeepers – everybody. So, that kind of care was here and she had it in her and with X it was very sincere, although it was business, but it was very sincere, and the people felt it.

Collectivistic respondents (HC). Be an example. Ralph replicated Nora's words that after Ms X was gone, he felt a different energy in the atmosphere, which demotivated him. Thomas Moore, Pat, Alexandra, John, Veronique and Jack also talked about Ms X's example, her role model of good leadership and uniting figure, as well as the big change that was felt behind her:

> X has been an unbelievable leader, an extremely smart woman; very savvy about the hotel business. I enjoyed immensely working underneath her and learned a lot from her. […] the hotel was really tiring on the disorder (after she left), which way to row the boat, and during that time we were not all going in the same direction (Veronique).

The HR Director confirmed that positive legacy – the irreplaceable image of the ex-GM and how Ms X's care of the individual at work – has inspired Hadley to be personable and interested as an HR Director. John underlined Ms X's outstanding example of genuine interest and concern for the employee, illustrated by instances of her meaningful acts of kindness:

> X, the previous general manager, who I've known for years is outstanding in that way. I mean, she always, she knows your kids' names and asks how they're doing, things like that, very involved in the personal lives of the employees and very good with remembering names and things like that, and a genuine interest […].

Company documentation. The results from the 2007 and 2006 AOS revealed that the statement "I have confidence in the GM's ability to lead this hotel" had a total agreement of 80 per cent in both 2006 and 2007 when leader of the hotel was the previous GM, whose legacy was discussed above by all participants.

Leader–follower communication
Individualistic participants saw their leaders as open-minded to new ideas, empowering, liberal and approachable. They viewed the HR department separately in its special role of a trustworthy mediator between the occasional divisions of "us" vs "them" among higher management and hourly associates. Collectivistic participants were generally positive and also found their leaders to be understanding, flexible and supportive of personal needs at the workplace. Participants from both cultural types pointed to the micromanagement styles of their immediate managers.

Individualistic respondents (HI). Jocelyn Marie shared that there was a good welcome to the organization, which was a reflection of how leadership and, more specifically, HR approached employees:

> If you get hired we make a little survey of what they like: their favorite color, their favorite beverage, their favorite snack, their favorite sports team and hobby. And then, for the first day, I go to the store and I get them and we make a little card: "We, the people from the human resources, welcome you in", and we always put a picture of their favorite sports team on it and in their color and leave it with the manager. And it's just breaking the ice, making you feel like you are part of the family.

Communicate and let people speak their minds. Jocelyn Marie also talked about how open-minded the company leaders were and how they listened to input from anyone. She

classified the leader–follower exchange (LFX) as an open flow because of the open-door company policy. The interdepartmental communication was very good, which created an atmosphere of friendliness and confidentiality for other associates to feel comfortable and trust the HR department. In addition, Trixie said that the leaders in her office were approachable. She could speak to them in private and always express opinions. In her opinion, an HO should offer a safe place to work that protects from bosses and provides an opportunity to voice one's opinion freely without fear.

As a higher-level hotel manager, Stan was a straightforward person with the risk to be tactless. He wanted to be always informed of what was going on, even in off-hours. He did not like surprises and demanded to be told everything. His personal communication guidelines with employees were: showing value to them through listening, working together and developing friendships with them. He saw things in the USA to be more liberal as far as communication with superiors, which was much different in Europe because of the rigid hierarchy where leaders were not as accessible:

> You have to put yourself with them. It's not dictatorial management. You ask them to work, you don't tell them. As soon as you demand you get an opposite reaction. If you ask it's different. Plus, we work together 18 hours, when they see you together they will not leave you in the mess if you need them. It's a friendship relationship you develop with your managers. In Europe, you have hierarchy; you have to go through 50 people. Here in America is very relaxed and you call your boss with his first name.

In support of the smooth and productive communication processes between the levels of the organizational structure, Jocelyn Marie added that mistakes were tolerated and that leaders coached and counseled associates before they reached the point of disciplining. In addition, Kate shared that people were empowered to take decisions and achieve balance for the successful operation of the business; however, she also saw the opposition between management and lower-level hourly employees and expressed the conflict in a "them" vs "us" terminology:

> And they still think dollar for dollar, penny for penny, that they are making less than other room attendants in the city. But when you divide by how many rooms they're cleaning to how many rooms they're cleaning, we actually pay them more.

In fact, this conflict was aggravated by the just-initiated unionization of the hotel, which Haefy called politics and qualified as complicating the LFX: "I mean, that's the bad part about a union, it totally separates the managers from employees" (Kate). Similarly, Nora saw a division between higher and middle management, which she called a "clique", and compared upper management to "the cool kids on the block". She lamented the fact that managers in this hotel did not work together as a team.

Collectivistic respondents (HC). Value people's opinions and do not micromanage. Thomas Moore was generally satisfied with the relationship between him, the organization and the leadership; however, as he said himself, "with time, frustration is showing more". He expressed that lately he felt a little micromanaged, which could be good for increasing motivation, to a certain extent. As a whole, Thomas, Owen and Sally Johnson thought that there was no dictatorship in the place; that people's opinions mattered; that associates were not monitored and followed around; that there was trust for the good performers; that there were personal conversations during the day; and that managers showed understanding for personal issues. Jack doubted that management listened to suggestions from associates and thought that there was a lot of

micromanagement and checking back with the higher-ups before a decision was made by someone. Mat, too, echoed the feeling that, lately, there was micromanagement and some meddling coming from the new department director. Even Pat, felt that her supervisor was micromanaging in her desire to know everything in the office. Additionally, Alexandra's feeling was that other leaders from the executive committee were not as approachable.

Mat was not micromanaged by his direct supervisor, who was never afraid to support her people, even if she had to perform their duties. Alexandra, too, felt that her department director upheld her decisions 100 per cent and treated mistakes with understanding, without reprimanding poor decisions. Ralph (middle management) also cared about his employees, and this relationship brought him satisfaction. He was a straightforward person who always thought well of his employees' frankness because he was repelled by the game of office politics. His style of managing was respectful, polite and appreciative:

> Sometimes what I do, I make a phone call, I order some pizza and we go upstairs and eat all together. I don't make the company to pay, I pay myself.

In Pat's opinion, leaders in this organization were open to communication and feedback from associates. They could hear suggestions and were ready to approve ideas:

> I feel that we could always, always bring up a suggestion or something new and then it will be heard. I don't feel like it would ever be shut down or anything like that.

Jack, just like Sally, was a representative exhibiting more collectivistic characteristics. He emphasized the division between management and employees into a "we-vs-them" opposition. Ralph also confirmed that division between the executive committee (EC) and the middle management of the hotel. He even described an occasion when the HR department had threatened middle management with repercussions if they did not submit certain documentation on time, whereas higher managers were allowed to procrastinate with the same task.

Company documentation. This case study took place in a transitioning period for the focus hotel, when line employees had just voted for the selection of union mediators in their relationships with higher management. Details of the vote, as well as around the type of union, were not gathered in this study, as this was not its purpose; however, the associate opinions and the researcher's observations revealed how this unionization vote presented a reason for the general mistrust in management's efforts to defend employees' interests and well-being.

The Employee Handbook elaborated a little bit in support of the open-door communication and complaint procedures among the organizational levels. The complaint procedure directions included the following steps:

> Report the incident to your supervisor, your HR department, your GM, or your VP of Operations who will promptly investigate the matter and take appropriate corrective action. Your complaint will be kept as confidential as practicable. If you feel you cannot go to any of these individuals, you should report the incident to either the Corporate Director of People Resources or the Senior VP of People Resources (Associate Handbook, p. 2).

The open-door guidelines followed the same chain-of-command as in the complaint procedures listed above. The company encouraged associates to discuss their problems as soon as they arose to prevent complications. Furthermore, in relation to the leader–

follower communication, the Associate Handbook conferred non-fraternization guidelines that concerned complaints of favoritism, other problems of supervision and morale and unlawful harassment claims.

In addition to the general level of satisfaction in the leader–follower relationships, the AOS statement "Rate your immediate supervisor or manager – doing something about your problems and suggestions" received a 3 per cent decrease, demonstrating a slight deterioration of supervisor–employee relationships from 2006, to a total of 57 per cent approval rate in 2007. The statement "Rate your immediate supervisor or manager – regular performance feedback" had a 4 per cent increase from 2006 to an approval rate of 62 per cent in 2007. The statement "Rate your immediate supervisor or manager – providing recognition when you do a good job" met an 8 per cent increase of positive opinions since 2006 to a total of 68 per cent in 2007. The statement "I trust my immediate supervisor" had an approval rate of 73 per cent in 2007, which was again 8 per cent over 2006.

How does the workplace feel intrinsically?

This sub-theme reviews the way respondents see their work environment as created and maintained by leadership or as a corporate culture passed down by the company's HQ office. The emphasis is on the intrinsic motivation of participants, which should be understood mostly as the feeling components of respondents' perceptions. Individualists thought that happy employees did a better job at work and contributed to the maintenance of a positive work environment, which led to the logical conclusion that employees should have a favorable attitude toward the workplace for the workplace to be positive. A favorable work environment not only retained associates and made them loyal but also consisted of a balance between business interests and personal interests. The negative individualistic opinion described the lack of positive work environment in the studied organization because of the absence of developmental opportunities. Most collectivistic participants did not agree with the goal orientation and competitive culture of the workplace nor did they agree with the lack of motivation and appreciation. Some of these participants concurred with their individualistic colleagues that employees contributed to the quality of the workplace and the way it felt, which is why they recommended a proper personality–job fit.

Individualistic respondents (HC). Keep employees happy. Jocelyn Marie expressed every participant's opinion by stating that happy employees did a better job. She also asserted that making associates content was HR's priority. In her written reflections essay, Jocelyn Marie reasoned that without the retention of people, the organization would have a large training expense for bad service:

> If you do not put people first, they will move on, and you will never achieve a good consistent service or product because you will always be teaching and training new people.

It is beneficial for management to support employees because:

> […] within the hospitality industry, if you don't treat your employees well, they will express that in an external way and not treat the guests well. If the workers feel good about how they are treated, they will be more productive (Kate).

Or like Bob worded it, if he was the owner, he would want to make employees happy as long as the delicate symbiosis was not ruined:

[…] it all comes down to financial balance vs. a humane way of doing things […]. So, I've always said the employees are the pillar of a company. Without the employees it's just a building. It doesn't serve any purpose. You need the employees as much as the employees need you.

Help people maintain a positive attitude. Several individualists such as Jocelyn Marie, Bob, Kate and Haefy believed that people needed to maintain a positive work attitude and support the purpose of the business: "Too many times the workers themselves create the havoc that can upset the applecart" (Heafy). Jocelyn Marie's motto was that the workplace is what one wants it to be. Survival depended on a positive attitude. She, herself, loved to stay optimistic and start everyday anew: "I can be miserable here if I choose to be miserable". But instead, Jocelyn Marie was certain that the optimism will come back to her. Kate leveled the good work atmosphere to accountability for one's actions and good stewardship of resources, especially when they belong to someone else. Trixie was a good steward of the company's money, and, just like Kate, her attitude to work and the organization was thoughtful and responsible.

Collectivistic representatives (HC). Empower people. Owen felt the work atmosphere in the hotel to be positive because of the empowerment provided by leadership, as well as the lack of micromanagement. Jack envisioned a good work environment where managers treat employees fairly and understand associates' problems, cover for them and provide tuition benefits for personal development in whatever field is dear to the individual personality. Pat also found the work environment in this organization, and more specifically in her department, to be generally relaxed and laid-back. Hadley called the culture understanding and forgiving of single mistakes.

Meet people, not just goals. Thomas Moore and Sally Johnson, although collectivistic cultural representatives, preferred a goal-oriented and competitive work atmosphere. On the other hand, Pat suffered from the constant goal-orientation and revenue hunt:

[…] the most important thing was to make your goal. I was not used to this type of atmosphere and it took me a while to get used to working in this type of atmosphere.

Veronique was also in agreement with her individualistic colleagues Jocelyn Marie and Kate when she said that unhappy people, who worked on what they did not enjoy, always caused problems. In addition, Pat explained that the workplace could be positively maintained by leaders if they provided flexible work schedules, clear work expectations and appreciation for associates' skills. For example, she was given half-work-day options and work-from-home days because of her need to spend more time with her infant daughter.

How does the work environment become negative?
Individualistic participants saw how leaders were able to convert the work atmosphere into a negative one by maintaining the face-time culture of the industry (staying late hours at the workplace, not necessarily with the purpose of being productive). Leaders could be dictators and exhibit unfairness in an organization that is primarily revenue-oriented and without regard for people. Purely economic goal-orientation made a bad impression on both individualistic and collectivistic representatives. Supervisors harboring racial and gender prejudices made the workplace intolerable; however, colleagues could also contribute in a negative way by being rude and inconsiderate. In addition, collectivists felt the workplace was

negative only when it did not allow them to provide for their families and when it prevented them from feeling free.

Individualistic representatives (HI). Discard the face-time culture and favoritism. When discussing the characteristics of a bad workplace that nobody wanted to experience, a strict boss and a face-time working culture were bothersome to Kate; however, rude coworkers without manners were even more disturbing. For Bob, "a Nazi boss", a person who wanted things done only his/her way, was bad for the workplace. If he had the say, he would have gladly changed the existing seniority policy in his department, which made only new employees work inconvenient evening shifts. He perceived this as unfair because it did not give a chance to newer employees who always stayed new. According to Nora, higher management was never that way at the time of the previous GM. Currently, she saw unfairness, favoritism, lack of accountability and lack of effort to keep good performers in the organization. Furthermore, Nora felt that in her current workplace, there were racial and gender prejudices. She thought that performance appraisal and termination procedures were selective, inconsistent and unfair.

Keep structure and freedom balanced. For Trixie, a stressful environment was where she was not able to think for herself, and where she had to take an Advil a day:

[…] because physically you start to break down from stress, headaches, and all that kind of stuff. So, you need a place where you feel you will fit in. And every day will not be a picnic.

In addition, as the face of the Human Resources Department, Hadley expressed willingness for more structure, rules and guidelines to improve the workplace. Finally, the response to the statement "I believe that my hotel will do something about issues identified in this survey" demonstrated a considerable decrease in the overall trust of associates for the way their work environment was going to change. Approvals dropped from 70 per cent in the 2006 AOS to only 53 per cent in the 2007 AOS.

Collectivistic representatives (HC). Do not dictate decisions. A bad place for Owen was where decisions were dictated by leaders:

If you have to do a lot of things in a short period of time – to rush you, pressure you. I don't like that. What else? Always to dictate what you need to do.

In this relation, Ralph's synonym for a bad workplace was one in which he would not be free to express his abilities and manage his department creatively. A superior with a threatening and humiliating attitude was the worst thing that could happen to him. The lack of moral recognition for a job well done was most disappointing to Ralph. Similarly, Alexandra disliked when her suggestions and comments were not appreciated, when she was not considered part of the decision-making process and when her boss was demeaning.

Furthermore, Sally Johnson did not like to be stuck in a routine, without advancement, without empowerment and without value. The bad workplace was where leaders were: "not empowering, not letting you grow, kind of pigeonholing you, you know, doing stuff that you don't necessarily want to do […] umm, being dishonest – that sort of thing". Veronique did not think the present EC was the best in that regard, but her attitude was wise and understanding because she believed that people learn from mistakes.

Provide for work–life balance and socialization. A place that did not pay sufficiently, that was "low on sick days, there's no personal days," and where leaders did not care to keep people was undesirable for Jack. Owen's bad workplace was one where he would not be able to provide for his family: "Yes, family is big for me because I am here to support my family". For Sally Johnson, bad was also the workplace where people were unbearably rude and where employers cared only about making money.

Make policies consistent. Pat detested office politics and sabotage from colleagues, which she fortunately did not experience in this workplace. She felt uncomfortable when there was ambiguity of business values and when leaders said things they did not fulfill. Additionally, Mat was bothered by the inconsistent termination policy that led to distrust and unfairness. In this relation, Hadley commented on the termination policy and rehire possibilities. The reason behind using them the way they were used was to protect other associates, guests and the owners' property:

> Other than theft, we will consider anybody for rehire. I think people change; they get their act together; but if someone stole from us, I cannot imagine that we will rehire them. There is too much at stake. There is people's personal property that is here that is at stake, there is hotel property at stake, and there is guest property that is at stake.

Conclusions
Caring leadership makes organizations humane
The findings of this case study revealed that the leadership values of the background organization are very supportive and employee-friendly-oriented. For the most part, leaders valued people and had the priority of keeping them even at the cost of more investment. Similarly, in Gayle's study (1997), people who experienced meaningful work also needed leadership that was empowering, supportive and appreciative like the participants in this study. If that condition was not fulfilled, people felt lethargic and apathetic and were not prone to performing their duties. In addition, back-of-the-house workers at the studied hotel echoed Schlesinger and Heskett's (1991) statements that the new service management model did not require direction, sanction and correction, but rather required coaching, developing and mentoring. Six participants (nearly 43 per cent) expressed that they experienced contentment in the state of leaderly learning: when leaders cared (Newman *et al.*, 2009); when they were knowledgeable; when they taught their employees constantly (Vaill, 1996); and when they tolerated honest mistakes, using them as opportunities for advancement (Butler, 2012). In this relation, participants from different cultures, both individualists and collectivists, believed that the previous GM of the hotel had contributed much to the creation of the supportive work environment through genuine empathy, sincere emotion and positive connection with people (Goleman, 2006). Her role model and ethical charismatic leadership style (Howell and Avolio, 1992) had left a positive mark on everybody throughout the hotel departments, energizing them to contribute more to the organization (Denchardt and Denchardt, 2006). Cleveland *et al.* (2007) explained the increasing satisfaction of the studied hospitality employees with the GM's positive example, which was also crucial for stress reduction and burnout prevention. Finally, the fit between personality and position was thought to be necessary in this business, and the hotel's leadership was found to be good about recruiting and promoting people who fit. In addition, the leader–follower communication in this workplace was rather positive and respectful. Most

participants were satisfied with the way their managers allowed them to be themselves at work, regarded their opinion and allowed them to take risks.

Other leadership characteristics in humane organizations
Dimitrov (2012) reported two additional characteristics to Chalofsky's (2008) HO framework:

(1) HOs are cognizant and understanding of individuals as human beings, not just as employees.
(2) HOs exist in a help-oriented and service-driven organizational mission such as could be found in hospitality.

More specifically, in regard to the first additional feature of HOs, this paper makes the claim that it is leadership, and the examples set by it, that make an organization more cognizant and understanding of individuals as human beings. Human beings are understood best by other human beings, who have the organizational power, authority and expertise (leaders) to exhibit humane qualities such as goodness, care, empathy, compromise, service and patience, as well as to create policies and procedures maintaining that culture. One of the collectivistic participants in this study, from European origin, thought that personalization at work was as big as professionalism. One American collectivist perceived bringing the genuine image of his unique personality to work was the key for successful hospitality. If people were treated as just another number, they would not invest passion into their actions, which would be devastating for this industry. There would be no hospitality without personalities at work, thought this participant.

In an HO, the focus of leadership should be to make people happy because of their identity as humans, not because of their identity as producers. In his written reflection, one collectivistic respondent attested to this with his opinion that all associates, including managers, have the need to be appreciated as people, not just means to an end in "the rat race of making more money." Another collectivist wished his higher management knew what it takes to make him happy, just as he knew what it takes to make *them* happy. In his reflection, he also expressed that for something to be "humane", it should be human first, whereas, organizations are certainly never human but, in the best scenario, are composed of genuine people. This employee thought that a good workplace was "in the eyes of the beholder," which is a good reason why leaders should know, at all times, what makes employees happy to be there.

Leaders in HOs do not contribute to a negative workplace
The data confirmed how participants' perceived the work atmosphere to be negative when leaders maintained the face-time culture and the revenue-orientation of the industry. There were occasional divisions into "us" vs "them" between higher and lower management or higher management and hourly associates. Some participants repeated two of the reasons in Stalcup and Pearson's (2001) model for why hospitality employees quit: poor communication with supervisors and differences in management values. There was some dissatisfaction with the micromanagement style of superiors expressed by six associates. One interviewed collectivist with European origin was very disappointed with the present work atmosphere. He was found in a similar emotional state, as described by Harvey (2002), when a company offensively dismisses employees

from meaningful responsibilities. Signs of anger and willingness to give up were also observed in one collectivistic participant with African background. Furthermore, there were other reasons for dissatisfaction and turnover in hospitality that were enumerated by Stalcup and Pearson (2001) and also detected in the opinions of the studied associates: problematic personal relationships with peers; undesirable or unethical duties; unfair treatment; economic uncertainty; interference of job requirements with personal life; limited career opportunities; inadequate remuneration and benefits, as well as two very popular turnover causes – an "overly harsh" management style and a fundamentally profit-oriented company culture. Only one participant inferred that cross-cultural differences with her director could be the reason for their bad communication, as was also suggested by Brownell (1998).

Similarities between HC and HI perceptions concerning leadership were more than the differences
Triandis's (1995) statement that cultural differences were not absolute and oppositional, but rather complementary of each other, was supported by the similarity of perceptions that different cultural representatives expressed here. In this study, older respondents were more typical ambassadors of their culture, just as Triandis (1991) suggested; but, as a whole, the cultural differences between participants blurred in the expression of their leadership-related needs and expectations. The need for a liberal, respectful and knowledgeable supervisor was shared among participants from both cultural types. Individualistic (HI), as well as collectivistic (HC) participants, needed a positive work environment with an emphasis on balance between organizational interests and personal ones. Visibly different were only collectivistic attitudes that preferred family and flexibility over goal-orientation, competitiveness and personal profit. The similarity of expectations at work did not diminish the culturally formed feelings, manners, interpretations and actions of respondents. As Trompenaars and Hapden-Turner (2012) concluded, national cultures converge nomothetically (the value orientation in the work context) and diverge idiosyncratically (the fundamental value orientation of the person). This manuscript concurs and reports that differences were also observed to be mellower at work but more expressed in other life roles and situations.

Humane leadership exists
Finally, the discussions in this manuscript reinforce certain types of leadership features and behaviors similar to those of authentic, charismatic, transformational, affective and servant leadership. This study sums all these leadership styles as one – humane leadership. Humane leaders can be fostered and encouraged in parallel with the transformation of a workplace culture into a human organization. The HO, with its specific features, is the proper environment where organizational and social conditions are those benign factors needed for the creation of humane leaders who nurture an engaged workforce.

Recommendations for future research
It would be a worthwhile ambition for a future HRD study to involve the characteristic features of the humane organization into the search for effective leaders. In other words, being "cognizant and understanding of individuals as human beings, not just as employees" (Dimitrov, 2012, p. 362) could be included as a new success factor for leaders. The contribution to the leadership body of knowledge and the new linkages with

leadership theory that this study examined need to be further pursued as well. A future study of the correlation of concepts such as authentic, transformational, ethical charismatic and humane leadership needs to be undertaken. This will lead to the formation of an HO leadership (humane leadership) framework that could be applicable to different (by industry, scope, ownership and size) types of organizations. Furthermore, HRD research will benefit from a clearer description of the role of leadership, as one of the identified features of an HO (Chalofsky, 2008; Dimitrov, 2009), in the development of culturally diverse humane organizations. Finally, a more extensive literature review and comparison with past cross-cultural studies on leadership could be undertaken to place the culturally relevant information from this study into a broader and more comprehensive context.

Recommendations for practical application

Organizations and HRD practitioners are encouraged to invest more time, efforts and resources into leadership development programs that create such leadership skills and prepare such quality leaders who are well-perceived and trusted by their culturally diverse workforce. These effective leaders should exhibit humane features (affect, emotion, social intelligence and personable disposition) and actions (care, empathy, encouragement, flexibility and cooperation), demonstrating concurrence with the maximum that organizations are only profitable when their employees are. HRD practitioners need to emphasize the traits of a good coach, friend and facilitator in organizational trainings; whereas, organizations should support this image by the maintenance of an appropriate organizational culture (a humane organizational culture). Employee participation in building healthy relationships and truly open communication between leaders and followers should be considered a mandatory part of this process. Family-friendly and flexible policies should be abundant and modeled by all levels of leadership in organizations that are on their path of becoming humane. In addition, leadership development programs should be strategic tools for organizational change and for the conversion of organizational characteristics into HO features where humane leadership grows. Furthermore, how the humane concept differs in the perceptions of people from different cultural backgrounds will also determine the level and extent of HRD intervention into the leadership context of an organization.

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