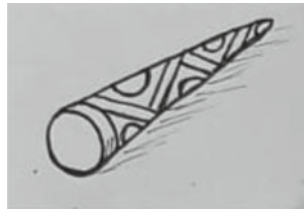




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## The Nexus of Family, Work in the Home and the Hospitality Profession

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# 1 Introduction

Hospitality in common parlance is understood to mean the friendly, welcoming treatment of guests, visitors or strangers. More specifically, with regards to the industry that has this as its main business, hospitality is the business of providing accommodation, food/drink, entertainment as well as travel-related services (Barrows, 2013; Walker, 2017). There is a wide range of players in this industry, from free-standing hospitality businesses (e.g., hotels, bars, restaurants and cruise ships); leisure venues (e.g., casinos, clubs and cinemas); to travel venues (e.g., airports, aeroplanes and stations) and subsidized hospitality (e.g., in workplaces, health care and education) (Slattery, 2002, p. 24). The hospitality industry is one of the largest employers of labour: as of July 2021, the hospitality and leisure super-sector accounted for 15.2 million jobs in the US alone (US Bureau of Labour Statistics, 2021). The industry engages different professionals in distinct specializations: housekeeping, laundry, front desk, food and beverage service, transport, management and entertainment. Notwithstanding the difficulty in arriving at unanimity on the scope of the hospitality industry, there is greater agreement on its reality as a pre-eminently service-oriented industry concerned with providing products, services and experiences aimed at recreation and supporting people's well-being.

The phenomenon of hospitality has been studied from diverse perspectives and disciplines, with each one highlighting different aspects of this very human universal reality. These studies have focused predominantly on the vocational, business and managerial dimensions of the industry, while relatively fewer attempts have been made to define the nature of hospitality and its implications for society. The beginning of the twenty-first century saw a lot of debate in academia and among practitioners about the essence of hospitality and what constitutes true hospitality (King, 1995, Lashley & Morrison, 2000; O'Connor, 2005; Slattery, 2002), with some going as far as questioning the authenticity of commercial hospitality vis-à-vis hospitality in the private/domestic domain (Ritzer, 2007; Selwyn, 2000; Telfer, 2000), while others suggest looking at the practice of hospitality in the private/domestic domain as the prototype to guide commercial hospitality (Hemmington, 2007;

O'Connor, 2005). Pizam and Shani (2009) present a summary of the main approaches by these studies to define the meaning and nature of hospitality, presenting them under four headings namely professionalism, hospitableness, hospitality as an experience and hospitality as a philosophy. Latent in many of the debates was the enquiry into the consequences for the notion of hospitality by the commercialization of its practice. A tension between domestic/private and commercial hospitality emerged and many subsequent studies have sought to justify the authenticity of hospitality practice in both domains, arguing that even though hospitality management is not the same as home economics, the former can benefit from gleaning ideas from the principles that underpin the latter (Golubovskaya et al., 2017; Lashley, 2015).

The variety of approaches and oftentimes divergent conclusions point to the richness and complexity of the hospitality industry, suggesting that a holistic—rather than a simplistic—approach that tries to gather the different perspectives would more accurately characterize the hospitality industry and harness the advantages of this approach for hospitality education and management. The studies of hospitality from the commercial perspective focus on profitability and professionalism, tending to treat the hospitality sector as homogenous with the rest of the service sector (Cheng & Wong, 2015; Menicucci, 2018; Slattery, 2002), with the attendant risk of missing out on hospitableness, a characteristic considered to be the very essence of genuine hospitality. Hospitableness connotes the kind, generous and disinterested concern for the well-being of others, serving them without concern for the immediate promise of reward (Lashley, 2015). This characteristic of disinterestedness and lack of concern for immediate (economic) gain is what makes some people question the authenticity of commercial hospitality given its profit-oriented focus.

The approach of the social sciences provides insights that show that hospitality is a human activity with long and widespread antecedents (Lashley, 2008, 2015; Lynch et al., 2011). Hospitality was originally (and predominantly) practiced in the home, in a social context that emphasized openness to (journeying) strangers and solicitude for their comfort (Walker, 2017). This practice had religious underpinnings with strong cultural and moral strictures for failure to be hospitable (King, 1995;

Lashley, 2016). Over time, the provision of food, drink and accommodation to strangers/travellers extended beyond the domestic context and became a commercial activity giving rise to the hospitality industry (Walker, 2017). Nevertheless, a look at the origins of hospitality, its socio-cultural aspects and its practice in the home yield elements that are useful for safeguarding the commercial practice of hospitality from losing hospitableness. Lashley (2008) concludes that study of the socio-cultural dimensions of hospitality establishes three key points:

- Hospitality relationships are an important and defining feature of all societies and communities;
- The cultural and religious obligations of both host and guest do not have the same significance they once had. All the same many contemporary societies still define civilized behaviour significantly in terms of the obligations to welcome and protect guests;
- The obligations to be hospitable can provide a framework for informing the behaviour of frontline operations in the different sectors of the hospitality industry.

The growth and development of commercial hospitality notwithstanding, hospitality is practised and experienced mostly in domestic private settings: entertaining family, friends, visitors and accommodating them if/when necessary; providing commercial hospitality in domestic dwellings such as farm stays, bed and breakfast, etc. (Lynch et al., 2011). The fact that many enterprises in the hospitality industry have “home away from home” and similar ideas as their catchphrase is itself a pointer to the link between domestic and commercial hospitality. The benchmark against which commercial hospitality is judged is markedly domestic/private hospitality. Research has shown that customers in the commercial hospitality industry frequently use the language of domestic hospitality to evaluate their experiences in commercial settings (Lashley, 2008) and some argue that borrowing from the characteristic features of hospitality in the domestic domain could be a way to enhance the hospitality experience in the commercial hospitality industry (Hemington, 2007). For many successful practitioners in the commercial hospitality sector, the experience of hosting people in the domestic setting was a

significant factor for awakening their interest in hospitality, for acquiring qualities of hospitableness, for learning about relations and skills that stood them in good stead for their hospitality career subsequently.

It is of interest to note that the positive attributes of domestic hospitality are due in great part to the care and quality of the service rendered in the tasks associated with work in the home (Ahlander & Bahr, 1995; Hilli & Eriksson, 2019). It stands to reason that work in the home should be examined closely to discover what it is about the services it renders that accounts for the richness of domestic hospitality and that could serve as a reference point for frontline and other professionals in the commercial hospitality industry to acquire the quality of hospitableness. What is it about the home—and by extension the work of homemaking—that makes it the byword for commercial hospitality? Ironically, there is a paucity of literature on this question.

This chapter provides an in-depth discourse and analysis of work in the home as the bedrock for work in the hospitality industry. It provides insights into how the laudable attributes and selfless service of housework and homemaking could benefit professionals in commercial hospitality. To do this, we discuss the myriad of issues in sections. In addition to this introductory section, section two examines the family and work in the home. Section three focuses on hospitality and work in the home and finally, a concluding section on hospitality, the home and social values.

## 2 Insights from Family and Work in the Home

The human person is by nature dependent on others and in need of care and attention all through life. Our survival, our flourishing—particularly but not exclusively in illness and injury—to a great extent is thanks to others (MacIntyre, 1999). This dependence on others for survival and flourishing applies to both bodily and spiritual needs: nourishment, clothing, shelter, language/communication, socialization, education, recognition and loving are all impossible without others. The care and attention that cater to the bodily and spiritual needs of

the human person, especially at the initial stages of life, are provided ordinarily—and ideally—in and by the family.

The human person is familial and typically would require the family and the home to thrive, flourish and function effectively (Buehler, 2020; Stork & Echevarria, 1998; Thomas et al., 2017; Vanderweele, 2017), thus, making the family an essential part of the individual's life. So much so that in situations where the natural family is not in the picture for whatever reasons, alternatives that can play a similar role are needed to provide an enabling environment for child growth and development. The family requires a home in which to subsist, the home being the material and spiritual reality where the day-to-day life of family members unfolds and life is lived as a sincere service to others. The home is the setting for personal welcome, physical rest and spiritual repose (Soto-Bruna, 2015). It is the place of intimacy where each member of the family is accepted and valued not for what he has or can give but fundamentally for himself, a mutual acceptance and love based on the recognition of the dignity and uniqueness of every human person. Given the incommensurable dignity of each human person, the attitude most proper of family life is magnanimity: openness to, approval of and confirmation of each family member in their being and existence, and this attitude in its turn enriches the members of the family.

The enabling environment in the home is created and fostered to a considerable extent as a result of work in the home, work which is made up of a series of tasks and interactions that make the house a home (Samanani & Lenhard, 2019). These tasks are distributed and carried out among the members of the family who sometimes count on the help of people employed specifically for them. Domestic work carried out by members of the family or outsiders requires interpersonal communication and self-giving: to care for others, one must be able to detect their needs and be willing to place oneself at their disposal to provide the help or service needed. Carrying out domestic work causes the development of knowledge, techniques, artistic skills and ethical qualities, which favour a more human and more personal life for all the members of the household. The qualities of altruism, sincere concern to make the other feel at ease, dedication to ensuring both material and spiritual well-being of those who share/make the home, understanding and catering

to the peculiarities and particular needs are among the characteristics of domestic work that make it so efficacious in creating an enabling environment in the home for the growth and development of the person who is a unity of body and soul. In attending to the basic (corporeal) needs of feeding, clothing and shelter, domestic work contributes to harmonious personal development by also ministering to spiritual needs. Good nutrition is needed for physical and mental health and satisfying this basic need in the context of (family) meals together with others is a social act that provides an opportunity to learn to interact with and benefit from interacting with others. It could also be protective against nutritional disorders. Care of clothing reflects the dignity of the person, aesthetics and elegance. It caters for personal external appearance which in turn has importance for self-expression, communication and social integration. Maintenance of hygiene, cleanliness and decoration in the home contributes to the development of an aesthetic sense and has a direct impact on the integral development of the person. External order in the home transmits serenity and helps interior order in those living therein. The experience of being loved and cared for in this manner contributes to positive self-esteem and awareness of inter-dependence. To be a person is to be relational, to be with and for others because the human being is essentially a social being. Domestic work contributes significantly to helping the family fulfil its role as the primary agent of socialization. It helps to acquire social values such as:

- Gratuitousness: perceiving material things as gifts and fostering the attitude of respect for others, material things and the environment;
- Spirit of service: the experience of the care received teaches one to care for others, to want to reciprocate and to contribute one's part to maintaining the ambience in the home;
- Social responsibility: concern for the common good and disposition of sharing what one has, of taking care of the more vulnerable.

Work in the home acquires meaning and value to the extent that the importance of the home for personal flourishing is understood by its members and also by society. Dedication to these tasks following from an understanding of their import is the meat of authentic service. Viewed

in this way, service is not a denial of one's autonomy nor is it a loss of something personal. Rather it is conduct born of self-possession as acceptance of oneself and it is directed to others as an affirmation of their identity as another with dignity like oneself (Soto-Bruna, 2015). Service, therefore, perfects both the one serving and the beneficiary of the service because it is an attitude that recognizes the unconditional dignity of every human person.

### 3 The Nexus of Work in the Home and Hospitality

Returning to the question of whether commercial hospitality can ever be genuinely hospitable, many argue that its profit-making focus is an inherent danger to its remaining true to the spirit of hospitality. For instance, Ritzer (2007) suggests that the corporate policies adopted to promote improved efficiency and control could inexorably result in creating systems that make the performance of frontline hospitality professionals more inhospitable with the consequence that customers feel undervalued as individuals. The generosity that characterizes hospitable-ness would appear to be at odds with the need to control costs and generate a financial return that is the economic reality of the hospitality business, resulting in tensions when businesses try to provide a true sense of hospitality. As Hemmington (2007) illustrates, charging for minor elements that could be part of the whole in a meal (e.g., butter and sauces) and the overt practice of portion control give the impression of meanness and some hospitality businesses allow these financial controls to dominate the guest experience to a level where they appear parsimonious and unfriendly. For Telfer (2016), the commercial transactional nature of the offer of hospitality in this sector is an ulterior motive that precludes genuine hospitality even though she also suggests that commercial hospitality need not necessarily be a less authentic version of the hospitality offered in the home since people who value hospitality could choose a career path in the commercial hospitality sector. In her characterization of hospitable-ness, she includes:



- The desire to please others, stemming from general friendliness and benevolence or affection for particular people; concern or compassion
- The desire to meet another's need
- A desire to entertain one's friends or to help those in trouble
- A desire to have company or to make friends
- The desire for the pleasures of entertaining—what we may call the wish to entertain as a pastime.

Commercial hospitality can indeed be made more hospitable and different approaches have been suggested for achieving this:

- Enhancing the hospitality experience by taking the management of hospitality beyond services management to focus on making hospitableness and generosity central. Accepting that businesses have to make financial returns, the challenge would seem to be one of distancing the guest experience from necessary internal financial controls and removing or redesigning unnecessary controls so that the hospitality experience can develop without reminders of the economic relationship and a sense of generosity can be developed (Hemmington, 2007).
- Being emotionally attuned to the needs of the guests/customers and responding appropriately to make them feel welcome, safe, respected and valued (Lashley, 2015).
- Exploring the host–guest relationship in domestic hospitality as well as the socio-cultural context of the practice of hospitality to identify personality traits of hosts and guests, identify motives for and modes of being hospitable, explore the dynamics of offering and receiving hospitality to glean insights that help define the profile of hospitality professionals and subsequently inform training and recruitment for the hospitality industry. In this way, traditional hospitality values and obligations will gradually come to be reflected in commercial hospitality organizations and become part of their culture.

The crux of the matter appears to be the manner in which hospitality is offered (and to some extent the motive). As Dawson et al. (2011, p. 290) point out, “this industry is different than any other because

of the intangible hospitality product that the personnel are delivering. Unlike most service industries, it is the manner in which the hospitality employee provides the service—as opposed to the service itself—which is critical to the customer’s overall enjoyment of the product or ‘experience’ being purchased.” Generosity, emotional intelligence, readiness to serve, tact and warmth in dealings, genuine concern for the well-being of others, unconditional acceptance and respect, competence in the delivery of more specific hospitality operations, in short, a combination of personal traits that reflect the appreciation of the dignity of the others as persons and technical expertise to deliver premium service in the provision of food/drink, lodging, comfortable and welcoming ambience are key elements of the profile of hospitality practitioners—particularly frontline staff—that would help ensure hospitable service in the industry. These attributes enable them to improve the quality of customer/guest experience which ultimately translates into customer satisfaction and loyalty.

The family ambience of the home, in continuity with the domestic work that contributes to creating it, is a veritable forum for cultivating and acquiring these personal qualities from early on in life such that they constitute a stable disposition—virtue—in the individuals that eventually make their way into the hospitality profession.

The understanding of service as ennobling is two-way: service that ministers to the dependency and vulnerability of the human person in a manner respectful of his reality as a unity of body and soul, fosters his development and fulfilment while also transforming the one who renders it—if he does so with the right dispositions—into a better person and professional. In serving, the personal attributes which foster benevolence are strengthened, making the person more humane. As some surveys of hospitality practitioners have shown, they see the difficulty and frustration involved with handling the situations that crop up in the course of their work as opportunities to be creative, imaginative and to acquire the open-mindedness and sensitivity that are the hallmark of hospitable behaviour (Pizam & Shani, 2009). They also found that working in the hospitality industry had a positive influence on one’s behaviour and attitude as a customer (Pizam & Shani, 2009). Appreciation of the dignity of each human being and the consequent disposition of disinterested

service—love—is the distinctive characteristic that work in the home can teach to (frontline) hospitality professionals responsible for making the guest's experience memorable. This outlook could be a powerful incentive for hospitality professionals and a source of personal growth, helping them to realize that service should come before the financial incentives and not vice versa even if receiving financial incentives could be a motivating factor. Francis (2020, #139 and #140) in *Fratelli Tutti* aptly captures this disposition in his notion of “gratuitousness: the ability to do some things simply because they are good in themselves, without concern for personal gain or recompense. Gratuitousness makes it possible for us to welcome the stranger, even though this brings no immediate tangible benefit. ... Life without fraternal gratuitousness becomes a form of frenetic commerce, in which we are constantly weighing up what we give and what we get back in return.”

However, it is not enough for hospitality professionals to acquire these attributes on their own through the opportunities provided in the home and by taking care of the tasks that comprise domestic work or the habitual challenges inherent to their profession. There is need for a work environment that enables and reinforces the desirable personal traits of employees. For instance, employers in this industry are increasingly aware of the importance of staff attitudes that achieve higher levels of customer satisfaction by displaying appropriate emotion and avoiding showing negative feelings. A lot of the stress which results in burnout and staff retention problems are due to this requirement of supplying emotional labour—the masking of negative feelings to display only appropriate emotion (Celiker et al., 2019). The desirable state would be emotional harmony where the individuals genuinely feel the emotion they are expected to display. Commercial hospitality operators, therefore, need to provide support and an environment that aids in achieving emotional harmony by providing the conditions needed both to remove negative impacts and generate emotions that are genuinely hospitable while reinforcing in their staff a disposition that values and appreciates the dignity of the customers/guests as human persons. As Camargo (2015) points out, if commercial hospitality prioritizes hospitableness, it needs to focus on how to organize an optimal environment for relationships of benevolence, sociability, interaction, happiness, etc. to grow.

## 4 Conclusion: Social Values, Work in the Home and Hospitality

Hospitality, over and above being an observable fact, is a virtue we expect when we come up against something strange (and everyone strange is also a foreigner), someone who is still not, but *should* be recognized as the other (Camargo, 2015, p. 19). Hospitality is the warm reception that every human person deserves. It is the virtue that leads us to welcome whoever we come across in our work, home and office—wherever,—with respect, affection and regard. The hospitable person’s attitude is characteristic of someone who recognizes the inestimable value—dignity—of each human being. This coincides with Francis’ (2020) “gratuitousness,” a quality he considers necessary for a social and political culture to have a future. The acceptance of vulnerability, dependence and sociability as essential human characteristics and of the home/family as the appropriate context for (initial) education in the virtues of acknowledged dependence allows for the proposal of a new form of humanism that promotes solidarity (as against individualism and professional success at all costs or at the expense of others), environmental sustainability, tolerance and openness to dialogue amidst diversity, empathy, respect and concern for others (especially the weak or marginalized). As Francis (2020) puts it in *Fratelli Tutti* (#150 and #181), no one people, culture or individual can achieve everything on its own: to attain fulfilment in life we need others. An awareness of our limitations and incompleteness, far from being a threat, becomes the key to envisaging and pursuing a common project. This means that “love, overflowing with small gestures of mutual care, is also civic and political, and it makes itself felt in every action that seeks to build a better world.” The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the work—heroic in many cases—of (health) care and service providers done to alleviate the attendant human suffering on so many different fronts are a case in point. Perhaps, like nothing else in recent history, it has vividly reminded us on a global scale about the reality of human dependence and vulnerability. It has also shown us that such situations can galvanize human beings into solidarity and unity and challenge one to reach deeper and bring out the best of oneself.

Besides extraordinary situations (such as a pandemic or natural disasters), the home and domestic work provide a more ordinary circumstance within everyone's reach for acquiring these virtues at the foundation of civic responsibility. As Chirinos (2006) argues, the work done to meet man's basic needs in the daily, hidden context of the family reveals man's dependence in ordinary life and humanely meeting those needs is an opportunity to learn the virtues of acknowledged dependence described by MacIntyre (1999) as *sine qua non* for the public life of the citizen. The spirit of service learnt in the home fosters solidarity and empathy given that it is directed towards attending to situations that reflect the dependence of the person on his bodily condition. This attitude, when extended to work in general, highlights the potential of human work for transforming our world and making it more humane. Ocariz (2021) expresses it very well:

In the face of so many broken personal situations, work offers us the opportunity to strengthen another of its dimensions: the capacity to welcome and be open to others. We sense the need to reach beyond ourselves, to care for others and receive care, to help and be helped, which are the first consequences of the recognition of our own vulnerability. When work makes room for human dignity and encounter with others, it becomes a dialogue with oneself and with our fellow men and women. It offers a shared purpose, awakens currents of understanding, helps to overcome differences and promotes mutual understanding. Work enriches us through the exchange of human capacities and participation in creative processes. Work is thus seen in its true light, as a "place" where we can all contribute something, and not only in economic terms. The shared vocation of all men and women to work leads us to strive to "recreate" the world of human relationships.

**Action Prompts**

- Ask people around you what kind of experiences make a home an attractive place.

- Identify five good character traits that one can learn from the home and share your ideas with others.

### Study Questions

1. Compare and contrast the practice of hospitality in the commercial and private domains.
2. In what way can domestic work contribute to the hospitality industry?
3. Discuss the centrality of the dignity of the human person in hospitality and how this notion can contribute to humanizing the hospitality profession and the society.

### Chapter Summary

The ideal of “home away from home” is the selling point of the experience most commercial hospitality establishments seek to provide their customers. The chapter delves into this intuition to explore what it is about the home that makes it referential for commercial hospitality and seeks to show how commercial hospitality can sidestep the risk of becoming inhospitable by gleaning insights from work in the home. It examines the argument about what constitutes the essence of hospitality. It explores the debate on the authenticity of commercial hospitality—given its focus on economic gain—through the lens of the works of previous scholars on the intersections of domestic/private hospitality and commercial hospitality. It then goes on to look at the family, the home and the domestic work required to sustain it, as important contributors to the acquisition of personal traits and social values required for humane work. It argues that the spirit of service, empathy, creativity and appreciation of the dignity of the human person developed in the home and through domestic work can be harnessed for work in commercial hospitality, resulting in humanistic work and service in the hospitality industry. By way of conclusion, the chapter touches briefly on dependence and vulnerability as very human traits and argues that openness

to caring for others in their dependence and vulnerability is a significant part of genuine hospitality. It hints at the prospects that work in the home and in the hospitality industry have for contributing to a more humane world.

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