PRODUCING AND REDUCING GENDER INEQUALITY IN A WORKER-RECOVERED COOPERATIVE

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Decades of feminist scholarship documents the persistence of gender inequality in work organizations. Yet few studies explicitly examine gender inequality in collectivist organizations like worker cooperatives. This article draws on the "theory of gendered organizations" to consider how gender operates in a worker-recovered cooperative in contemporary Argentina. Based on ethnographic and archival research in Hotel B.A.U.E.N., this article finds that although gender remains a salient feature of the workplace, the cooperative has also adopted policies that take steps toward addressing gender inequality. It concludes by offering an updated theoretical framework for the future study of "gendered organizations."

INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality is a persistent feature of work organizations (Ridgeway 2011). Despite advances, women continue to confront occupational segregation, a gender wage gap, and pressures to conform to masculine standards in the workplace. To understand the deep roots of gender inequality, Joan Acker's (1990) theory of gendered organizations has served as an important tool to explain how gender structures organizational life (for a review, see Britton and Logan 2008). However, there is a notable omission in this body of literature. For the most part, research on gendered organizations focuses on employer-owned and nonprofit organizations. This is despite the fact that Acker once suggested that to dismantle gender inequality, "hierarchy would be abolished, and *workers would run things themselves*" (1990:155, my emphasis). Yet literature on gender inequality in worker-owned businesses is remarkably thin (Sobering, Thomas, and Williams 2014).

In this article, I apply the gendered-organizations framework to examine how gender structures work in Hotel B.A.U.E.N., a worker-recovered cooperative operating in contemporary Argentina. Worker-recovered businesses are companies that were converted from privately owned enterprises into worker-controlled collectives during times of crisis (Vieta and Ruggeri 2009). Workplace "recovery" refers to the origin of these organizations, whereby workers occupied and restarted abandoned workplaces to save their jobs. Despite their distinct founding moment, today most worker-recovered businesses operate as worker cooperatives, which are organizations marked by collective

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ownership, democratic decision making and high levels of participation among their worker–owners (Rothschild and Whitt 1986; Mellor, Hannah, and Stirling 1988).

There are reasons to believe that gender inequality can be addressed and disrupted in collectivist organizations such as worker cooperatives (Rothschild 2009). First, cooperatives are collectively owned enterprises, creating opportunities to transform relations of dependence between worker and owner characteristic of privately owned firms (Ranis 2010; Atzeni 2012). Second, cooperatives are guided by value-driven organizational logics based on principles of democracy, equality, and solidarity. These principles are institutionalized through the adoption of horizontal workplace structures and participatory cultures (Rothschild-Whitt 1979), which may disrupt inequality between men and women. Indeed, studies that examine gender in worker cooperatives suggest that although inequalities persist, women fare better than they do in conventional workplaces (Hacker and Elcorobairutia 1987; Rothschild and Tomchin 2006; Meyers 2011; Miller 2012). These findings raise important questions for the study of gendered organizations. When "workers run things themselves," how do they address gender inequality?

Inspired by Acker's theory of gendered organizations, this article analyzes gender in one worker-recovered cooperative operating in contemporary Argentina. It begins by presenting the theory of gendered organizations and subsequent efforts to understand gender inequality in the workplace. It then draws on ethnographic and archival research conducted in Hotel B.A.U.E.N. from 2008 to 2014 to consider how gender inequalities are perpetuated and potentially disrupted in this cooperative business. Based on these findings, it concludes by updating the gendered-organizations approach for its continuing use in the study of gender, work, and organizations.

GENDER INEQUALTY IN THE WORKPLACE

The theory of gendered organizations has provided an important theoretical tool to explain the sources and persistence of gender inequality in the workplace. Building on feminist organizational studies (Hartmann 1976; Kanter 1977; Cockburn 1983), Joan Acker (1990) argued that gender is built into the very structure of work organizations. Instead of conceptualizing gender as internal to individuals or external to the workplace, gender is understood as a process that shapes organizations and is reproduced by the actors within them. This marked a critical intervention into organizational theory, exposing how the gender-neutral assumption of an "ideal worker" privileges masculinity and assumes a freedom from domestic responsibility traditionally enjoyed by men. Gender shapes work organizations through a workplace's structure, its cultural and ideological assumptions, and the agency of its workers (Britton 2003:6). At the level of structure, workplace policies and practices reflect and reproduce divisions of labor, power, and resources between men and women. Gendering also occurs at the level of culture, influencing the symbols and logics that shape our assumptions about particular organizations and how they should function (Britton 1997). Finally, individuals produce gender through their identities and interpersonal interactions; in other words, by "doing gender" in the workplace (West and Zimmerman 1987; Martin 2001, 2003).

TABLE 1. Comparison of Bureaucratic and Collectivist Workplaces

	Bureaucratic organizations	Collectivist organizations
Structure	Hierarchical and specialized; Formal rules and divisions of labor	Horizontal and generalized; Minimal rules and divisions of labor
Culture	Legal-rational logic; Abstract and universalized jobs	Value-rational logic; Embodied and personalized jobs
Agency	Ideal of impersonality; Role-based, instrumental social relations	Ideal of community and solidarity; Holistic and personal interactions

In her initial formulation of gendered organizations, Acker (1990:154–55) suggested that any effort to dismantle gender inequality would require "the end of organizations as they exist today, along with a redefinition of work and work relations." She has since become more conservative in her prescription for gender inequality (Acker 2006a, b). Although change is difficult, under the right conditions, organizations may be able to disrupt specific "inequality-producing mechanisms" to alleviate sources of gender inequality (cf. Vallas and Cummins 2014). Nevertheless, the theory of gendered organizations has been critiqued for its inability to account for "less oppressively gendered" organizations or efforts to create social and organizational change to address inequality (Britton 2000; Britton and Logan 2008).

One explanation is that the theory explains a particular type of organization: one that is not only characterized by bureaucratic features like hierarchy, impersonality, and abstract jobs (Acker 1990; Britton 2003), but also by capitalist assumptions and practices. Yet work organizations and their organizational contexts are far from homogenous (Britton 2000; Dellinger 2004). This has prompted scholars to update and expand the theory of gendered organizations to account for different types of work organizations and new mechanisms of gender inequality (Ward 2004; Kelly et al. 2010; Williams, Muller and Kilanski 2012; Brumley 2014). A notable exception from this literature has been the study of gender in collectivist workplaces, such as worker cooperatives, collectives, and communes.

Collectivist organizations differ dramatically from the bureaucratic model of the "gendered organization" (Rothschild-Whitt 1979; Rothschild and Whitt 1986; Chen, Lune, and Queen 2013). Table 1 briefly compares two ideal types—the collectivist-democratic and hierarchical-bureaucratic organization—in terms of ways that organizations become gendered. As Rothschild-Whitt (1979) describes, collectivist organizations are horizontal and egalitarian and they distribute power among their members through participatory democratic practices. They operate according to a value-based logic that prioritizes substantive goals such as equality, participation, and community over instrumental ends such as profits and growth. Finally, worker participation is embodied, divisions of labor are minimized, and workplace decisions are personalized. In sum, collectivist organizations are those that have explicitly followed Acker's original prescription for gender inequality: they have "redefine[d] work and work relations." So, how do women fare in collectivist workplaces?

Research on gender in collectivist organizations suggests that women are better off than they are working in traditional firms, but are still unrepresented, have lower status, and participate less in decision making in comparison to men (for a review, see Sobering et al. 2014). For instance, a study of gender in the Mondragon system of worker cooperatives in Spain finds that women had higher salaries and greater job security in cooperatives than in private companies (Hacker and Elcorobairutia 1987; Hacker 1989). In a more recent study, Miller (2012) reports similar findings for women in worker cooperatives operating in the United States. Nevertheless, occupational segregation and gendered divisions of labor present barriers to gender equality in the workplace. Other organizations directly address some of these barriers. In their study of Twin Oaks, a long-standing intentional community in the United States, Rothschild and Tomchin (2006) show how the collective pursues gender equity through an egalitarian labor system that equally values all types of work, from childcare and housework to producing items to sell. Similarly, the few studies that have examined gender in Argentine worker-recovered businesses indicate that processes of organizational change open new opportunities for women. For example, case studies have found that women in worker-recovered businesses have increased access to leadership positions (Monteagudo 2008), more control over their time (Fernández Álvarez and Partenio 2010), equal pay (Oseen forthcoming), and the ability to create new workplace gender identities (Dicapua, Perbellini, and Tifni 2009).

In workplaces that differ from the model of the gendered organization, how does gendering operate? Importantly, how do such organizations disrupt inequality between men and women? By examining gender in one worker cooperative, this article seeks to critically reflect on the theory of gendered organizations to better account for efforts to address inequality. In the following section, I introduce the case of study and provide contextual information about worker-recovered businesses in Argentina.

HOTEL B.A.U.E.N. AND THE MOVEMENT OF WORKER-RECOVERED BUSINESSES IN ARGENTINA

Hotel B.A.U.E.N. is a worker-managed and worker-recovered cooperative operating in the heart of Buenos Aires, Argentina. Located just blocks away from the national legislature and other major landmarks, the twenty-story hotel offers moderately priced overnight accommodations (ranging from approximately $60 to $120 USD per night) and event spaces.[1] On entering Hotel B.A.U.E.N. from a heavily trafficked avenue, guests are ushered into an open-concept lobby with maple floors, wood paneled walls and tarnished brass columns. Adjacent to the reception desk is a café that the cooperative named "Utopia," which serves coffee, pastries, and a variety of Argentine dishes. The hotel's 220 guest rooms are modest and vary in size to accommodate between two and six people. The hotel is also equipped with six meeting rooms and an auditorium, which regularly host events, press conferences, and performances.

Hotel B.A.U.E.N. opened its doors in 1978 as a four-star hotel constructed in preparation for the soccer World Cup that year. It soon took on an iconic status, first

providing a venue for the country's military dictators, and then, with the return to democracy in 1983, politicians and businesspeople wielding political power. During the 1990s, Argentina underwent a series of neoliberal reforms and structural adjustment policies that resulted in a massive social and economic crisis that erupted in 2001 through 2002 (Silva 2009). On the eve of this crisis, the hotel's corporate owners declared bankruptcy. Employees arrived to work on December 28, 2001 to find themselves locked out without explanation or the back pay they had earned. In the weeks that followed, waves of popular mobilizations swept the country as the government defaulted on its public debt (Blustein 2006). In response, newly formed social movements called for a regeneration of democratic politics and a renewed participation in economic and civic life (Svampa and Pereyra 2003; Borland and Sutton 2007; Sitrin 2012).

In March 2003, approximately forty former employees, both men and women, forcibly entered the abandoned hotel and established a worker cooperative.[2] They named the cooperative B.A.U.E.N., standing for *Buenos Aires, Una Empresa Nacional* (Buenos Aires, a National Business). Workers then began the process of restoring the facility, which had been illegally vacated by its owners and left in poor condition. In 2004, they opened the first floors and salons to the public. In addition to literally resurrecting the business—investing their own money, time, and labor into cleaning, repairing, and furnishing the hotel—workers also transformed the formerly private business into a worker cooperative.[3]

Hotel B.A.U.E.N. is one of 311 "worker-recovered businesses" (*empresas recuperadas por sus trabajadores*) operating in Argentina today (Programa Facultad Abierta 2014). Worker-recovered businesses are companies that were converted from privately owned businesses into worker-controlled enterprises during times of crisis (Vieta and Ruggeri 2009). Workplace "recovery" refers to the origin of these organizations (Fajn 2003; Magnani 2003), and today, most are organized as worker cooperatives that have transformed their internal structures and labor processes (Fajn and Rebón 2005; Atzeni and Ghigliani 2007), but continue to face political and legal constraints (Palomino et al. 2010; Vieta 2010; Hirtz and Giacone 2013). Most are small or medium-sized businesses that operate in various industries, with about half in industrial production (such as metals, textiles, print shops, and food production) and half in service (such as gastronomy, health care, education, and hospitality). In total, worker-recovered businesses make up less than one percent of the country's labor force. While small in number, the symbolic dimension of these businesses is considerable (Palomino 2003), attracting scholarly and popular attention as "innovative alternatives for reorganizing productive life itself, especially during hard, crises-riddled economic times" (Vieta 2010:296).

In contrast to working under a boss (*bajo patrón*), the cooperative in Hotel B.A.U.E.N. is governed by a workers' assembly, which is made up of all its members. It meets regularly to debate and vote on major decisions like hiring, firing, and budgeting according to participatory democratic principles. The assembly also elects an administrative council, which is in charge of overseeing the everyday operations of the hotel. While governance was completely transformed with the formation of a worker cooperative, the

hotel's division of labor looks similar to its previous incarnation. Work in the cooperative is divided into sectors, including offices of accounting, public relations, reservations, reception, housekeeping, and human resources. Most of these existed before the closure. Yet, instead of a managerial staff, appointed representatives coordinate the daily operations in each department and report regularly to the administrative council.

In Hotel B.A.U.E.N., a cooperative organizational logic informs how workers understand their work and the organization. As Karen Faulk (2008) argued in her earlier analysis of the cooperative hotel, this logic is both formal and affective.[4] Workers in the hotel are legally registered with Argentina's National Institute of Associations and the Social Economy (INAES), which stipulates formal policies and practices for worker cooperatives across the country. This formal cooperativism is complemented by an affective cooperativism or *compañerismo* that captures the sense of working together on behalf of the group. David, a founder and former president of the cooperative, highlights both the formal and affective aspects of this cooperative logic. "Under self-management (*autogestión*), the cooperative is in a process of creating greater solidarity among new workers that is not only attentive to economic factors, but also enhances the social and the cultural aspects of the business" (quoted in Pierucci 2014). As David explained, workers have redefined the formal purpose of the organization to encompass social and cultural imperatives and this has gone hand-in-hand with values of solidarity and self-management that unite the workers in their common purpose.[5]

Since its inception in 2003, the cooperative in Hotel B.A.U.E.N. has grown substantially. While the specific number of members informally reported to me during fieldwork varied each year (e.g., 162 in 2011 and 130 in 2014), a report of the cooperative's investments and achievements authored by two of its members calculates a 640 percent increase in new positions at its height (Pierucci and Tonarelli 2014:151). Despite this impressive growth, the cooperative continues to fight for the legal right to administer the property. Since the initial occupation, the former owners have refused to negotiate with the workers and the legal case has stalled at the highest court (Vales 2014). As this stalemate ensues, the cooperative has appealed to Congress to expropriate the property as a public utility. As of 2014, the hotel's uncertain legal status was still unresolved.

METHODS

This article draws on ethnographic fieldwork, in-depth interviews, and archival research conducted in Hotel B.A.U.E.N. Data were collected during four periods of fieldwork between 2008 and 2014. I first made contact with the worker cooperative through a six-week internship that I completed in 2008. During this time, I became acquainted with the cooperative and assisted in translating articles about the hotel into English. Using these contacts, I returned to Buenos Aires in the summers of 2011, 2012, and 2014 to conduct an organizational ethnography of the cooperative hotel, spending approximately 200 hours in the field in total.

During this ethnographic fieldwork, I was granted access to public and private spaces of the hotel. In the lobby, café, and salons, I observed workers as they attended to

customers and interacted with their coworkers. I also spent time in administrative offices, break rooms, and worker residences where members prepared for their shifts, organized, socialized, and even lived. When invited, I also spent time with workers after their shifts to attend social and/or family events. In the summers of 2011 and 2014, I went to the hotel four to five days a week on the weekdays, and occasionally on weekends to conduct participant observations and in-depth interviews. As a participant observer, I accompanied different workers through their daily tasks to observe both formal and informal organizational policies and practices. I did not have the opportunity to attend a workers' assembly, although I was able to talk with members of the cooperative before and after one that concurred with my fieldwork. In July 2012, I completed a shorter period of fieldwork in the hotel, following up and doing interviews while conducting research for a different project. That year, I also spent three full days doing archival research about the hotel in the local archive for worker-recovered businesses. In the periods between my fieldwork, I stayed in regular contact with my informants through email communication and social media, occasionally translating documents and writing articles on their behalf (i.e., Sobering 2014).

While in Buenos Aires, I also attended fifteen events related to worker cooperatives, the social economy, and the hotel's campaign for expropriation between 2008 and 2014. These included nine events in the hotel (three large festivals, two conferences on cooperation, two press conferences, a film screening, and a private meeting of worker-recovered businesses in the city of Buenos Aires) and six events outside the hotel (two conferences on cooperation, a documentary screening, a protest, a political rally, and a visit to another worker-recovered business). Throughout my fieldwork, I took brief notes in a small notebook that I carried with me to record exact quotes, tally events, and help prompt my memory later. Using these jottings, I typed detailed ethnographic fieldnotes at the end of each day for one to three hours (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 1995).

In addition to this ethnographic fieldwork, this article draws on interviews with workers and archival research on the cooperative. I conducted nine in-depth interviews at different times with five longtime worker–owners of the cooperative. These interviews ranged from 30 minutes to two hours and focused on the history of the cooperative, its current challenges, and individuals' transition from worker to "worker–owner" (Sobering 2012). I conducted all interviews in Spanish, audio recorded them and then transcribed them myself. I also did archival research in a local archive on worker-recovered businesses located in the city of Buenos Aires, where I collected nonelectronic news articles, reports, and past interviews with workers. When available, I referenced internal documents in the hotel, such as organizational charts, written policies such as the cooperative's articles of incorporation, and pay stubs. I used these documents to triangulate information about formal policies and practices that I learned through talk and/or observation.

I analyzed interview transcripts, archival materials, and approximately 200 pages of typed fieldnotes using open and focused coding with the qualitative data software, Atlas.ti (Emerson et al. 1995). In 2013, I conducted the first "open coding" of these data to consider gender in/equality in the worker-run hotel. This initial analysis of gender, organizational structure, and participatory practices helped to reframe my analytic and

empirical questions in the cooperative. I then focused my codes to include the five gendering processes Acker (1990) originally identified as constitutive of gendered organizations: their divisions of labor and power, cultural symbols, interpersonal interactions, workplace identities, and policies and practices that reflect an organization's logic. In the process, I developed subcodes to refine my analysis (i.e., "division of labor" was further focused into "occupational segregation" and "job flexibility," "power" was subdivided into "authority" and "decision making," and "workplaces policies and practices" into "pay" and "housing"). This analytic coding informed my final period of intensive ethnographic fieldwork in 2014, which explored empirical questions that emerged from these data. Upon returning from the field in 2014, I combined and coded the most recent fieldnotes and interview transcripts with my existing research.

As described above, this fieldwork took place over four periods of research and six years, which shaped the type of data I was able to gather. These punctuated periods of fieldwork are similar to what Burawoy (2003) calls ethnographic "revisits," or returning to a site of fieldwork to compare it with a previous point in time. As Burawoy describes, such revisits allow the ethnographer to "focus on the inescapable dilemmas of participating in the world we study, on the necessity of bringing theory to the field, all with a view to developing explanations of historical change" (p. 647). Similarly, through my regular returns to the field, I was able to reflect on my role as ethnographer and refine my future fieldwork to address new analytic questions that emerged as my understanding of the cooperative evolved. The nature and timing of this fieldwork also affected my key informants, who were primarily longtime members of the cooperative with whom I built trust over the years. Most had been instrumental in the foundation of the cooperative and thus, had institutional memory that was invaluable to understanding the organization and its challenges. As a result, I had less regular contact with newer members of the cooperative, who were not able to speak to the history of the cooperative or did not (yet) hold leadership positions. By my observation, new members were generally younger than my key informants, but included both men and women who filled positions in all sectors and were included as full voting members of the cooperative. In what follows, I use pseudonyms and modify work roles and some personal information to protect the identity of my respondents.

GENDERING PROCESSES IN HOTEL B.A.U.E.N.

The following section examines how gender operates through workplace structure, organizational culture, and workers' agency in Hotel B.A.U.E.N. As I will show, gendering processes produce and reduce gender inequality at multiple levels of the organization. For analytic purposes, I discuss structure, culture, and agency as distinct organizational processes. Yet in practice, these three facets of the worker cooperative are deeply intertwined and mutually reinforcing.

Workplace Structure
First, an organization's structure reflects, produces, and potentially disrupts gender inequality in the workplace. This is especially evident through the divisions of labor,

power, and resources between men and women. On its surface, this division of labor in the hotel is sex segregated. Women are disproportionately located in traditionally female occupations such as housekeeping and administrative positions. Men dominate other occupations like security and maintenance. Some days, this occupational segregation is made visible when workers eat lunch in the cooperative's staff kitchen in the basement. For example, sometimes at lunchtime, a group of housekeepers—all women—take their lunch together, clearly distinguished from the others by their matching pale blue uniforms.

Yet this division of labor is less rigid than it appears on organizational charts or in answers to the simple question, "what is your job?" In practice, jobs in Hotel B.A.U.E.N. are more flexible. Worker–owners in the cooperative hotel have a primary job, but sometimes take on additional tasks and responsibilities informally. The occupational history of one member of the cooperative, compiled from four periods of field-notes, highlights the flexibility allowed, and sometimes encouraged in the cooperative:

> Javier joined the cooperative in 2004 after an accident left him out of work. He first worked in the hotel's purchasing sector, but when I met him in 2008, he had recently transferred to the press department, where he coordinated publicity and events. The first day I returned to the hotel in 2011, I expected to work with Javier in the press office. But to my surprise, we spent the afternoon attempting to fix a leaking urinal in a bathroom. Two or three days each week, he would dedicate an hour or more to work on the facility: replacing bulbs, installing emergency exit signs and scheduling city inspections. In 2014, Javier had moved back into the purchasing department as its coordinator (*encargado*), but continued to manage the cooperative's social media and apply his knowledge of the facilities to buy the right components for their ongoing maintenance.

As this brief occupational history demonstrates, Javier has not only held different positions in the cooperative, but he has also been responsible for tasks outside the scope of his primary job. Javier is no exception. All of the people I talked to who were not new members of the cooperative had held more than one position during their tenure. Nevertheless, occupational segregation may have consequences for women in the cooperative. For example, while job flexibility may be encouraged for some, there may be fewer options for women working in less interactive positions such as housekeeping. Occupational segregation may also affect women's ability to be elected to leadership positions in the cooperative by potentially limiting their ability to develop the social networks necessary to win a democratic election.

Authority and leadership positions in the cooperative are also gendered. As described above, the cooperative is governed by a workers' assembly, which operates according to participatory democratic practices. Yet the cooperative also relies on a hierarchy of elected representatives and coordinators that oversee the day-to-day operations of the hotel. Like the division of labor, power is also divided along gender lines. Since the cooperative's inception, only one woman has been elected president and has served

for two out of the six terms. Women also hold positions as coordinators that oversee different work sectors, but are not equally represented in comparison to their male colleagues. In 2014, of the four main areas of work (housekeeping, administration, food/drink, and facilities), only one coordinator was female and she was in charge of housekeeping (Fieldnotes, June 4, 2014).

Although women were underrepresented in leadership positions, during this fieldwork, there was a gender coordinator that advocated for women's rights. Carmen has held this position since she joined the cooperative. "I'm a feminist," she explained to me. "I'm against the patriarchy, but not against men." With a history of union activism, Carmen created the position of gender coordinator during the early years of the cooperative when she organized meetings with women in the hotel and in other worker-recovered businesses (Interview with Carmen, June 24, 2014). A passionate and articulate speaker, Carmen often discussed the role of women and women's issues in the cooperative, but insisted that the position was more important at the outset. However, over the years, I observed Carmen continue to reference this role, act as spokesperson to women's organizations, and even win an award for her gender advocacy. Yet unlike elected leadership roles, the position of gender coordinator was neither formal nor permanent, but linked to Carmen's presence and charisma. While important, this ad hoc and personalistic position may not provide an ongoing organizational commitment to gender issues.

Despite informal efforts that allow job flexibility and advocate for women's issues, occupational segregation and access to authority are processes through which gender inequality persists in the cooperative. In contrast, the organization's compensation policy explicitly addresses a persistent source of workplace inequality between women and men: the gender wage gap. In Hotel B.A.U.E.N., all members receive the same base pay. This rate is decided in the assembly and periodically adjusted based on the cooperative's financial situation and external economic forces like inflation. Members also receive small monthly stipends based on their tenure in the cooperative, leadership position, degree of responsibility, attendance, and family status. These "extras" are small. In 2012, the stipend for heads of household added 200 Argentine pesos per month to a paycheck (at the time, approximately 35 USD) (Interview with David, August 5, 2012). Although the hotel has introduced some differentiation into its compensation, the workers' assembly actively votes on and shares information about the logic informing compensation (Oseen forthcoming). Thus, while members' take-home pay varies slightly, this income inequality is bounded and pay rates are transparent.

The cooperative's policy of equal pay and formal rules for small amounts of wage differentiation are mechanisms that disrupt gender inequality in this cooperative workplace. By receiving equal compensation, women may be able to become less dependent on men as sources of financial support. In the hotel, these policies are discussed as gender-neutral, equally applied to all members of the cooperative. Indeed, in a conversation about gender, one worker explained that in the hotel, "it's not about gender [...] it's about work" (Interview with Carmen, June 24, 2014). Yet, by not considering gendered implications of workplace policies, such policies may run the risk of reproducing inequality between men and women (cf. Acker 1990).

One way that gender inequality could permeate this policy is through accepted forms of wage difference. In the hotel, all of these "extras" are measureable. For example, tenure is measured in years, leadership positions through elections, and family status ("head of household") by whether a member has a child. Members who handle money make slightly more, as they are considered to be taking on more responsibility. Finally, attendance is based on the number of times someone either misses work or is late for shift. While this could open an opportunity for bias, clocking in and out in the hotel is mechanized through a system that logs arrival and departure times through a fingerprint scanner. Nevertheless, it is possible that the attendance stipend may impose harsher penalties on women who have greater responsibilities outside the workplace (cf. Wajcman 1983; Miller 2012). Gendered divisions may also arise through opportunities to work extra hours for extra pay. For example, when the hotel hosted special events, certain sectors needed more labor to help prepare food, organize afternoon coffees, or serve large group dinners. The number of events in the hotel determined the availability of these shifts. During high season from June to August, events took place at least once a week, with multiple events scheduled over the weekends. Workers who expressed interest could sign up for extra shifts, many of which occurred in afternoons and evenings or on weekends. If men have greater freedom from domestic responsibilities, they may be able to work more hours and, thus, receive more compensation in the cooperative.

Organizational Culture

Gendering processes also operate through an organization's culture, which provides the images and ideologies that naturalize formal and informal policies and practices. In Hotel B.A.U.E.N., a cooperative organizational logic is central to its workplace culture, informing how workers understand the purpose of their work and experience of community. In particular, the culture of *compañerismo*, or affective cooperativism, is gendered in that it relies on the symbolic role of women and discourses of kinship in the workplace.

First, women are featured as advocates and representatives of the cooperative. During their campaign for expropriation in 2014, women in the cooperative were boldly featured on the cover of an Argentine magazine and the story of one woman was used to tell the history of the cooperative (Lavaca 2014). During other periods of mobilization that I witnessed in 2008 and 2011, women, and especially older women, frequently took the floor to speak on behalf of the cooperative. Beyond its members, the cooperative also invited representatives from the *Madres de Plaza de Mayo*, a famous human rights group of women who lost children during the military dictatorship, to participate in their events. *Madres* attended many of the public events that I observed in the hotel between 2008 and 2012, including two press conferences, a book release, and two major festivals organized in support of the hotel's campaign for expropriation. Sitting visibly at the front of the room or on stage, the presence of *Madres* was both material and symbolic. It not only bolstered the social capital of the cooperative and secured its connection to a well-respected activist group, but it also validated the workers' activism, symbolically linking the struggle of the hotel to the history of social resistance that

began during the military dictatorship in the 1970s.[6] In addition to their attendance, the organization has also disseminated press releases affirming their support for the cooperative (i.e., de Bonafini 2011).

While women were often featured as advocates of the cooperative, both men and women discussed membership in the cooperative in terms of kinship. During a meeting I attended in 2012, one man explained, "the cooperative is like a family, it's not just concerned with financial investments but investments in people (*inversión humana*)" (Fieldnotes, August 1, 2012). Relating the cooperative to a family is not merely discursive. Many members of the cooperative actually have family members who also work in the hotel. For example, in one work sector, half of the members had at least one relative who was also part of the cooperative. In 2014, another worker told me that there were some families with three generations working in the hotel. Regarding her grandchild, she said: "I am so proud that he has never had to work under a boss, but always under self-management" (Fieldnotes, June 3, 2014). Another woman explained to me that she felt a responsibility to the cooperative that competes with her biological family. "I see the needs of my *compañeros* and it affects me." Although her children want her to retire, she stays in the cooperative out of obligation to the new members. "I believe that my experience as a worker can help the cooperative [. . .] I'm an example for the young people here" (Interview with Gisela, July 29, 2011). As these quotes suggest, the discourse of kinship is an important part of the culture of *compañerismo* in Hotel B.A.U.E.N. By relating solidarity in the workplace to a familial bond, whether real or fictive, workers produce a culture that reinforces the business's expanded social, cultural, and economic purpose.

The culture of *compañerismo* also makes space for family demands and major life events that are traditionally separated to the "private sphere." By extension, the cooperative allowed some members to permanently reside in the hotel. During each period of fieldwork, approximately 20 workers lived in the hotel in exchange for an affordable monthly rent. The administrative council determined who was allowed to stay on a case-by-case basis. When workers first occupied the hotel, the newly formed cooperative faced the impending threat of eviction. Before reopening to the public, workers maintained a presence on the property 24 hours a day. But as the imminent threat of eviction passed, two floors of the hotel continued to be dedicated to housing workers and their families. In the beginning, mostly young, single men lived in the hotel (Fieldnotes, May 28, 2014). But over the years, I observed more variety. Two older women in the cooperative lived in the hotel continuously during my fieldwork. There were also children who lived in the hotel. One day, two elementary-aged girls rode a pink bicycle up and down an otherwise quiet corridor. When I stopped to talk to them, they told me they also lived in the hotel (Fieldnotes, June 24, 2014). Previous research on worker-recovered businesses has shown how a cooperative logic inspires businesses to open their "productive" spaces to the community. For example, some worker-recovered businesses have sought to create an "open factory" (*fábrica abierta*) by establishing community centers, popular education programs, health clinics, and soup kitchens (Vieta 2010). Similarly, Hotel B.A.U.E.N. has explicitly sought to become a hub of cultural activity by

hosting organizations in the "solidarity economy" and opening a community library. Yet the practice of on-site housing represents a further step to integrate the personal lives of workers into the productive functions of the workplace.

Nevertheless, the provision of on-site housing may also create or reinforce gender inequalities in the workplace. Because the practice is informal, who is able to reside in the hotel is up to the discretion of the administrative council or the assembly. In explaining why they might call a special assembly, Armando recounted, "for example, there are some workers who live in the hotel. If a woman is having a fight with her husband and she needs a place to stay, she can ask the assembly if she can stay in one of the rooms. We've done this before" (Fieldnotes, June 3, 2014). In this way, gender may affect who is seen as deserving of assistance or support from the cooperative.

Worker Agency

Finally, gendering operates through the agency of those working in an organization, largely shaped by the organizational structure and culture described above. Like in other areas of social life, men and women "do gender" in ways that reflect, produce, and disrupt gender in the workplace (West and Zimmerman 1987; Deutsch 2007). One way that gender influences workers' agency is evidenced in how men and women discuss their activism. Among longtime members and founders of the cooperative with whom I had regular access during my fieldwork, the history of the cooperative and sense of cognitive liberation from working without a boss were regular topics of conversation. On a chilly morning in July 2012, a group of workers convened in an office to watch video footage of an eviction that had recently been uploaded to YouTube. Years before, workers who were occupying a nearby factory received an eviction notice. Within hours, they locked themselves in the factory, supporters arrived on the scene, and police surrounded the building. Many of the people in the room had been in the crowd that day.

> As Paco recounted, "when this happened, I had a bag with 10 or 15 Molotov cocktails [. . .] I was in park [. . .] and I ran around the corner to a bar with an entry on both sides of the corner."
>
> With the video paused, the small group in the office listened intently as he continued.
>
> "So, I ran in holding a Molotov cocktail and everyone in the bar was so scared! I ran out the other door and tried to get close enough to throw it at the cops, but the streets were filled. When I finally threw it, nothing happened!"
>
> The office exploded with laughter and others remembered where they were that day.
>
> Carmen had also been at the factory to visit a friend who worked there. As she remembered, she had left in the afternoon, but when she got a call about the eviction, she rushed back to support her friend still at the factory.

"Remember how we rubbed lemon on our face to dispel the gas?" Carmen asked. (Fieldnotes, August 2, 2012)

When Paco recalled his participation, he described himself taking an active and potentially violent role in the crowd that had formed to resist the police. Carmen, conversely, described her role as one of "support" not only for her *compañeras* who were barricaded inside but also for the protesters confronting the police. While Paco brought Molotov cocktails, Carmen came prepared with lemons to fend off the effects of the tear gas. This memory of activism shows how gender informs activist identities in the cooperative. Yet for both Paco and Carmen, these identities are active, empowered, and politically engaged (cf. Dicapua et al. 2009).

The workplace empowerment evidenced through this dialogue is largely accomplished through participatory democracy in the cooperative. When workers "recovered" the hotel, the most substantial change they made was to adopt participatory democratic practices such as holding regular assemblies and making decisions democratically. "*Una voz, un voto*" ("one voice, one vote") was a phrase that was regularly used to describe this practice. As members of the cooperative, everyone is responsible for attending meetings and voting in assemblies. In practice, participatory democracy requires an individual commitment on the part of each worker that goes beyond the scope of a traditional job (Sobering 2012).

Whether and how people participate in assemblies and democratic decision making is largely up to the individual. For example, not all workers attend all assemblies and in certain circumstances workers even choose not to participate in collective decision making. This was explained to occur for a variety of reasons. Sometimes, days off and certain shifts conflict with the timing of assemblies. Other times, workers choose not to attend. On one occasion, I sat with a worker who abstained from a debate through non-attendance (Fieldnotes, June 29, 2011). While participatory democratic practices distribute decision-making power and formally open avenues of participation to all members, individuals utilize these opportunities selectively. Nevertheless, formal mechanisms like quorum requirements limit decision making without sufficient participation. In regular assemblies, for example, half of the cooperative plus one person must be in attendance, according to the cooperative's articles of association.

Despite the creation of formal equality in the workplace, people participate differently and in ways that may create and reinforce gender inequality. The ability to participate is influenced by the social, economic, and sexual inequalities that exist in the "private" sphere (Pateman 1970, 1989; Hacker 1989; Kleinman 1996). For example, primary caregivers may have less time to participate in extra meetings that are scheduled outside of work hours. It is also important to note that not all members of the cooperative have activist identities described above and this may affect how they participate in the cooperative. Worker-recovered businesses are worker cooperatives born out of struggle. Some members have worked in the hotel for over 20 years, laboring first under a boss and then occupying their workplace and creating a cooperative. Yet the majority of members are newer, having only worked in the hotel as part of the cooperative. It is possible that the empowerment shared by many longtime members of the cooperative does

not extend to new members, who may be more likely to see their participation in the cooperative as a "job." Finally, not all members have had similar experiences of mobilization and resistance, and this also may influence how and why they participate in democratic decision making.

DISCUSSION

Through processes operating at multiple levels, Hotel B.A.U.E.N. is a "gendered organization." Table 2 summarizes the different gendering processes discussed at the levels of structure, culture, and agency in the cooperative. In all, gender is a meaningful feature of the workplace. It affects workers' roles in the organization, access to power, cultural symbols, and individual identities. As this analysis shows, the cooperative has not eliminated gender inequality. Women experience occupational segregation, limited representation in leadership, and gendered constraints to participation. Yet, there are also gendering processes that begin to disrupt some forms of inequality between men and women. Through policies of pay equity, on-site housing, and participatory democracy, the cooperative has taken steps to distribute power and resources and accommodate the outside demands that its workers confront. These are not "degendering" practices that seek to make gender irrelevant (Lorber 2000). Rather, they represent organizational efforts to address workplace inequality while allowing gender to remain a meaningful category of difference. Following Britton (2000:423), Hotel B.A.U.E.N. offers an example of a "less oppressively gendered organization," one where "gender takes on less significance in the construction, reproduction, and allocation of 'advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity'" (cf. Deutsch 2007).

I do not intend to idealize these policies and practices as perfect ways to address workplace inequality. Tensions and contradictions exist within each effort discussed. One issue is that formal policies of democratic decision making and pay equity are gender neutral: they distribute power and resources evenly between men and women without explicitly valuing male skills or assuming a male recipient of these benefits (Gornick and Meyers 2009). For example, the policy of participatory democratic decision making or "*una voz, un voto*" does not account for axes of difference that affect who participates, what opinions are valued over others and what voices may be marginalized in the process (Pateman 1970, 1989; Hacker 1989; Kleinman 1996). This may also affect who can earn more in the workplace through extra shift work or policies that justify wage difference. A second issue relates to the use of informal practices. In the cooperative, some workers have job flexibility, take on voluntary leadership roles, and even seek out housing in the hotel. Yet, these are all informal practices that may be differentially available to men and women. Despite these issues, the cooperative in Hotel B.A.U.E.N. offers insight into how one gendered organization disrupts inequality between women and men in the workplace. It does so imperfectly and with limitations. Yet, these findings call for an updated framework for studying gendered organizations.

TABLE 2. Summary of Gendering Processes in the Cooperative Workplace

Organizational structure	Workplace culture	Worker agency
- Occupational segregation	- Symbolic advocates	- Activist identities
- Access to authority	- Kinship discourses	- Participatory democracy
- Compensation	- On-site housing	

UPDATING THE GENDERED-ORGANIZATIONS APPROACH

The gendered-organizations paradigm is an important theoretical tool to understand how and why gender inequality persists in work organizations. But it needs to be updated to better account for different types of workplaces and the possibility of efforts to disrupt inequality. Based on the empirical analysis of gender in Hotel B.A.U.E.N., this article concludes by outlining three components necessary for a more effective study of gendered organizations. In what follows, I discuss each imperative and offer possible directions for future research.

Inequality-Producing and -Reducing Processes

Future applications of the theory of gendered organizations should pay attention to processes that both produce and reduce inequality, understood here as the unequal distribution of power, status, and resources between men and women. As described above, an analysis of gendered organizations turns our attention to gendering processes: the way that gender shapes structure, culture, and agency in the workplace. To better explain inequality, studies should move away from an analytic focus on "gendering processes" to a specific attention to "inequality-producing mechanisms" (Acker 2006a, b). This must also be complemented by an attention to those mechanisms that may disrupt or reduce inequality between men and women. As this article shows, organizational policies and practices that have the possibility of disrupting inequality may still be informed gender. To be sure, gendered norms, stereotypes, and identities are crucial to understanding processes of social reproduction. Yet not all expressions of gender reproduce inequality in the workplace (Gherardil 1994; Schilt and Meadow forthcoming). Future research should examine how gendered assumptions may inform and even legitimize mechanisms that seek to produce greater equality in the workplace.

Alternative work organizations that adopt collectivist-democratic practices are important sites to study efforts to reduce inequality. While different forms of democratic participation have expanded across workplaces and civil society (Polletta 2014), worker cooperatives generally infuse participatory practices with meaningful organizational power. In organizations where participation and power go hand-in-hand, how do gender arrangements change? In his study of worker collectives in Greece, Kokkinidis (forthcoming) finds that workers create new ways of living not only through their participatory practices but also by reconfiguring the workday and reducing work hours (i.e., Weeks 2011). Such efforts promise to have major implications for the gendered division of labor. Future research should examine how attempts to reconfigure and reimagine work affect gender inequality, both in the workplace and beyond.

Organizational Context

Second, future applications of the gendered-organizations approach should emphasize and historicize an organization's context, which may "provide insight into the mechanisms that could be used to begin to encourage and build less oppressively gendered organizations" (Britton 2000:431). Organizational context refers to the internal arrangements and external forces that shape organizations and the possibility of change (Britton 2000; Dellinger 2004; Ward 2004; Britton and Logan 2008). For example, an organization's ownership arrangement, governance, participation, and ideology are key factors to take into account (Sobering et al. 2014:1243). An organization's history and founding moment may also provide insights into how organizational inequality is shaped over time. Meyers and Vallas (2016) offer a prime example of accounting for organizational context. In their analysis of two distinct "diversity regimes," they show how internal organizational structures and historical forces influence the configuration of workplace inequality over time. Future research should follow their lead, paying particular attention to how internal governance as well as external factors such as the sociopolitical environment, other organizations, markets, customers, and social movements may facilitate or constrain efforts to address inequality.

The imperative to better account for organizational context comes on a wave of scholars who have begun to question how work transformations—both internal and external to the firm—are reconfiguring the very concepts we use to study gender in the workplace (Williams et al. 2012; Kalleberg 2013; Williams 2013). The theory of gendered organizations is no exception. Future research should be especially attentive to how trends toward the "disintegration" of the firm, casualization of labor, and financialization may transform gender inequality (Vallas 2012). It should also examine how such forces are creating new possibilities for social and organizational alternatives and innovations. Studies of worker-recovered businesses in Argentina, which are largely the product of the crisis of neoliberalism that reconfigured the economy, politics, and even citizenship, are a case in point. As workers continue to "recover" businesses around the world (i.e., Kokkinidis forthcoming), more research is needed to analyze how these alternative organizational models can reduce gender inequalities in the workplace.

Capitalist Critique

Finally, while the transformations associated with globalization and neoliberalism have troubled different assumptions about organizational context, scholars must also reflect on the capitalist assumptions embedded in theories of work and organizations (Atzeni 2012). Despite its ontological roots in feminist critiques of patriarchy, the gendered-organization approach relies on a network of mutually reinforcing assumptions that naturalizes capitalism and capitalist work relations (Weeks 2011). Future studies of gendered organizations must identify and problematize these assumptions to better explain how particular aspects of work under capitalism reproduce gender inequality.

Scholars should pay particular attention to two important and widespread assumptions. First, wage work is presumed to be inherently exploitative and oppressive. This assumption has a long history, dating back to the Marxist theory of wage labor, which explains the unequal relations between wage workers and capitalists as a necessary

condition to extract surplus value. While a critical examination of exploitation is central to the social sciences, whether or not paid work is always exploitative remains an empirical question. For example, what happens in work organizations where the traditional division between worker and owner is deconstructed as it is in Hotel B.A.U.E.N.? How does capital exploit labor without a boss? Cooperative and self-managed organizational arrangements raise important questions about sources of exploitation, forms of resistance, and the role of self-exploitation in the era of precarious work.

Second, the purpose and design of work organizations is often assumed to be profit maximizing, rational, and market-oriented. In other words, firms are understood through the lens of neoclassical economic theory. While the gendered-organization paradigm rightly critiques the abstraction of organizations and the roles within them, it still relies on the assumption that work organizations are driven by the rules of the market to maximize profits and organize efficient production or service. This is especially evident in the way that wages are conceived. Although controlled by the firm, wages are presumed to be set, at least in part, by the "market." This ends up naturalizing wage inequality as an inevitable product of modern organizations and, by extension, labor markets and economic systems. Participatory democratic organizations with policies of wage equality and collective ownership arrangements encourage us to look beyond traditional organizational forms and trouble the inevitability of capitalist work arrangements. Future research should focus on the policies and politics of compensation, paying particular attention to how they can facilitate participatory democracy and potentially disrupt inequality in the workplace.

CONCLUSION

Despite the persistence of gender inequality in workplaces around the globe, few studies have examined how gender operates in organizations that explicitly redesign work according to different goals and purposes. Drawing on ethnographic research in Hotel B.A.U.E.N., this article analyzed how one worker cooperative has addressed gender inequality. Although imperfect, the ways that the cooperative has minimized the gender wage gap, troubled the gendered division of labor, and formally distributed decision-making highlight the need to update the gendered-organizations framework to better account for social change toward greater workplace equality. Future research should pay particular attention to processes that produce and reduce inequality, emphasize and historicize organizational context, and expose capitalist assumptions about work and organizations. In doing so, the study of gendered organizations will continue to advance our understanding of gender inequality and possible solutions in the 21st century.

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NOTES

[1]The exchange rate changed over the course of this fieldwork. In 2014, the official exchange rate was approximately 8 ARS to 1 USD.

[2]Prior to occupying the hotel, former employees met with representatives of the National Movement of Recovered Businesses (MNER or *Movimiento Nacional de Empresas Recuperadas*) to receive support and guidance for their initiative.

[3]The decision to form a cooperative was initially one of convenience as it offered an accessible legal means to reopen a business under worker control. Yet worker-recovered businesses in Argentina were divided between those advocating for the adoption of a cooperative model and those calling for nationalization under worker control. For a discussion of this division, see Hirtz and Giacone (2013:92–93); in Hotel B.A.U.E.N., Faulk (2008:602-3). On the difference between "new cooperatives" and traditional Argentine worker cooperatives, see Atzeni and Ghigliani (2007:654–5) and Faulk (2008:596–7, 601).

[4]The cooperative logic is not the only logic operative in worker-recovered businesses. For an analysis of the role of market logic, see Atzeni and Ghigliani (2007).

[5]For a brief history of self-management and worker control, see Atzeni (2012:10–16); in Argentina, Vieta (2010:302).

[6]The *Madres* who attended events in the hotel were affiliated with the Association of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. In 1986, the organization divided into two groups: the Founding Line and the Association. Whereas the Founding Line focused on legislation, the Association adopted a more activist approach in an effort to realize their children's unfinished political goals. On the history of the *Madres* and motherhood, see Bouvard (2002).

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