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**From Worker to Worker-Owner: Emotional Labor in the Cooperative
Workplace**

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Workplace**

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Thesis

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Abstract

From Worker to Worker-Owner: Emotional Labor in the Cooperative Service Workplace

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Many studies into emotional labor are constrained by a capitalist paradigm, where emotional labor is performed within corporate organizations with hierarchical divisions of labor. Using the case of Hotel BAUEN, this paper considers emotional labor in different organizational and relational context: a worker-owned and worker-recovered business in Argentina. Drawing on ethnographic observations in Hotel BAUEN, this paper shows how service work is structured in the cooperative hotel. Instead of doing emotional labor in the traditional “service triangle,” worker-owners provide services in a “cooperative dyad” without the oversight of a boss. This structural difference has both organizational and relational implications for the business. First, worker-owners provide a variety of services to a broad set of customers. Second, the processes of *autogestión* (self-management) rely on workers’ emotional labor to cultivate lateral workplace relations through self-management. Ultimately, within the cooperative service workplace, emotional labor functions differently than the literature would suggest.

Rather than reproduce social inequalities, workers use emotional labor to generate capital and sustain an organization that seeks to reduce inequality.

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Introduction

With the growing number of service jobs in economies across the globe, theories of work now differentiate service from traditional work in industry and agriculture. Service work is interactional, occurring through the dynamics of worker, boss and customer. It also requires a special type of labor – emotional labor – whereby workers adjust their feelings according to organizational rules. In this context, studies have found that service work reproduces various forms of inequality by solidifying class status, normalizing gendered practices and exacerbating workers' alienation from their labor. Emotional labor becomes the vehicle by which service workers practice self-subordination in the new economy. Nevertheless, studies into the practices and effects of emotional labor in service work are largely situated in capitalist or state-run organizations with hierarchical divisions of labor and traditional labor relations. How does emotional labor function in a different type of organization?

This paper argues that the structure of a workplace can alter the role of emotional labor in the lives of workers. Through an extended case study of Hotel BAUEN, a cooperatively managed and worker-recovered business in Argentina, this paper refines theories of emotional labor by exploring a case where emotional labor functions differently. It finds that, instead of sustaining inequality, emotional labor is used to generate capital for a structure that seeks to reduce inequality for its workers.

Hotel BAUEN is not a typical service workplace. Located in downtown Buenos Aires, Argentina, the hotel looks much like it did thirty years ago under corporate management. On the eve of the country's economic crisis in 2001, the hotel's corporate owners declared bankruptcy, leaving the workers without explanation, jobs, or the back pay they were owed. In 2003 with the help of other recovered businesses, a small group

of former workers illegally occupied the hotel, established a worker cooperative and eventually reopened the business to the public. Walking through Hotel BAUEN's heavy glass doors today, guests check in and out at the front desk, passersby dine in a street side café, and conference-goers wait for elevators to transport them to one of the ballrooms in the twenty-story tower. In this busy environment, workers continue to illegally occupy the space, which they now manage as a cooperative hotel. Workers, too, have transformed from workers into worker-owners, sharing in the ownership and management of the business.

Martín's career in Hotel BAUEN has followed the contours of the hotel from corporate to cooperative management. He is in his mid-60s, tall and imposing, with a grey beard, kind eyes and a proud voice. As we sit at his desk in the press office of Hotel BAUEN, he tells me about his history with the hotel. As a young man from a small town in the province of Buenos Aires, he was hired as a bellhop, not knowing he would work at the hotel for the rest of his adult life. In 2003 after the hotel shut down, he led the occupation of his old workplace and served as president of the worker cooperative that resurrected the hotel. "Hotels are very complex," he explained. "There are things that you're going to get [in the hotel], but also intangibles [...] For us, if excellent service is a 10 out of 10, we have to be an 11." In his description of hospitality at Hotel BAUEN, Martín echoes the notion that has dominated hotel management since the 1980s: that service is central not only to filling beds but also in differentiating a business from its competitors.

Behind the scenes, workers in Hotel BAUEN are, indeed, differentiating their work by forging a different type of business to provide these "excellent" services, one that is owned by its workers and managed via participatory practices. I asked Martín what he thought about his work in the hotel under his old boss now that he was a self-

managed worker (*trabajador autogestionado*): “It was way different (*nada que ver*),” he said. “I was a worker in a neoliberal state. It was always, ‘*si, Señor, si Señor*’ [...] I lived in a bubble.” Becoming a self-managed worker was a major change. Now, he confided, “I feel alive” (fieldnotes, July 28, 2011). Based on the literature on emotional labor, Martin’s story does not fit the common narrative one expects to hear from a service worker in a hotel. What is happening in this service workplace to change his experience of work?

Hotel BAUEN, like many other worker-recovered businesses, has received attention from international media (Lavaca 2004; Lewis and Klein 2004), local journalists (Vales 2011, 2008) and scholars (Ruggeri and Vieta 2010; Palomino 2003; Palomino et al 2010) for their efforts to save jobs and defend an alternative business model. Yet on a daily basis, worker-owners in Hotel BAUEN confront the common challenges of managing a hotel but they do so in a different organizational and relational context. This paper argues that emotional labor functions differently in this alternative service workplace. In what follows, I begin with a review of scholarship on emotional labor in service work. Next, I present the case of Hotel BAUEN to provide an overview of the historical context and work processes in this cooperative service workplace. I then show how the hotel is organizationally different from the model developed in scholarship on service work and explore the relational implications for worker-owners who perform emotional labor in this different context.

Emotional Labor in Service Work

Service work has grown in economies across the globe, with employment rates in the service sector outpacing traditional work in industry and agriculture. In Argentina, just below 60 percent of working-aged individuals were employed in the service sector in 2010 (International Labor Office), a number that likely underestimates the true number of service workers across economic sectors. Service work, in this broader conception, includes any job that requires a worker to interact with customers on a regular basis (Leidner 1993, 1999).

To nineteenth century theorists, service work was considered “unproductive labor,” incapable of creating a tangible commodity (Smith 1982) or surplus value (Marx 1978). What brought service work to the fore, according to Harry Braverman (1974), was not an empirical change in the economy, but rather a change in the social form of profitable activity as capitalists began to make money by selling services. With this shift, literature on work began to identify differences between the industrial “shop floor” and the “service theater.”

In her study of luxury hotels, Rachel Sherman (2007:20) uses the image of the “service theater” to highlight the particular components that differentiate the service environment. First, the term evokes a connection to “dramatic theater,” where actions are divided between a frontstage and backstage and actors shape the performance. This division, however, does not isolate service work to the front of the house. Rather, service work is performed by workers who are visible and those who are “semi-visible,” exercising either “limited face-to-face or exclusively telephonic contact with guests” (Sherman 2007:49). The image of a “service theater” also embodies the idea of an

“operating theater,” a place where skills are exercised and social relations and personal identities change. Finally, it can be understood as a “theater of war” where conflict is played out. Importantly, “all three usages describe...an arena of action set off from but linked to the outside world” (Sherman 2007:20).

In this parallel space, service workers execute a different type of work that is distinguished by the product they produce, the actors involved and the labor required. Instead of a physical good, workers provide a service—an intangible good—directly to the customer, who becomes the raw material of this interactive process. With the customer directly involved, the composition of work relations changes from the traditional relationship between workers and owners to a “service triangle” that includes the customer. The moment of interaction between worker and customer becomes the site of simultaneous production and consumption, which poses different challenges to the management of individuals holding these positions.

Within these triangular work relationships, workers use not only physical and mental labor, but also emotional labor to produce a service. First described by Arlie Hochschild (1983) in her study of flight attendants, emotional labor is the process by which interactive service workers align their feelings with organizationally defined rules. For example, when a hotel concierge smiles and accommodates a guest’s needs, he or she provides the care and attention through emotional labor that distinguishes service in the hospitality industry. Since *The Managed Heart* (Hochschild 1983), the theory of emotional labor has expanded to consider workers’ agency and autonomy (Paules 1991), different types of emotion work (Bolton and Boyd 2003), and emotion work in the absence of manager-imposed feeling rules (Lopez 2006). Despite debates over the adequacy of the concept of emotional labor (Brook 2009, Lopez 2010), there is broad consensus that workers produce services with their emotional labor.

Scholars have also explored how emotional labor operates to construct and reproduce inequality in the workplace. In corporate luxury hotels in the United States, Sherman (2007:57) suggests that inequality takes two forms: “the structural asymmetry between workers and guests and the interactive self-subordination of workers to guests.” By looking at these two forms, she documents the ways that workers consent to and normalize inequality by constructing themselves as powerful in comparison to their high-income guests. In other words, it is through the ways the workers create dignity that they accept inequality. In luxury hotels in China, Eileen Otis (2008) explores how local customs shape the gendered labor practices of service workers; Amy Hanser (2008) draws similar connections between service work and structural inequality in her comparison of Chinese retail outlets. She finds, “key social divisions—along lines of class, gender, and even generation—solidify in the course of service interactions” (Hanser 2008:3). While service work can be skillful, creative, and challenging, the “service theater” is also a potentially dangerous site, where inequality is reproduced, gender roles are reinscribed, and ultimately, individuals perpetuate the structural forces of their subordination.

In her review of literature on emotional labor, Amy Wharton (2009:149) describes the extent to which research uses emotional labor to understand “the organization, structure, and social relations of service jobs.” Emotional labor is conceptualized as a feature of interactive jobs that shapes the organization and experience of work. Interestingly, in Sherman’s (2007) research in luxury hotels, both managers and workers invoke an imaginary ownership to facilitate their emotional labor. For example, Dirk, explains that in order to remember guests’ names, “I pretend I own the hotel and I’m getting those four-hundred-dollar rack rates” (Sherman 2007:119). Alice, a training manager, says she teaches workers to solve problems by “think[ing] about the hotel as if

it were *your* business” (Sherman 2007:78). While emotional labor may be affected by having an ownership stake in a business, it is less clear how organizations determine the practice of emotional labor beyond setting the “feeling rules” of the workplace. This may be a result of the site of studies into service work, which are typically located in bureaucratic, capitalist entities where workers occupy a single role, customers receive standard services, and owners manage the labor process (for an exception, see Hanser 2008).

Nevertheless, the relationship between an organization’s structure and the practices of emotional labor are, indeed, related. In Jenifer Pierce’s (1995) study of emotional labor in law firms, she shows how gendered organizations produce gender-appropriate forms of emotional labor that reproduce the gender asymmetry of the firms. For Pierce, the organization itself sets the terms of emotional labor – in this case, as a gendered performance. Similarly, in Sherman’s (2007) study, she examines how workers and customers normalize inequality through their strategies of self. By “doing class” (much like Pierce’s lawyers “do gender”) through emotional labor, workers consent to the inequality that shapes their social relationships (Sherman 2007:260). While scholars have hinted at the role of the organization in shaping relationships in the service workplace, this paper explicitly examines the connection between emotional labor and organizational structure to refine the theory of emotional labor and better account for the context of service work.

Case Study: Hotel BAUEN

Towering over the streets of Buenos Aires, Hotel BAUEN is a twenty-story building located in the heart of Argentina's capital city. Situated blocks away from the national legislature and other major landmarks, wide glass doors usher guests off the busy street and into the lobby of maple floors, wood paneled walls and gold-plated columns. A striking modernist sculpture hangs over the stairway entrance to the theater, a collection of gold tubes clustered from the ceiling at different levels. The hotel's 220 rooms vary in size, accommodating between two and six people with narrow beds and small bathrooms. The hotel is also equipped with six meeting rooms and an auditorium to host events, press conferences, and performances. From one of the ballrooms on the top floor of the hotel, floor to ceiling windows provide a dizzying view of the sprawling city.

Hotel BAUEN first opened its doors in 1978 as a five-star hotel to accommodate visitors to the soccer World Cup hosted in Argentina that year. The original owners financed the construction of the tower with credit granted by the Argentine military dictatorship, funds which were never paid back by the owners (O'Donnell 2007). During the 1990s as the country underwent neoliberal reform, Hotel BAUEN was acquired by a multinational corporation and, on the eve of the country's economic crisis in 2001, the owners declared bankruptcy (Magnani 2009). When the workers arrived at the hotel on the morning of December 28, they were locked out of the building without explanation or the back pay they were owed. Following the lead of other worker-recovered businesses in the city, in 2003 a small group of former workers occupied the hotel, established a worker cooperative and eventually reopened the business to the public.

Today, Hotel BAUEN is organized as a worker cooperative that is owned and operated by its workers. In Argentina, a cooperative workplace structure is legally defined as a type of private business marked by collective property and democratic control (Instituto Nacional de Asociativismo y Economía Social 2003). This status affords financial and legal benefits to the organization that are unavailable to traditional businesses, including the protection of worker-owners' personal property and exemption from taxes on revenues (for a review of the Argentine legal framework of cooperatives, see Ruggeri and Vieta 2010:8).

In Hotel BAUEN, workers embrace *autogestión* as the processes by which they change productive relations in the hotel. While workers are equal owners of the cooperative, its division of labor maintains certain aspects of its former organization under private ownership (Bos, Fogante and Russo 2007:17-19). Work is divided into groups including accounting, press, scheduling, reception, housekeeping and human resources, each of which is managed by an elected leader. Worker-owners also elect an administrative council to oversee business processes, streamline operations and mitigate the demands of collective ownership. Finally, all workers participate in regular assemblies to discuss and vote on issues confronting the cooperative.

In 2011, the worker cooperative operating Hotel BAUEN employed 160 full-time worker-owners and had just finished remodeling the final floor to open all the rooms for business (fieldnotes, June 10, 2011). In addition to the growth of the cooperative and their investment in the facilities, workers are embroiled in an ongoing fight to win the legal right to operate the hotel. In 2008, the bankruptcy judge in charge of the hotel issued an eviction notice to the cooperative, which the workers resisted by staying put and maintaining business as usual. Since then, the cooperative has appealed to higher judges and legislators to support their case to expropriate the property. In 2011, the

Argentine Supreme Court dismissed the cooperative's appeal for expropriation and as a result, workers and their supporters are now pressuring the national legislature to pass a bill to legalize their occupation of the iconic hotel (Vales 2011).

Autogestión in a Cooperative Hotel

In Hotel BAUEN, workers practice *autogestión* (self-management), which includes any practice characterized by democratic decision-making and the autonomy of the collective (Peixoto de Albuequerque 2004:39). As Paulo Peixoto de Albuequerque (2004:39-40) explains, *autogestión* is an ambiguous term that can include social, economic, political and technical dimensions. For example, the social aspect of *autogestión* includes processes that generate actions and results that are acceptable to a group whereas the economic aspect involves social relations of production that privilege labor over capital. The political application of *autogestión* concerns representative systems that promote collective decision-making and power sharing and the fourth, technical dimension suggests the potential for alternative organizations with different divisions of labor.

In worker-recovered businesses like Hotel BAUEN, workers have used *autogestión* as a tool to recover bankrupt companies (for a historical overview of *autogestión*, see Petras and Veltmeyer 2002). As Petras and Veltmeyer (2002:16) describe in their essay on *autogestión* in worker-recovered businesses, *autogestión* facilitates the creation of spaces where workers can make decisions about production, set the terms of their work, determine priorities of production, maintain autonomy, distribute economic surplus, create solidarity and democratize social relations of work. Practices like these span the multiple dimensions of *autogestión* and show how worker-owners in recovered businesses adapt *autogestión* to the needs of the collective.

In worker-recovered businesses, *autogestión* has been called a “social innovation” through which organizations leverage the skills of their members and create unique

solutions to the challenges of occupying and restarting a business. For example, worker-owners learn new skills, rotate jobs, collaborate with other businesses and universities, upgrade their technology, network and provide community centers, schools, health clinics and other resources on their property (Ruggeri and Vieta 2010). Although the immediate goal of most of these “innovations” has been to improve their competitiveness in the market, these adaptations are also attempts to reduce inequality and empower members within the organization and economies that they are building.

Data and Methods

This paper is based on ethnographic research conducted in the summer of 2011 in Hotel BAUEN. I adopted a case study methodology, selecting one worker-recovered business where I would observe not only individuals, but also group dynamics to consider how workplace structure affects emotional labor. As Sjoberg et al (1991) point out in their review of the case study method, case studies are powerful tools for understanding organizational patterns at the intersection of human agents and organizational structures. Moreover, in their extended case study method, Burawoy et al (1991) explain how anomalous cases can help reconstruct and refine existing theories. After eight weeks in the field, I analyzed my fieldnotes and interview transcripts using open and focused coding based on theoretically relevant and emergent themes and sub-themes (Emerson, Frenz and Shaw 1995).

Using contacts I made during a month-long research internship (*pasantía*) in the hotel in 2008, I returned to Hotel BAUEN as a student researcher and was granted access to the hotel by workers in the press office. I identified myself as a student and researcher with all my contacts, and explained that I sought to understand both their work processes and their experience as *trabajadores autogestionados*. I then embedded myself in their lives, joining them in their workday to learn the local practices, strategies and meanings that they constructed in and through their service work.

My previous experience doing a *pasantía* in the hotel shaped the workers' expectations of me upon my return in 2011. Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1992) experienced a similar role shift when she returned to the site of her Peace Corps work as a scholar now forced to balance the imperatives of research with the demands for assistance from

the community. She captures the dynamic tension of her reentry by describing her new role as “anthropologist-*companheira*”:

“I assumed willy-nilly the role of anthropologist-*companheira*, dividing my time, not always equally, between fieldwork and community work [...] If they were ‘my’ informants, I was very much ‘their’ *despachante* (an intermediary who expedites or hastens projects along) and remained very much ‘at their disposal’ (1992, p.18)

In my case, I returned to Hotel BAUEN as a sociologist-*compañera* and also remained “at the disposal” of my informants, translating documents as requested and doing small tasks, often as part of a group with other workers.

In the lobby, café, and special event rooms of the hotel, I observed workers as they attended to customers, their co-workers and their environment. It was not uncommon to find these places bustling with people and luggage at check in and check out times, creating a frenzy that seemed to penetrate the entire hotel. I was also allowed in the private areas of the hotel, which included the offices, break rooms, kitchens and worker residences where workers prepared for work, organized, socialized and even lived. I began a typical day of fieldwork with workers who coordinated press in the hotel’s administrative offices and then followed them as they navigated their schedules. Three or four times each week, I stayed at the hotel into the evening or ventured into the city with workers to attend meetings and events. These included press conferences, political rallies, protests, and visits to other worker-recovered businesses, meetings with worker-owners, and social events after hours. In the field, I used a small notebook record short quotes and key events to prompt my memory later. At the end of each day, I returned to my nearby apartment and wrote fieldnotes following the guidelines of Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw (1995), often spending between two and four hours a night recording the day’s events.

In addition to this ethnographic fieldwork, I conducted five in-depth interviews and had many more informal conversations with workers in the hotel to learn about their perspectives on service work, their co-workers and the organization itself. My formal interviews were semi-structured and conducted in Spanish with individuals with whom I had worked closely before the interviews. When the location and ambient noise level permitted, interviews were recorded using a digital recorder. I recorded four of the interviews and reconstructed one with notes I had taken during the conversation. I also had the opportunity to participate in two group interviews with other students, offering my own questions and listening to how workers answered other researchers' inquiries. Finally, I interviewed two local researchers involved with worker-recovered businesses and spent an afternoon in the local archive on worker-recovered businesses to historicize and learn about new issues affecting Hotel BAUEN.

My interview sample included four voting members of the cooperative, and one paid employee of the federation of worker-recovered businesses founded by and housed within Hotel BAUEN. These interviews lasted between one and two hours and were done in the hotel or at a nearby café. Of the four interviews with members of hotel, two of my respondents were male, two were female, and all of them were founding members of the cooperative. From discussions with researchers working in other worker-recovered businesses across the city, I was alerted to the possibility of tensions between founding and new members. During my fieldwork, I detected such divisions as three of my interviewees mentioned the differences they observed between those who had been part of the original occupation and the newcomers. Because my sample consisted of long time and highly invested members of the cooperative, it is possible their perspectives on service work were different from those of new members. Moreover, all four of my interviewees had worked in the service sector prior to their involvement in the

cooperative and two of them worked in Hotel BAUEN under its previous owners. I speculate that their similar work histories and experience in the service sector could also differ from those workers who were new to the cooperative, came with different skill sets or were unfamiliar with the high demands of participatory work.

Cooperative Service Work

In Hotel BAUEN, workers provide services similar to those offered in a traditional hotel. Reservations are made, rooms are cleaned, food is served and guests are attended. Yet behind the curtain of ‘business as usual,’ worker-owners navigate a very different organizational space from the “service triangle” of corporate service work.

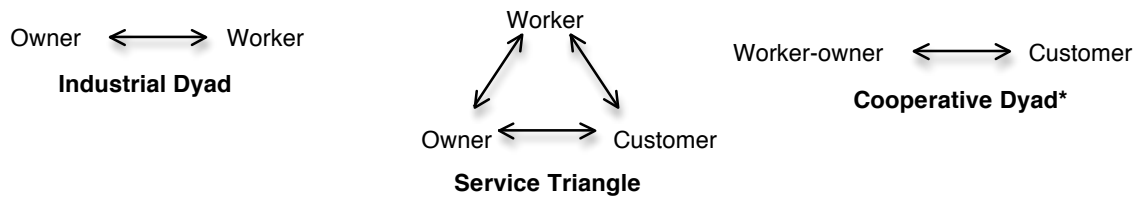
Table 1. Structural variation of Hotel BAUEN

	Hotel BAUEN	Traditional hotel*
Corporate structure	Cooperative	Corporate
Authority relations	Lateral	Hierarchical or lateral
Managerial regime	<i>Autogestión</i>	Managerial professionalism or flexible informality
Legal status	Contested	Uncontested

*Sherman (2007)

Hotel BAUEN is structurally distinct from traditional hotels like those described by Sherman (2007) and Otis (2009) (Table 1). As a cooperative organization, it is subject to different rules and regulations than a corporation or other small business. In Argentina, this legal status requires the regular assembly of workers, democratic decision-making and collective ownership. Worker-owners in Hotel BAUEN blend their corporate history and cooperative mandate to practice lateral relations where workers oversee themselves and their co-workers within work groups. Worker-owners also practice *autogestión* instead of relying on a boss to oversee their labor. Finally, Hotel BAUEN does not have the legal title of their building, undergirding its service work with uncertainty and precariousness.

Figure 1. Actors involved in the service interaction.



*not sector specific

Operating without a boss, the actors in the cooperative service workplace shift to bipartite orientation that I call the “cooperative dyad” (Figure 1). Instead of the service triangle documented in literature on service work (Leidner 1993; Lopez 2010; Paules 1991), worker-owners participate in a more stable social arrangement than the triad, where multiple parties can shift the social dynamics of the triangle (Simmel 1950). The “cooperative dyad” differs from the industrial dyad because the relationship involves the interests of the customer instead of those of a boss, which significantly changes the management process. For example, this new dynamic amends the classic coercion and consent process that plays out between worker and owner on the shop floor (Burawoy 1979) and prompts compliance to become a normative practice that relies on self-management and other participatory mechanisms (Rothschild-Whitt 1979:513).

Expanded Products and Customers

Just as there is often more than one good produced on the shop floor, Hotel BAUEN exemplifies how multiple service products can be produced in a single service workplace. Behind the blanket term “service product” (Leidner 1993), workers actually produce a *set* of services to meet the wants and needs of a diverse consumer base. This range of products includes not only the obvious sources of profit, what I call “primary products,” but also “secondary products” that achieve goals beyond the profit of the hotel (Table 2).

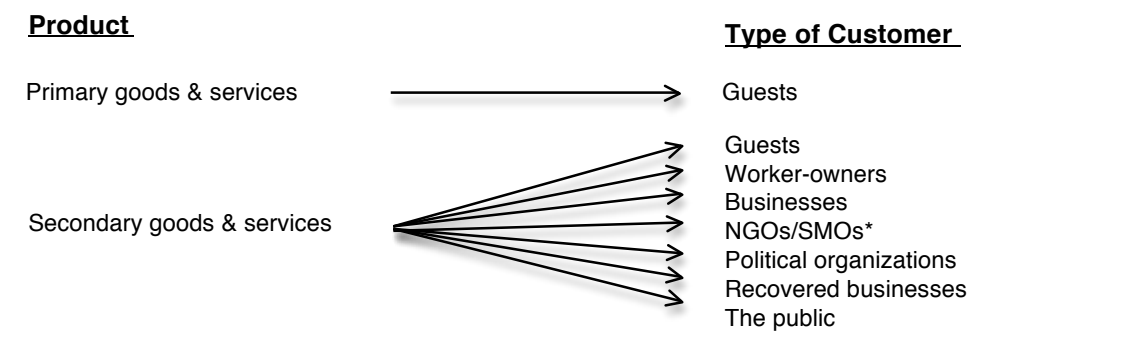
Table 2. Taxonomy of products

Primary Products		Secondary Products
- Room and board	- Theater	- Support for WRBs*
- Event space	- Hospitality	- Workplace culture
- Café	- (Limited) care work	- Public space

*worker-recovered businesses (WRBs)

Primary and secondary products in Hotel BAUEN are also targeted at distinct groups of consumers. Guests, or the customers who stay overnight in the hotel, consume the primary goods and services of the hotel. Secondary products, on the other hand, expand the range of consumers to include everyone from the guest to different types of organizations, businesses, and the public (Figure 2). Differentiating the products produced and consumed in the hotel reveals the many types of customers that come through the doors of the hotel.

Figure 2. Customers determined by products in Hotel BAUEN.



Hotel BAUEN's effort to support other worker-recovered businesses is a good example of the connection between secondary services and the diverse consumer base of the hotel. Worker-owners support other worker-recovered businesses by providing human and administrative resources to federations that represent other worker-recovered businesses. Specifically, the hotel provides services two federations of worker cooperatives, the Federation of Self-Managed Worker Cooperatives (*Federación de Cooperativas de Trabajadores Autogestionados* or FACTA), which represents 70 worker cooperatives, and the National Confederation of Worker Cooperatives (*Confederación Nacional de Cooperativas de Trabajo* or CNCT), which includes over 200 members.

In partnership with these federations, the hotel provides administrative resources like office space, Internet and phone, as well as a portion of worker-owners' paid work time. In 2011, the president of Hotel BAUEN was appointed president of FACTA, the federation started by workers in Hotel BAUEN to cultivate networks and make worker-recovered businesses more competitive. By providing paid work time to federations, this secondary service-product appears more akin to community service than the interactive

service work. Yet for the workers in Hotel BAUEN, this is not an in-kind donation. The human resources produced by workers in the hotel and consumed by the federations are unique secondary services that place Hotel BAUEN at the helm of the distribution of information and resources to worker-recovered businesses across the country. Instead of monetary revenue, the cooperative can control resources and exercise their influence in the community of worker-recovered businesses. Moreover, as both a member and a service-provider to these federations, a handful of workers in Hotel BAUEN straddle the two organizations in “boundary spanning” positions, or those jobs that involve representing the organization to an outside group (Miles 1980). By providing time, space and assistance to federations, worker-owners produce secondary services to support other worker-recovered businesses and as a result, they do service work not only to generate profit, but also to foster networks and increase access to information and resources.

The Emotional Labor of *Autogestión*

Service work in Hotel BAUEN occurs within a different organizational structure, which affects business practices like the types of products produced and consumed in the hotel. However, this alternative structure also has relational implications. Like other service workers, worker-owners in Hotel BAUEN practice emotional labor to manage their feelings according to the guidelines of the organization. In the cooperative, these rules and guidelines include not only standards of acceptable service but also the practice of *autogestión*. In other words, worker-owners use their emotional labor to practice *autogestión*. Thus, emotional labor is exercised in multiple sites beyond the traditional service interaction in the cooperative service workplace.

The following section explores how worker-owners practice emotional labor through various practices of *autogestión* in the hotel. First, worker-owners practice *autogestión* by using self-awareness and mutual accountability to manage their emotional labor in the traditional service interaction. Second, worker-owners use emotional labor to reinforce solidarity among members of the cooperative by training each other and cultivating a vibrant workplace culture. Finally, they employ their emotional labor through their networking and activism to garner legitimacy for the cooperative. These three examples illustrate how the alternative structure of work has material and symbolic consequences for how workers practice emotional labor in Hotel BAUEN.

SELF-AWARENESS AND MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Worker-owners in Hotel BAUEN produce services in a “cooperative dyad” where they interact directly with the customer without oversight by a boss. In the absence of a

boss or manager, worker-owners practice *autogestión* to direct their own labor. Central to managing work through *autogestión* are the practices of self-awareness, whereby workers monitored their own contribution to the hotel, and mutual accountability as workers monitored each other's labor in their field. Moreover, both self-awareness and mutual accountability require emotional labor on the part of the workers.

During my fieldwork in the hotel, I observed worker-owners holding themselves and others accountable for their labor as they managed their time, checked in with others and completed their daily tasks. One instance that illustrates these two facets of self-management involved a worker-owner who lost his temper in front of a customer. It was a busy afternoon in the café as José, a worker-owner and waiter, filled orders while navigating the crowded tables and small walkways from the street-side patio to the indoor bar. A table filled with men in suits placed their order as José jotted notes and scanned the other guests. When he returned with their plates of food, one of the men became angry about his order and as tensions escalated, José raised his voice in the exchange of harsh words with the customer.

When José's shift was over, other members of the cooperative met him in an office, questioning him about his attitude towards the customer. 'You must not have any respect for what we are doing,' a co-worker yelled, '[...] it's one thing to go to the bars [to pick fights] on the weekend, but during the week, it's another thing.' His co-workers continued to reprimand José while others sat in the room listening, nodding and inserting pieces of advice on how to prepare for and address the cooperative as a whole in the next assembly.

José's story and his co-workers' reactions illustrate the emotional labor that is required in the service interaction according to the demands of *autogestión*. Working in the café, José provides a primary service to generate revenue for the hotel. Yet during his

shift, he was unable to manage his emotions, resulting in his explosion towards the customers. Had José worked in a traditional café, he would most likely have been fired for his actions. Instead, José had the opportunity to reflect on and improve his behavior while being held accountable by his peers. José uses emotional labor to reflect internally, hone his emotional control and deal with the shame of threatening the cooperative's collective endeavor. As processes of *autogestión*, José's self-awareness and his co-workers' mutual accountability were accomplished through their emotional labor.

In the literature on emotional labor in service work, scholars imply that emotional labor requires self-awareness and self-control to manage one's own labor. For example, in her study on the routinization of service work, Robin Leidner (1993:178) writes, "...because the selves of the workers are closely bound up with the quality of the work they do, employers work on the people they hire, and the employees generally need to *work on themselves* to do their job well" (*my emphasis*). In the absence of hierarchical management, José works on his co-workers and himself to better do his job in the hotel, highlighting how both *autogestión* and service work require skilled emotion management on the part of worker-owners.

In addition, José practices emotional labor to navigate the social landscape of the cooperative by allowing his co-workers to hold him accountable for his actions, listening to their reprimands and preparing to go before an assembly of his fellow worker-owners. This mutual accountability and horizontal surveillance replace the hierarchical relations between a worker and owner. In Sherman's (2007) case study of the Royal Court, a five star hotel managed with "flexible informality," she was surprised to find, "workers themselves basically ran the hotel, taking on quasi-managerial functions. They trained and monitored one another, exchanged positive feedback, and helped one another out" (p. 100). In her case, the mutual regulation among workers was a product of managerial

neglect. By contrast, worker-owners in Hotel BAUEN actively use emotional labor to practice *autogestión* in order to manage the hotel.

TRAINING AND CAPACITATION

Worker-owners also use emotional labor to reinforce solidarity in the hotel by training members to learn the skills necessary to both do their work and practice *autogestión* in the cooperative. The first component of training involves teaching job skills among the workers. In Hotel BAUEN, this type of training is informal and often done within work groups by founding members of the cooperative. For example, Luciana is a ‘*grande*’ in the hotel—a founding member who works as a seamstress repairing uniforms and linens in the hotel. She describes herself as a “simple worker” (*trabajadora sencilla*) who teaches her skills to others and shares what it means to work with the younger members of the cooperative. In reference to one of her co-workers, Luciana remembered, “When Brenda joined the hotel, she didn’t know how to do anything. I taught her how to use the [sewing] machines, I’ve taught her everything I know.” At 65, Luciana identifies the contribution she makes through training and supporting newer members of the cooperative. Although her children often encourage her to retire, she refuses: “I have seen the needs of my *compañeros* and it affects me [...] This work is so important [*importantísimo*] to me...and I keeping working more and more for my *compañeros*.” Motivated by her commitment to the group, Luciana exercises her emotional labor to train to her co-workers for the effective functioning of her work group.

In addition to teaching job skills, worker-owners also train each other how to be self-managed workers. First, worker-owners provide one another a sense of purpose and

history to the work done in the hotel. Encouraged by their occupation of the business, the ongoing struggle for expropriation and their cooperative organization, workers in Hotel BAUEN imbue their organization with a strong workplace culture. Beyond a commitment to the basic cooperative principles, this organizational culture centers on what it means to be a *trabajador autogestionado*: one who is self-managed, who participates in their cooperative, and who is part of a lineage of activists working for social change. This workplace culture is co-created by the worker-owners themselves to provide purpose and increase group cohesion.

The production of workplace culture is manifested in the symbols that workers produce and consume to generate solidarity. While these symbols are less visible in spaces open to the public, the areas off-limits to clients are a canvas upon which workers construct these symbolic ties. On my first day of fieldwork in the hotel, I found that the administrative offices had changed very little since my first visit years before. That evening, I recorded, “The press office was just how I remember it. Three desks fill the tiny room and the walls are lined with full sized portraits of leftist heroes – most prominently, Eva Perón, Néstor and Cristina Kirchner, Evo Morales, Hugo Chávez and Che Guevara” (fieldnote excerpt, June 10, 2011, see Appendix A). By surrounding themselves with these images, workers at Hotel BAUEN symbolically link their work with iconic South American leaders who workers believe are trying to change social life for the better.

Two weeks later, I ran an errand to an office in the basement of the hotel. I took the service elevator down and exited into a white hallway spotted with black doors. As I turned into the printing room, it felt like I had entered the heart of the hotel. The room was warm and dark with what seemed like hundreds of posters that hung from wall-to-wall advertising events, performances and demonstrations that had been held *en la puerta*

of BAUEN. This was the archive of events hosted by the hotel, a reminder of the support and struggle that workers had experienced over the years.

Images of political leaders and posters of events are aesthetic symbols that send emotional cues to workers about the culture that drives their service work. They are also a part of the “servicescape” that constitutes Hotel BAUEN. Bitner (1992) uses the term “servicescape” to account for the environmental dimensions of service organizations and how they affect participants’ emotional responses. Aesthetics influence emotion and serve as a form of knowledge that organizations can manipulate to evoke responses in any party (Wasserman, Rafaeli and Kluger in Fineman 2000:142). By symbolically linking the hotel’s struggle with iconic South American leaders and keeping an archive of the events hosted in the hotel, workers in Hotel BAUEN leverage their backstage “servicescape” to create and sustain solidarity through their collective endeavors in the hotel.

As these aesthetic features suggest, workplace culture is produced and consumed by worker-owners themselves. In this service interaction, worker-owners become internal customers. To envision workers as customers has been a defining feature of hotel management since the 1980s. During that time, Ritz-Carlton was the first to adopt empowerment and corporate cultural strategies in an effort to produce “high-quality service interactions” (Sherman 2007:71). Ritz-Carlton described its workers as “internal customers” and developed programs to encourage employee identification with the business (Sherman 2007:71-2). While the actors in the service interaction may seem fixed in their positions, in Hotel BAUEN, workers shift roles from worker-owner to customer as they create and reinforce their workplace culture.

Within this symbolically charged “servicescape,” worker-owners train each other how to be *trabajadores autogestionados* not only through the labor practices, but also

through the history and purpose of the organization. Luciana constantly shares her story of the cooperative to provide a sense of history. “They [the young people] should know where they are. Some people listen to me and others don’t, but what’s important is that they know what it means to be here.” As a seamstress, Luciana does not confront the challenges of self-management in a front-line service interaction with traditional customers. Nonetheless, she exercises emotional labor in order to train, guide and preserve institutional memory. Worker-owners in Hotel BAUEN nurture a strong workplace culture by training workers how to do their jobs in a different way and constructing an environment that supports the emotional investment of members of the cooperative. In doing so, worker-owners foster solidarity among themselves for their collective endeavor to run a hotel without a boss and protect their jobs in a cooperative workplace.

NETWORKING AND ACTIVISM

Finally, worker-owners practice emotional labor through their networking and activism to frame the hotel as a public space in order to garner legitimacy for the cooperative. In a traditionally managed hotel, the public is commonly the target of generalized marketing efforts. In Hotel BAUEN, the public becomes a consumer of the secondary product of the hotel as a public space. Beyond simply renting event spaces, worker-owners seek to provide a meeting place in the heart of Buenos Aires that is accessible to a variety of groups. The effort to position the hotel as a public space was adopted from the practice of an “open factory” (*fábrica abierta*) that has bolstered some judicial arguments for the expropriation of worker-recovered factories (Ruggeri 2007:13). In an “open factory,” workers open the doors of a recovered business to the community,

usually providing a venue for community meetings, health clinics, and schools that cater not only to worker-owners and their families, but also the community at large. By directly involving the community in the physical space of production, recovered businesses hope to cultivate greater support from the local public.

The cooperative provides public space by offering accessible rental rates and by reframing the hotel's history and struggle as a public issue. In addition to fourteen floors of hotel rooms, the cooperative has six ballrooms of various sizes for rent. While they generally charge for the use of these spaces based on the size and duration of an event, the cooperative also offers solidarity pricing on a sliding scale to those who cannot afford standard rates. During my fieldwork, the ballrooms were consistently in use, providing venue for presidential campaign events and meetings of indigenous communities, student political organizations, and other cooperative businesses. Moreover, solidarity rates are not limited to event spaces, but also apply to *compañeros* who need to stay overnight. In the summer of 2011, I observed three different occasions during which a single room was offered for the discounted price of between \$40 and \$50 Argentine pesos a night (\$10 to \$12 U.S. dollars) to individuals from cooperatives outside of the city.

In addition, worker-owners use emotional labor to frame the hotel as a public space by networking with other organizations and participating in activism for other social causes. For example, Elena is a worker-owner in her mid-50s who works as the gender coordinator in the hotel, a job born out of her incorporation into the group during the early years of the cooperative. Drawing on her past activism in unions, she represents Hotel BAUEN in women's organizations and government ministries across the city. She often refers to a large black journal filled with contact information, dates and relationships that she uses to keep the cooperative connected with others. Organizations

often call her or others in the press office instead of calling the general reservations line to access the solidarity rates and show their support for the hotel.

The worker cooperative also leverages the visibility of their location in downtown Buenos Aires to construct a narrative that ties the hotel's history to public issues. This narrative is explicitly broadcast during the semi-annual street festivals sponsored by the hotel. While these festivals certainly unite the workers behind a collective effort, the public is the primary customer of this event. The festivals serve as a form of marketing for the hotel's facilities, a reminder of the hotel's continuing legal battle and an elaboration of the social significance of recovered businesses. For example, in a meeting I attended of worker-recovered businesses, workers brainstormed the phrase "Argentina is a worker-recovered business" to appeal to the public by linking the country's past and future to that of a recovered business. By asserting this connection, workers signal their efforts to tie the "recovery" of productivity in worker-recovered businesses to a sense of nationalism through economic progress. As sympathetic members of the public adopt this message, workers receive greater legitimacy for their work in the occupied hotel.

Worker-owners position Hotel BAUEN as a public space by framing their work as an accessible, historically relevant and progressive effort. Like the framing efforts used by social movement activists to produce and maintain meaning for parties internal and external to an organization (Snow et al 1986), the cooperative also practices similar meaning-making efforts to situate the service workplace as a public asset. Worker-owners use discursive framing processes to articulate and align their discounted offerings with the provision of public space. They also employ the strategic process of frame bridging to create links between the cooperative's struggle for legal legitimacy and Argentina national progress. In so doing, worker-owners clarify their goal to provide a

public space to social organizations and harness national sentiments to build their legitimacy in a contested space.

The emotional labor of worker-owners is the fuel that drives these framing processes through their constant contact with other organizations and commitment to social causes. For example, when worker-owners feared eviction in 2011, Elena activated her networks to inform supporters of the pending threat. During one of her many visits to other worker-recovered businesses in the city of Buenos Aires, I accompanied Elena to Brukman, a worker-recovered factory that makes men's suits, to appeal for support. Standing before a large room of women sitting at their sewing machines, Elena said, "We have always considered the *compañeros* of Brukman to be our *compañeros* as well. We are together [*somos nosotros*]...we speak the same language of self-management." Like Luciana, Elena uses emotional labor beyond the traditional service interaction as she reaches out to other organizations on behalf of the hotel. In her impassioned speech at the Brukman factory, she reignited their mutual support in the case of eviction and generated legitimacy for the hotel by ensuring support from other businesses.

As these examples display, emotional labor is transformed through the practices of *autogestión* in a cooperative workplace. In the service interaction with the customer, worker-owners use emotional labor to not only produce a service, but also practice self-awareness and mutual accountability to manage the cooperative workplace. By nurturing a strong organizational culture within the cooperative, worker-owners use emotional labor to train others to learn the skills they need not just to do their work, but also to do their work according to different principles. Finally, worker-owners frame the hotel as a public space through networking and activism with outside organizations to generate legitimacy through the support of others. Ultimately, worker-owners in Hotel BAUEN

use emotional labor to provide services to traditional customers, “internal customers” and external organizations. Through these relationships, which are transformed by practices of self-management, worker-owners mobilize emotional labor for different ends than those traditionally described in the literature on service work.

Producing Capital to Reduce Inequality

As the case of Hotel BAUEN displays, emotional labor adapts to the structure and relational context of the service workplace. As worker-owners provide different types of services in a cooperative workplace, emotional labor is utilized both to produce services and to practice *autogestión* to manage that work. By filling rooms in the hotel and providing hospitality, worker-owners generate profits for the business. By training each other within a strong organizational culture, worker-owners cultivate solidarity. And by framing the hotel as a public space and receiving support from others, worker-owners build legitimacy. In these various arenas, cooperative service work highlights the ways that emotional labor generates capital of various forms: emotional labor is used to generate not only economic capital, but also social and symbolic capital for the worker-owners and their organization.

Worker-owners mobilize emotional labor to not only produce and sell a service, but also to construct and strengthen networks internal and external to the hotel. In doing so, workers generate social capital for the cooperative. Social capital is the benefit that individuals accrue through their participation in social groups. Specifically, social capital involves networks of relationships through which individuals can mobilize power and resources (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:119). Originally associated with the individual (Bourdieu 1985; Coleman 1988), the concept of social capital can also be used to understand communities: the “features of social organizations, such as networks, norms and trust, that facilitate action and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Putnam 1993:35). Petras and Veltmeyer (2003:17) note that *autogestión* has the potential to engender social capital, yet the case of Hotel BAUEN shows how emotional labor can propel practices of

autogestión into resource-generating work. By using emotional labor to practice *autogestión* in the cooperative, workers reinforce their commitment to the organization by holding themselves and others accountable for their work. They nurture identification and strengthen their internal ties as they train each other to learn new skills and how to be a self-managed worker.

The emotional labor exercised by worker-owners in Hotel BAUEN also casts their work to a broader audience as workers provide services to a diverse consumer base and cultivate networks outside organizations. In doing so, worker-owners also accumulate symbolic capital for the cooperative. According to Bourdieu (1991:118), any form of capital can become symbolic capital if people recognize its unequal distribution as legitimate. In other words, symbolic capital is generated by “being known and recognized and is more or less synonymous with: standing, good name, honor, fame, prestige and reputation” (Bourdieu 1992:37). When Elena seeks the support of the workers at the Brukman factory, her impassioned appeal for support based on their ‘common language of self-management’ legitimizes the work done in the hotel by contending that the hotel is, indeed, different than a traditional business. By framing the hotel as a public space and a business truly functioning according to *autogestión*, worker-owners use emotional labor to accumulate symbolic capital for the hotel.

By generating resources for the cooperative, emotional labor sustains the cooperative service workplace managed by *autogestión*. Rather than reinforcing social divisions, emotional labor in this service environment fosters autonomy, encourages investment in work and generates support for the collective. While their ownership and material investment in their workplace certainly affects the meaning of work in Hotel BAUEN, emotional labor would likely look the same if the business functioned as corporate organization hierarchical relations. It is, rather, the structure of the service

workplace that changes the services provided and transforms relations between workers-owners and their various customers. In the service workplace managed through processes of *autogestión* rooted in equal ownership, democratic decision-making, lateral authority, emotional labor serves a different function by supporting an organization that works reduce inequality within its walls.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates how emotional labor can have very different functions depending on the structure and organization of service work. Using the case study of Hotel BAUEN, this paper explores how service work is done in a cooperative workplace according to practices of *autogestión*. Within this context, worker-owners practice emotional labor much like workers in other service workplaces by aligning their emotions according to the demands of the organization. However, the results of that labor are very different. Instead of reproducing inequalities through their work, worker-owners in Hotel BAUEN use their emotional labor to generate resources – economic, social and symbolic capital – to support their financial solubility and social mission. By examining how emotional labor is performed in a cooperative service workplace, the case of Hotel BAUEN proposes a connection between the relational structure of the workplace and the uses and effects of emotional labor in the lives of workers.

This study makes a single contribution to the theory of emotional labor in the practice of service work: it shows that the organizational and relational structure of the workplace needs to be included in analyses of emotional labor. In Hotel BAUEN, emotional labor is done in a “cooperative dyad” according to lateral authority relations of *autogestión*. As a result, worker-owners provide a range of products that include both the “primary” and “secondary” services for many different consumers. Within these diverse service interactions, worker-owners use emotional labor to enrich their organization with economic, social and symbolic capital.

As a result, emotional labor functions differently according to the structure of the workplace. While emotional labor may be an inherent part of different interactive jobs,

the function of that labor is not the same across organizational forms. This analysis displays how structural and relational context of work can affect the outcomes of emotional labor. Specifically, to generate various forms of capital for a cooperative workplace and sustain an organization that actively seeks to practice equality through its business practices. Ultimately, with the growth of both service work and social and economic inequality, this study contributes to our understanding of the connection between workplace structure and emotional labor in the reproduction of inequality.

In light of these findings, more investigation is needed into the different functions of emotional labor in the service workplace. Research into different types of organizational structures could identify what components of the workplace have direct consequences for the practice of emotional labor. Comparative analysis of emotional labor in service workplaces could identify ways by which emotional labor is affected by the structural and interpersonal dynamics of an organization. Finally, investigations into the role of customers in these varying services workplaces could better illuminate the relationship between emotional labor and the production of capital through service work.

Appendix



Photos taken by Katherine Sobering, July 2011.

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Vita

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