When it pays to be friendly: employment relationships and emotional labour in hairstyling

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Abstract

This article examines worker-client relationships in hairstyling. Data are drawn from interviews with 15 hourly-paid and 32 self-employed hairstylists and a self-administered survey. Relations of employment are found to be central to the deployment of emotional labour. Self-employed owner-operators are highly dependent on clients, rely on deep-acting, enact favours, and are prone to emotional breaking points when they fail to realise their 'congealed service'. In contrast, hourly-paid stylists perform surface acting, resist unpaid favours and experience fewer breaking points. Methodologically this article demonstrates the importance of comparative employment relations analysis (CERA) for exposing the relationship between employment structures and labour process experiences.

Since Hochschild (1983) first suggested that interactive service workers carry out emotional labour in the course of their work, this proposition has become widely accepted. However the relationship of emotional labour, and client-worker social interactions more generally, to the structural relations of employment has received surprisingly little attention: most inquiries into emotional labour have been conducted in large companies amongst waged workers whose employment relations vary little. In consequence emotional labour has increasingly been abstracted from the structural conditions of its production, and come to be seen as the product of occupation, employers' capacity to exercise Foucauldian control over workers, or workers' production of meaning in their workplace interactions. This article shows that these conceptualizations are partial as worker-client interactions vary with variation in employment relations, even where workers face similar cultural and occupational demands. This is therefore a call to resituate emotional labour, and worker-client interactions more broadly, in the structures of employment within which they are produced.

Emotional labour: alienation, breaking points and gifts

For Marx alienation has four dimensions: workers are alienated from the product of their labour, which appears, 'an alien being, as a power independent

of the producer,' ([1844] 2000: 86), from the process of production (over which they have ceded control), from their 'species-being' (creative *and social* productive activity) and thus (since social labour in capitalism is commodified) from both capitalists who direct their work and their co-workers (Marx [1844] 2000: 88–93). In *The Managed Heart* Hochschild extends this, claiming that, '[t]he worker can become estranged or alienated from an aspect of self – either the body or the margins of the soul – that is *used* to do the work' (Hochschild, 1983: 7). The flight attendant smiles, the debt collector snarls, both produce a product: 'the proper state of mind in others' (Hochschild, 1983: 7). This product (a customer's response) is owned by the capitalist, who reaps its rewards. And the labour employed is 'emotional labour', comprising 'the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display'. As such emotional labour is understood as a subcategory of 'labour'. Critically emotional labour is sold for a wage and Hochschild argues that this is why it is alienating, not because it involves pretence. Indeed whereas 'emotional labour' is historically specific (the commodification of emotion work in a capitalist labour market) 'emotion work' (pretence and emotion management) is common to all social interaction.

Marx argues that alienation of human creative labour reaches beyond the realm of work. Similarly Hochschild suggests that corporate demands for emotional labour gradually alienate workers from themselves in the wider world. When workers 'inhabit their own stage faces with caution; behind the mask, they listen to their own feelings at low volume' (Hochschild, 1983: 189). It is difficult to continually feign emotion (do 'surface acting') so workers do 'deep acting', like the method actor, adjusting their emotions to fit the emotional demands of the job. Since emotion work is inherently interactive this involves alienation from the self and from others. Workers who are estranged from feeling (Hochschild, 1983: 90) are unable to cope when conditions of work alter. Thus Hochschild claims that when the illusions necessary for deep-acting are undermined, 'personal breaking points' occur, after which workers may 'go into robot' (Hochschild, 1983: 126–7) withdrawing emotional labour and merely going through the motions (Hochschild, 1983: 136). Thus breaking points signal workers' recognition of dissonance between their emotional expression and inner feelings. At this time alienation (or estrangement) is experienced, however the conscious experience of alienation is also the beginning of consciousness and therefore (potentially) workers' reclamation of control over their feelings and labour. Indeed, Hochschild suggests that collective action is most likely after breaking points (Hochschild, 1983: 126–9). In contrast emotional labour experienced as satisfying by 'happy workers under normal conditions' (Hochschild, 1983: 8n) may be the most alienated, as it is farthest beyond workers' conscious control.

An extensive literature has drawn on Hochschild (good reviews are found in Bolton, 2005; McCammon and Griffin, 2000; Steinberg and Figart, 1999), but the foundational link between capitalist production and emotional labour

has been de-emphasized. Thus a recent focus has been whether emotional labour can be characterised as 'skilled' (see Payne (2009) for an excellent critical summary of this debate). There has also been a tendency to understand service-interactions through an extra-economic lens, characterizing emotional labour as 'cultural work' (Taylor, 2002). Furthermore, academic focus has shifted from Hochschild's understanding of 'emotional *labour*' rooted in the structures of employment (the result of workers selling their labour-power as exchange-value (Hochschild, 1983: 7)), towards examination of 'emotion *management*' practices. Management is used here to describe both workers' self-management of emotion and management practices for managing workers' emotions.

Bolton (2005; Bolton and Boyd, 2003), is perhaps the most well known proponent of this 'managerial turn'. For instance, while Hochschild distinguished uncommodified emotional work from emotional labour sold for a wage, Bolton redefines this distinction as 'the incursion *of management* into the area of emotion (emotional labour)' versus 'the pre-existing ability of employees to control themselves (emotion work)' (2005: 99, emphasis added). In effect Bolton argues that it is managerial control over workers' emotions, rather than the sale of labour-power that marks the transition from emotional work to emotional labour. Simply put, this focuses on *alienation from the process* (one of Marx's four dimensions of alienation), ignoring the relationship of emotional labour to alienation from the product, self, or others.

This selectivity in interpreting Hochshchild (and Marx) enables Bolton to claim that workers retain an 'autonomous' capacity to manage emotion in the workplace. Thus, she argues, workers may 'gift' emotion work to customers in performances of 'philanthropic' emotional management, 'not controlled by an organisation's "feeling rules"' (Bolton, 2005: 133).

> Often, during social encounters in the workplace, a 'gift' exchange takes place that has little or nothing to do with the production of a profitable product. The 'gift' may inadvertently reinforce the quality of a consumable product, such as in a face-to-face service encounter, but it is not something which is directly controlled as part of the capitalist labour process and the freedom to offer or withdraw the gift remains with the organizational actor (Bolton, 2005: 32).

As this quote demonstrates, Bolton argues that worker-client interactions *at the workplace*, even those which reinforce the quality of the product (and therefore capital returns) may be uncommodified and as such are not 'emotional labour'.

It is worth noting that Hochschild did not ignore managers' attempts to wrest organizational control of emotion from workers (Hochschild, 1983: 119), but Hochschild's (Marxist) premise was that the commodification of emotion work as emotional labour occurs prior to its realization. This argument permits

that persistent 'indeterminacy' and capitalist-worker conflict over labour extraction remain (Smith, 2006: 389–91; Thompson, 1989: 242–3), including conflict over the performance of emotional labour, as Bolton (2005: 32–3) highlights. Yet it also implies that, even where direct managerial control of workers' emotions is absent, emotion work is no more uncommodified than is the physical labour of a construction worker who bypasses managerial edicts in order to do the job 'her way'.[1] Workers' 'gifts' to clients, like physical labour or corporately mandated niceties, occur *after* and *because* workers have been forced to sell their labour-power (including the capacity to perform emotional labour) on the market. Brook (2009a; 2009b) has done the most to integrate Hochschild into a Marxist framework. In a critique of Bolton, he neatly points out that workers' 'emotional gifts' are commodified by virtue of 'the simple fact that employers understand that the final service product [client experience], whether planned, enhanced or sabotaged, is their "property"' (Brook, 2009b: 539). Employers reap the profits, or problems, that result from this 'fact'.

In an attempt to reveal the ways that worker-client interactions are structured by capitalist wage-labour, *comparative employment relations analysis* (CERA) is helpful. CERA involves comparison of workers in different structural relations of employment, within a single occupation (here hairstyling). Whereas analysis focusing only on waged labour obscures what is common, a comparison of waged labour with other workers highlights the impact of different employment relationships for labour process outcomes (here the specific ways in which workers interact with clients and, as will be discussed further, their bestowal of 'gifts' or 'favours').

CERA also enables the exploration of emotional labour performed by workers in 'non-standard' employment relationships (here self-employment). This has received little attention,[2] despite evidence that worker-client service interactions are affected by variation in remuneration structures, for example tipping (Ogbonna and Harris, 2002), and the content and management of targets (Taylor and Bain, 1999; Taylor, Hyman *et al.*, 2002), and thus will undoubtedly be affected by structures of employment.

At a conceptual level the performance of 'emotional labour' by the self-employed appears a misnomer. The self-employed do not transact on the labour-market. Their work (including emotion work) neither profits nor is controlled by an employer. Rather, self-employed workers' relations with clients are directly mediated by the market, in this analysis the market for hairstyling services. It is worth noting that the self-employed in this analysis are 'really' self-employed, not sub-contractors or 'disguised-wage-workers', although both categories of worker exist in hairstyling. Since they control the labour process the self-employed are not estranged or alienated from it, and they recognize the product of their labour. However little work has been conducted on the extent to which this lack of estrangement extends to their relations with others. This article, therefore, sheds light on the ways in which the self-employed, performing emotion work in direct market relationships

with clients, have experiences of alienation from others and, by extension from themselves, that differ or are similar to waged workers' experiences.[3]

Employment relations in hairstyling

Hairstyling is an ideal site for CERA because stylists complete broadly comparable training, apparently 'do' the same work, but do it within diverse structural relations of employment with variation along several (non-correspondent) dimensions: place of work (in salon or not), business owner-ship (or not), self-employed status (or not), and credentialed (or not), producing a range of employment types, see Figure 1.

The range of employment relations in hairstyling is also indicated by esti-mates that between 40 and 50 percent of stylists are self-employed with fewer than 40 percent of the self-employed employing others (Berry-Lound *et al.*, 2000).

Hairstyling involves one-off but contingently ongoing worker-client rela-tions. For example Gutek *et al.* (2000: 333) on the basis of a random population sample, found that a majority of both Australian and US respondents claimed ongoing service relationships with individual hairstylists. The tension between a formal absence of compulsion and the informal obligations implied by ongoing relations, however is masked by a pervasive 'discourse of the client'

Figure 1. Relations of Employment in Hairdressing

Not in Salon	In Salon [dedicated work-site]						
	Salon/ business owner[a]		Not salon/business owner				
	Self-employed		Employee[b]				
	Qualified/ skilled labour					Unqualified/ unskilled labour	
Mobile Stylist	Owner, NOT Employing Others	'Franchisee'	Working 'for' a chain, or				
		Owner, Employing Others	Working 'for' single-site owner-practitioner				
			'Chair/ Space Renting' [sub-contracting]	Earning Basic plus Commission	Earning Basic Wage only[c]	Trainee	'Satur-day Girl' [casual/ teenage labor]

Notes:
[a] Stylists who own an in-salon business and those who also own the premises are not differentiated.
[b] Only employees who work on hair are included, excluding receptionists and non-styling managers.
[c] Formally and informally employed employees are not differentiated. This could com-prise an extra dimension, but is omitted for the sake of parsimony.

(Anderson-Gough, Grey *et al.*, 2000), in which the omnipresence of the category 'client' predefines and redefines contingent customer-worker relations as ongoing client relations.

Variation in stylists' dependence on clients' repeat custom further complicates this. Self-employed owners invest significant capital and have the most to lose if clients stop coming. Where they employ other stylists and their labour-power comprises a smaller proportion of total salon production they become less dependent on individual clients. Self-employed 'mobile' stylists make little capital investment but depend on individual clients for short-term income and long-term reproduction (usually achieved through word-of-mouth). Self-employed 'chair-renters' risk little capital but their income depends on take, making each client valuable. It is similar for stylists on commission, but this similarity diminishes as the proportion of income comprising basic pay increases. In contrast, hourly-paid stylists' income is independent of clients, who at most provide (usually meagre) tips. Trainees are also paid hourly and so are in a similar position. This variety in worker-client dependence highlights the importance of examining employment relations when investigating stylist-client interactions, something CERA enables.

Worker-client interactions in hairstyling

In each interaction the stylist is minimally required to interpret and act according to imprecise client demands, perhaps proffering suggestions. Interactions may, however, last hours and stylist-customer relationships potentially extend over decades or generations so communication is rarely this minimal. These worker-client interactions (lengthy, long-term, personal) are very different from the anonymous, one-off interactions common in call-centres, retail outlets, or even hospitals that have featured in most discussions of service work (c.f. Bolton and Houlihan, 2005; Korczynski, 2004; Pettinger, 2005). Since hairstyling work is 'body work' (Wolkowitz, 2002) it also involves intimate proximity and touch, requiring stylists to combine conversational interaction with physical manipulation (Toerien and Kitzinger, 2007). Moreover, due to relatively flat hierarchies, with most salons and barbershops owned and/or managed by a working stylist, interactions are rarely directly managed in anything other than an ad-hoc manner. Chain-salons, characterized by Lee *et al.* as 'polyopticons' (2007: 15), may be an exception but comprise a small percentage of the industry. Thus stylists exercise relatively free reign over complex physical and conversational interactions with clients who they often know well.

Unsurprisingly, stylist-client relations have been a focus of most sociological studies of hairstyling (Eayrs, 1993; Furman, 1997; Gimlin, 1996; Gutek *et al.*, 2000; Lawson, 1999; Van Leuven, 2002; Williams, 1993). These studies highlight the development of in-salon 'communities' (Furman, 1997; Rooks, 1996; Williams, 1993), one-on-one relationships (Eayrs, 1993; Van Leuven,

2002), attempts to gain trust (Eayrs, 1993) and the potential contradictions of stylists' projection of a 'professional' identity (eg Gimlin, 1996: 523–4).[4] Stylists have primarily been framed in cultural or aesthetic terms or their social distance from clients explored. Several studies highlight stylists' attempts to mould clients into a 'following' (Eayrs, 1993; Schroder, 1978; Willett, 2000). Followings stabilize current income where this depends on take. They also give stylists leverage vis-à-vis owners, potentially easing the cost of job mobility. Followings are, however, more essential for some stylists than others.

Previous studies have not systematically examined the effect of stylists' employment relations on worker-client relationships or on attempts to build a following. This is partly due to methodological reliance on participant observation. Research into stylist-client relations has most often been conducted in a single salon (Drummond, 2004; Eayrs, 1993; Furman, 1997; Gimlin, 1996; Soulliere, 1997; Williams, 1993) or very few salons (Van Leuven, 2002). There are notable exceptions (Lawson, 1999; Schroder, 1978) but these are few.[5] Since hair salons and barbershops vary, as do the employment relations within them, research reliant on a single salon may mis-specify worker-client interactions produced by employment relationships as a product of occupation, community or personality.

Research methods

Primary research was conducted in 2002–3 in a city in the north of England, 'Northerncity', and involved a postal survey and semi-structured interviews. A list of hair salons and barbershops in Northerncity was compiled from www.yell.co.uk (N = 328). The postal-survey was distributed to every salon/barbershop in the city and reminders mailed. A 40 percent response rate was achieved. This rate is somewhat low, but within the normal range for postal surveys concerned with employment (Baruch, 1999) and several times the response rate achieved by a previous hairstylist survey (Berry-Lound *et al.*, 2000). Systematic comparison of responding and non-responding salons is impossible as no dataset of the salon population exists. A superficial analysis of the characteristics of non-responding salons, based on notes taken when the researcher delivered the questionnaire, suggested that they differed little from responding salons. A limitation of the survey is that only one questionnaire per establishment was filled out. The rationale for this was related to questions (not discussed here) about variation between establishments. In consequence, however, the survey includes a disproportionate number of owners and under-represents hairstylists in larger salons. It is therefore poor at describing the whole population of hairstylists. Since however this article is interested in within-hairstylist comparisons (employees and owners) this is a less serious problem. Nonetheless, in light of the relatively small sample size and other problems, the analysis below is primarily descriptive, with chi-square analysis employed on occasion to test formally the (null) hypothesis of no difference

between employee and owner (or the non-effect of employment relations) as against the alternative hypothesis that employment relations affect relations with clients. Finally, the meaning of quantitative findings is fleshed out by integrating it with qualitative interview data.

Semi-structured interviews with hairdressers and barbers were conducted in two rounds. Interviewees were initially selected by listing every salon geographically by post-code, and interviewing at least one hairstylist in every tenth establishment. This produced a socio-geographically diverse set of interviewees. A second round of interviews was conducted after the survey, using information from the survey to select interviewees from four strata of theoretically interesting salons which had been insufficiently covered by the first round: salons containing chair-renting, chain-salons, barbershops, and salons with primarily ethnic minority clients. Overall seventy-one workers in 52 salons or barbershops were interviewed. The sample included:

- 32 owner/operators (19 of whom employed other stylists);
- 30 stylists (including 5 chair-renters; 10 commission-based; 15 hourly-paid, with variable contractual formality);
- 7 trainees;
- 2 managers, not currently styling.

Fluctuations in service demand facilitated interviewing, which was arranged for slow days, often on the condition that should additional clients want styling appointments the interview would be postponed. In this way neither the stylist's nor the salon's earnings were adversely affected by time spent being interviewed, yet stylists did not sacrifice 'free' time. Requests for interview were refused only once.

Fifteen interviewees were male (proportionate with the industry average). Most interviewees worked in establishments with largely female or mixed clienteles, but seven were based in barbershops. The research did not involve participant observation, however many hours of stylist-client interactions were witnessed since the researcher visited over 300 hair salons, returning to some several times. Additionally most interviews took place in salons, and clients were present and interacted with interviewees during approximately half of them. Questions about relationships with clients were not asked when clients were present as this might have detracted from stylists' attempts to 'personalise' and individualise the interaction (Toerien and Kitzinger, 2007: 654), an important aspect of client reproduction. It may also have constrained stylists' responses. Since there were periods when clients were not present or when stylists were between clients during all interviews these issues were raised then. All interviewees agreed to being audio-recorded. The researcher transcribed and inductively coded the interviews using ATLAS.ti. Interviewee and salon names have been anonymised to protect participants.

In order to compare groups with contrasting structural dependence on clients and unambiguous relations of employment this article draws on the interviews with the 15 hourly-paid and 32 owner-operator stylists (shaded cells

in Figure 1). This approach has weaknesses. It inevitably glosses over within-group differences, whilst the experiences of and forms of emotional labour performed by trainees, chair-renters, commission-based or mobile-stylists are not discussed. Moreover, little attention is paid to worker or client gender, sexuality, ethnicity, age or to salon-type, all of which may intersect with the effects of stylists' employment relations but are not the focus here.

'Meeting people' – hairstyling clients

Interactions with clients, and the emotional labour demanded therein, are integral to stylists' self-assessment. Responding to an open-ended survey question, 'What are the best things about your work?' nearly two thirds of respondents (64 percent) wrote about *client relations unconnected to hairstyling* (see Table 1). Thirty-eight percent of question respondents employed the identical phrase: 'meeting people'; thirteen percent described conversation, laughing or 'gossip' with clients (or in the salon generally); ten percent highlighted the diversity of clients ('Meeting people from all walks of life', 'Varied clientele' or 'Racially diverse clientele'); six percent mentioned sociability or 'getting on well' with clients; and ten percent simply stated 'clients' or 'nice clients'. While a third of respondents (36 percent) mentioned the technical exercise of hairstyling skills ('Challenging styles,' 'transforming people,' 'creativity') as a 'best thing' the deployment of hairstyling skills *to produce client response* ('making clients feel good about themselves,' 'client satisfaction') was mentioned by nineteen percent of respondents. Other things (relations with staff; employment conditions and workplace atmosphere) were less frequently mentioned. Proportions of owners and non-owners mentioning each of the above were similar, however only owners made overarching declarations like, 'job satisfaction' or 'I love my job', suggesting that business ownership produces a significantly (p < 0.01) closer general identification with work – or an unwillingness to untangle its constituent parts.

Despite being central to job satisfaction, clients are also integral to workplace discontent. In response to a similar open-ended question that asked for 'the worst things about your work', over a quarter of respondents (27 percent) mentioned clients ('clients,' 'bad clients,' 'awkward clients,' 'fussy clients'). Notably those who categorised clients as a 'best thing' were *as likely as those who did not* to include clients as a 'worst thing' (27.8 and 26.8 percent respectively). On the other hand owners were four times more likely to mention clients as a worst thing than non-owners, a significant difference (p < 0.05) that will be explored more fully below. Nine percent of respondents mentioned a form of emotional labour when describing the worst aspects of their work – for example 'having to listen to people talk about themselves', 'listening to a lot of illnesses', 'smiling', 'always having to be nice, even when you're upset'. Non-owners were twice as likely to mention this as owners but the difference just fails to reach significance (probably due to small sample size). Mentioning

Table 1 Responses to open ended questions: 'What are the best/worst things about your work?', by employment relation (self-completion survey)[a]

Best Things	Stylists		Owners
Non-styling related relations with clients	**68%**		**62%**
'Meeting People'	*44%*		*37%*
Conversation, gossip, laughing, chatting with clients	*8%*		*14%*
Diversity of clients	*20%*	+	*7%*
Nice clients/'clients'	*12%*		*9%*
Sociability/getting on well with clients	*4%*		*6%*
Exercise of styling skills to please clients	**12%**		**21%**
Exercise of styling skills (no mention of client mood)	**36%**		**38%**
General job satisfaction (eg 'I love my work')	**0%**	**	**28%**
Relations with other staff	**16%**		**13%**
Conditions of employment (eg hours, pay, status)	**12%**		**12%**
Atmosphere (eg fun, friendly)	**12%**		**11%**
Total (N)	**100% (25)**		**100% (85)**
Worst Things			
Clients	**8%**	*	**33%**
Emotional Labour (mentioned explicitly)	**17%**		**7%**
Job Conditions (eg standing up, hairs, hard work)	**63%**	+	**43%**
Hours of Work	**33%**		**35%**
Pay	**8%**		**9%**
Total (N)	**100% (24)**		**100% (82)**

Notes:
[a] Categories were developed inductively from open-response questions. Therefore multiple responses are possible (and column percentages do not sum to 100%). Shaded areas indicate responses related to clients. Non-response may indicate general satisfaction but this is unverifiable. Non-responses are therefore omitted.
+ ($p < 0.1$); * ($p < 0.05$) ** ($p < 0.01$) Chi-square test for independence.

emotional labour (without prompting) implies recognition of the structural imperatives involved in client interactions. Perhaps this recognition is less concrete amongst owners whose deployment and management of emotional labour is directly constrained by their market relationship with clients, without regard to an identifiable intermediate 'boss'. Perhaps unsurprisingly, given conditions in the industry (Leino *et al.*, 1999), the most commonly mentioned 'worst things' were job conditions (for instance 'standing', 'boredom', 'backache', 'hairs stuck in your skin', 'tired feet'), mentioned by 47 percent of respondents and significantly more non-owners than owners ($p < 0.1$); hours of work, mentioned by 35 percent; and pay, mentioned by nine percent. Client interactions are therefore not the most frequently mentioned negative facet of hairstyling, but are regularly understood as problematic and differently problematic for owners and non-owners.

Yet client interactions are framed by industry-wide acknowledgement that skill alone will not generate client loyalty. Thus 86 percent of survey respondents agreed or agreed strongly that, 'If you're not friendly clients won't come back, *even if the haircut is fantastic*'. An interviewee, Gopal (a self-employed barber working from the converted front of his house), explained the causal process: 'You welcome customer. He's okay. Otherwise no come customer. I try to good performance, good talking with him'. Hence stylists' enthusiasm for 'meeting people' is contextualised by the widespread belief that client reproduction depends on performing friendliness. This together with the fact that client reproduction is of different material consequence when workers occupy different employment relationships, as well as differences (above) between owners' and non-owners' negative perceptions of clients, indicates that further investigation of the relationship between employment relations and stylist-client interactions is appropriate, notwithstanding owners' and employees' widespread enthusiasm for clients. The following sections consider this, scrutinizing a particular moment in stylist-client relations – the favour. Favour exchange is a feature of even quite limited friendships (Spencer and Pahl, 2006: 60–3). Within the workplace favours occur when stylists knowingly over-step formal job requirements and do so *for clients*. The favours discussed here generally encompass more than the philanthropic smiles of Bolton's 'emotional gifts', yet they can be considered concrete realisations of the empathy which underpins these, and are potentially expressions of 'emotional autonomy'. Moreover, given a research method, interviewing, which is dependent on recall, favours are sufficiently substantial to be memorable.

Favours and employment relations

Most stylists, in interview and in survey responses, reported doing 'favours'. Favours commonly involved extending hours (staying late, coming in early or on days off), transporting clients to or from their homes, or going to clients' homes to style their hair, either when they are ill or for a wedding. Survey findings revealed that owners were, however, significantly ($p < 0.01$) more likely to report favours than non-owners (see Table 2). Owners who reported favours also tended to describe a greater number of favours than non-owners. For instance one owner listed: 'Taxi service, early start, do on day off, home visits when ill . . . . . .' The final extended ellipsis suggesting perhaps that favours extend beyond what is easily listed.

Owners' willingness to inconvenience themselves for clients is evidenced in responses to a question that asked how they would react if they were fully booked and a regular client came in. Nearly three-quarters of owners said that they would 'squeeze' them in and owners were significantly less likely than non-owners to choose one of two alternative options: booking the client with someone else or trying to persuade them to come back on another day ($p < 0.1$

Table 2 Performance of favours for clients, by employment relation
(self-completion survey)

	Stylists		Owners
1. Have you ever done special favours for clients?[a]	75% (18)	**	95% (82)
2. I [often or sometimes] stay late because:			
A client who comes in late wants something that takes a while	65% (17)	*	83% (74)
Clients without appointments come in and I do not want to let them down	46% (12)	*	72% (64)
3. If you are fully booked and a regular client comes in what are you most likely to do? (multi-response possible)			
Squeeze a space for them	58% (11)		74% (57)
Try and persuade them to come back another day	42% (8)	+	21% (16)
Book them with someone else on the same day	42% (8)	*	17% (13)
Total (N)[b]	**100% (26)**		**100% (89)**

Notes:
[a] Full text: 'Have you ever done special favours for clients (for example come in on a day off; gone to their home to pick them up; come in early to do their hair for a special celebration . . .)?'
[b] Stylist and Owner Ns vary slightly across questions due to item non-response.
[+] $(p < 0.1)$ * $(p < 0.05)$ ** $(p < 0.01)$ Chi-square test for independence.

and $p < 0.05$.[6] Unsurprisingly therefore owners are more likely to stay late at work to accommodate clients who arrive without appointments $(p < 0.05)$.

Rationales for favours vary. Most are not explicitly instrumental. Janet, the sole owner-operator of a small salon in a working-class area, embeds discussion of favours in an account of her intimacy with clients:

> I class everybody as friends that come in here because I've known them for such a long length of time. I mean there's one of me customers just been . . . She's just had her voice box took out because she's got cancer. I mean, I've known her. And I've went to hospital to see her . . . Like, tomorrow, I've got a lady that I will cut in the morning. She's 95 year old, and because she couldn't get in a taxi any more, I go now to pick her up on a Friday morning, because otherwise she wouldn't get out. I class her as me grandma. . . . She looks forward to coming in here and seeing all the customers that she knows.

A sense of community is apparent and Janet's motivation may, as she suggests, arise from friendship or familialism. Later however Janet notes that she does not socialize with clients outside work hours. The hospital visit was therefore a notable exception while the favour recounted above involves maintaining her following. These are therefore 'limited friendships' (Spencer and Pahl,

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2006), underpinned by direct market relations. Other sole-owner operators' favours, even in the telling, tread a line between altruism and instrumentalism.

> Luigi   Sometimes [people] say, 'Oh my money is not enough for haircut'. But I always say, 'Never mind. That's not important. You can stay and I do for you haircut. You can come back and give the money'.
>
> Q   And have they always come back?
>
> Luigi   Always come back. And that is good advertise you know, trust. I trust people.

Here, interwoven with Luigi's description of his generosity and trusting nature is the conflation of altruism with marketing.

Unlike these owners, stylists on hourly wages tended not to recount picking up clients and bringing them to work; they cannot grant informal credit or 'freebies' because they lack control over takings and they rarely stayed very late at work. A few described styling regular clients at home when they were ill or immobile and several 'did weddings', but both involved extraordinary income. Moreover hourly-paid stylists were generally explicit that favours were one-off. Nat, an employee in a smart suburban salon, explained:

> There was one lady she was having trouble walking to the salon. I went and did her hair one time and I told her that I wasn't going to do it all the time so I suggested a mobile stylist for her. So she now has one of those. Sometimes you feel 'just this once' but you've got to watch out that this once doesn't end up twice and, you know, three times, and that's it, you end up doing it all the time.

As an employee Nat has no impetus to retain the client. Moreover her waged employment relationship means that styling is clearly marked as 'work'. Thus although Nat recognises and empathises with her client's needs she recognises that doing extra-salon styling, even 'just this once', may set a precedent, precipitating the encroachment of work into extra-work life. As discussed elsewhere an overwhelming majority of employees (88 percent) agreed that 'I like to leave work behind when I leave the salon' (Cohen, 2008, p. 118), but are plagued by requests to do such work. They are therefore well practised in recognising, and resisting, work seepage.

Hourly-paid stylists express less reluctance to perform favours during the working day which involve a transfer of time from their work rather than extra-work lives. Thus Fiona, a part-time employee in a bustling suburban salon, describes a favour completely unrelated to hairstyling:

> We even get some customers phone us up, say, 'Can you go check in [the] pound shop if you've got so-and-so for me?' Then we run round, come back, say, 'Yeah, they have'. 'Oh, will you get it and I'll call up for it'.

This favour is 'time out', an opportunity to escape the salon, get some fresh air. As an hourly-paid stylist Fiona's income is independent of client numbers or loyalty. She has little incentive to build a personal following and it is immaterial whether she or another stylist works on any particular client. Indeed she notes that 'most of them [the salon's clients] want anybody'. The favour described above involves the transfer of time from profit-producing activity (styling). But hairstyling depends on client presence and during slow times, when few clients are present, employees may be at work but without work. During such (frequent) unproductive periods, any labour use which may (re)produce client loyalty is explicitly or implicitly sanctioned by salon owners, notwithstanding that it decreases workers' in-salon hours.[7]

Thus, whilst all stylists attempt to accommodate client demands, the way stylists 'do being friends' with clients varies by employment relation, insofar as this involves performing favours that extend beyond the formal requirements of hairstyling work. Self-employed stylists with interests in client income and repeat custom are more likely to inconvenience themselves more frequently in order to accommodate clients, and to do this outside normal work spaces and times. Hourly-paid employees have little incentive to extend their styling work beyond the boundaries of the working day but may happily undertake favours that effectively reduce their at-work styling hours and ameliorate the wage-effort bargain. This is not a claim about the relative emotional proximity of owners or employees to clients. It rather demonstrates the intricate connection between, and even indivisibility of, worker-client interactions and employment structures. As such it is unhelpful to characterise any worker-client relationships as uncommodified or existing beyond the market.

Marx's analysis of commodities as 'congealed labour-power' (Marx [1867] 1967: 57–8) suggests the possibility that favours be reconceptualised as 'congealed service' – a commodity whose value is externalized (as goodwill). This value is imminent but can be realized in the (re)production of a following. Realization of congealed service is however not straightforward, as expanded upon below. And whilst employees have already sold their labour-power in exchange for a wage and so relinquished interest in its products (which their employer must realize), the self-employed, who enter into direct exchange with customers, are themselves concerned with the realization of congealed service. Consequently, as we shall see, owners are more prone to emotional breaking points.

Favours and breaking points

For owners, like Janet (discussed above), favours are constructed as offerings borne of friendship. Yet, in extra-work settings we expect favours to be reciprocated (Spencer and Pahl, 2006: 75,84). For self-employed stylists, particularly long-time salon-owners, unreciprocated favours expose and undermine the ('deep acting') conceptualisation of clients as friends.

Thing is a lot of the time. I did put myself out, and a lot of the time it does not get repaid. You know that customer no longer comes, over a really stupid incident. One year I had four days off. I get married and I had four days off and went to Venice for my honeymoon. And it happened to be over a Bank-Holiday weekend and nobody was available to do her hair. She's not been since. And she was furious . . . But when she was ill I went to her house and did her hair. You do reach a point where you think, 'No, people don't respect what you've done'. So, I wouldn't do that again. [Elise, owner of upmarket salon, employing three stylists]

Doing hair, perming hair, and then all of a sudden [claps hands] – you're dropped like that . . . I've delayed holidays by a week to do people's hair for their weddings. Finish up with naff weather . . . And you're thinking, yeah, and I could have been here [on holiday] last week. And you put yourself out and delay your holiday to do . . . for other people's hair for their weddings and then this happens [they drop you]. [Paul, owner of small salon occasionally employing a part-time stylist]

Paul continues, recounting that he worked while ill to appease a client who nonetheless dropped him when he 'inconveniently' entered hospital for a hernia operation. Both he and Elise present favours as constitutive elements of reciprocal relationships in which clients have failed to reciprocate; they have not acted like friends and been insensitive to owners' extra-work lives (especially large life-events such as a honeymoon, operation, holiday). This lack of reciprocity gnaws away at the deep acting required to portray clients as friends, exposing the instrumental core to 'favours'. Put differently, owners' breaking points are associated with the problems of realizing 'congealed service'. If clients' main form of reciprocity is continuing as clients, some clients will always fall short and congealed service will remain unrealised. Over time owners gain experience in judging the likelihood of this occurring. Elise and Paul thus resolve that 'putting themselves out' is not worth it. Since favours are intertwined with a designation of clients as friends, the decision to avoid favours may also involve the revocation of this designation. Thus Mary, another owner, states: 'As I've got older I don't forget anymore . . . the client's not your friend'. For these owners the association of emotion work with the production and realisation of congealed service produces estrangement from others – here clients.

Sometimes not clients, but third parties, initiate such estrangement. Oona describes a long-term client who became ill and moved into a residential home. The client's daughter had previously taken advantage of the regular appointment to meet up with her mother. Oona therefore felt the daughter's disregard of her was especially egregious:

She [the client's daughter] even knows that she comes here every week. And I thought one little phone call. I mean I would have even gone to see

her if I'd known which home she'd gone to. So it's that type of thing that hurts you. And sometimes [the daughter] would pop in to have a word with her mother and then go on. You know. So it really hurt me that, more than anything. I thought all these years I've done her hair and then couldn't let me know that she was poorly and then had to go in a home.

The daughter's lack of regard is unacceptable, given Oona's (and perhaps even her client's) framing of a thirty year friendship. For it to make sense Oona is forced to re-acknowledge the relationship's underlying commercial basis, which after this many years is especially hurtful. In this case, Oona does not abandon the conceptualization of clients as friends. Instead she limits her expectations of in-salon friendship and, in common with several other interviewees, alights on a specific moment when reciprocity is made visible – Christmas.

Christmas is lovely, lovely in hairdresser's shop. Love every minute of it. Everybody is so nice. And you know, they give you something and you think, 'They have appreciated . . .' All these Christmas cards from everybody and it's so nice. Not just for the receiving part. But it makes you feel, 'Yes, you appreciate what I've done for the last twelve months'.

This assertion is revealing as stylists more often describe Christmas (the busiest time of year) as 'hell' than 'lovely'. By redefining friendship and enabling her clients to fulfil their roles, Oona sustains her own deep-acting, avoiding breaking points, but she does so without consistently realizing the 'value' of her congealed service.

A similar story of third party disregard was recounted by two waged stylists in a city centre salon. In this case the client's family notified the salon that the client had suffered a stroke and cancelled her regular appointment, however they did so in a brusque manner, rebuffing the stylists' concern for a long-term client's wellbeing.

Tina: They'd rung up to cancel and [I'm] like, 'Oh, err, what's happened? Is she okay and everything?' And she just went, 'Oh, well yeah, she's just been rushed into hospital, like'.

Ellen: Said that very casually, 'Oh yeah, she's just been rushed into casualty!'

Tina: But that was what they were like . . . [laughs] No, but that were what they were like you see. 'Oh, well, yes, she's fine. Gonna be alright and everything'. But it's just . . . !

Tina and Ellen are more baffled and less hurt than Oona. Like her they were treated as unconcerned bystanders, but they laugh this off. On the one hand they spent less time than Oona waiting for information about their client. On

the other hand, as a trainee and waged stylist, they are less invested in the designation of clients as friends, rarely go out of their way to do the favours associated with this designation, and therefore are at reduced risk of breaking points.

More generally, the breaking points experienced by Paul, Elise and Mary, that Oona worked to avoid, and that other salon owners described, were not recounted by stylists in other employment relationships. This is partly due to career stage – salon owners are on average more experienced than other stylists and more likely to have been 'let down' by a client. But this explanation is insufficient. Many salon owners are young, and other stylists have as much or more experience. Moreover most experienced stylists reported incidents where long-term clients abruptly stop coming. The difference is that waged stylists tend to frame it not as client betrayal but, like Kim (a stylist with fifteen years experience in her current salon), as a reflection on their most recent performance: 'You think: what did I do wrong last time?' Alternately stylists suggested that clients could benefit from change, simply because a new stylist might 'freshen up' their style.

Thus the experience of long-term clients leaving is universal, but stylists' interpretation of this varies. Salon owners' short term income *and* long term reproduction depends on their maintenance of a following and gives them the incentive to provide potentially inconvenient favours. This inconvenience is masked by deep-acting which stresses friendship and reciprocity, but can become unsustainable when client behaviour is demonstrably oriented to an instrumental logic. This is different to Korczynski's (2003: 57) argument that workers understand clients as 'our friend the enemy' because, unlike his examples, the workers discussed here are not faced with client abuse. Rather the friend designation is undermined by the market relationship which it conceals. Non-owner stylists rarely go out of their way to do favours outside of the workplace, are less invested in the conceptualization of clients as friends and more likely to resent the requirement to be friendly, which is externally imposed. Consequently they experience less strain and fewer breaking points. As such waged employees' interactions with clients are both constituted by their employment relationship (and thus alienated), but also experienced as less emotionally problematic than those of owners.

Conclusion

This article has shown that relations of employment produce different forms of worker-client dependence and thereby affect workers' interactions with clients. Hairstylists may like some, or even all, of their clients. Indeed the majority of both owners and employees state that 'clients' are one of the best aspects of their job. Spontaneous goodwill towards clients is, however, an insufficient explanation for the production of 'emotional gifts' (Bolton, 2005; Bolton and Boyd, 2003). It is suggested above that these 'gifts' are better

understood as 'congealed service'. Owners, but not employees, are required (and able) to realise 'congealed service'. Therefore employment relations shape how labour, including emotional labour, over and beyond that formally required by the job, is 'gifted' to clients.

Waged stylists have little incentive to befriend clients and do few inconvenient 'favours'. They therefore have limited expectations of client reciprocity, clients are unlikely to 'let them down' and they rarely encounter challenges to their deep-acting strategies. Consequently, waged stylists rarely reach breaking points and are unlikely to express hurt or to make generalised criticisms of clients whose confidences and sociability they enjoy. However the absence of breaking points among waged stylists is not evidence of unalienated relationships. Their relative sanguinity is only retained by consistently reaffirming the boundaries of their relationships with clients, and differentiating these from extra-work relationships (which are less easily limited). Thus whilst relationships with clients may be experienced as authentic, this experience not only does not challenge, but depends on labour commodification and therefore alienation (Brook, 2009a).

Whereas waged stylists rely on established salons to attract clients, owners (especially in the early years of ownership) must build their own followings. Failure will precipitate income drop and, eventually, business collapse. This leads to dependence on regular clients and the willingness to perform often inconvenient favours. To explain these favours owners employ a form of deep-acting in which interactions with clients are reconceptulised as 'friendships'. This situates favours as subject to the norms of extra-work reciprocity. Since owners' interactions with clients are based on market exchange they ill fit a model of reciprocal friendship (at least over the long run), thus precipitating breaking points, after which owners move towards surface acting or, less commonly, reconceptualise the constituent elements of friendship (for instance reducing reciprocity to annual Christmas exchange). To the extent that owners' relations with clients are oriented to the production of congealed service they are alienated from others. And inasmuch as owners manufacture empathy and a desire to please or, after breaking points (and like Hochschild's (1983) debt collectors), limit their empathetic connections with clients they have determined are 'not friends', owners are systematically alienated from their emotional selves.

This article does not suggest that employment relationships are the *only* things that structure stylists' interactions with their clients. As previous research has shown, service interactions are gendered (Hochschild, 1983; Soulliere, 1997; Steinberg and Figart, 1999), about which several stylists commented, for example characterizing male stylists as more likely to flatter, or 'give it flannel'. Interactions are also conditioned by the specifics of the work being done (relations in hairstyling differ from those in many other service industries, whilst even within the industry some styling tasks require more lengthy or intimate interaction than others), by the class and race of clients (Furman, 1997; Gimlin, 1996; Rooks, 1996), and the social distance (with respect to both of these) between stylist and client (for instance there is less

social distance between most workers discussed here and their often working-class clients, than reported elsewhere (Gimlin, 1996)). However to date analyses of emotional labour and worker-client interactions have focused on these socio-demographic and, less frequently, occupational drivers, to the exclusion of workers' structural employment relations. This article may begin to redress that balance.

To what extent are findings about hairstylists generalizable? Worker-client interactions in hairstyling are characterized by their duration, that they are contingently ongoing, and that they occur with a relative absence of monitoring. They are also physically proximate. These features differentiate worker-client interactions in hairstyling from those in supermarkets or call-centres but they characterise many forms of 'body work' (Wolkowitz, 2002) such as physical and emotional therapies or fitness training, while more disparate occupations share some of these characteristics. For instance a mechanic and an accountant both provide an individual with contingently ongoing service and experience little direct monitoring.

The more fundamental point, that variation in employment relationships is consequential for the deployment of emotional labour, seems on the one hand uncontroversial; workers' priorities, behaviour and forms of emotional engagement being shaped by the definite structural relations of their employment is hardly news. On the other hand, given the paucity of the literature on worker-client interactions that has paid systematic attention to workers' employment relations, and the growing acceptance of Bolton's (2005) claim that workers *at work* are able to manage their emotional labour autonomously, this assertion comprises a demand for a refocusing of current sociological approaches to emotional labour and worker-client interactions.

An issue raised, and not resolved, by this discussion is whether 'emotional labour', a term rooted in the specificities of wage-labour, is appropriate for discussing the emotion work of self-employed workers. This article has shown that this emotion work is rooted in capitalist market relations and therefore cannot be understood as extra-economic, but the differences, empirical and theoretical, between this and the emotional labour (and alienation) of waged employees requires further study. It is hoped that CERA may provide the methodological toolkit for this.

Acknowledgements

Notes

1 This describes *workplace* behaviour and therefore bypasses the broader question of whether any uncommodified or unalienated action is possible in capitalism.
2 Conversely the relatively extensive literature on non-standard work (c.f. Houseman and Osawa, 2003) does not discuss 'emotional labour'.
3 Some of the above formulation was suggested by Paul Brooks in an email correspondence with the author.
4 Psychologists have also highlighted the informal support hairstylists provide for clients (c.f. Cowen, 1982; Milne and Mulllin, 1987; Picot-Lemasson *et al.*, 2001).
5 Other studies of hairstyling have been conducted in larger numbers of salons (ie Druker *et al.*, 2005) but have not examined stylist-client interactions.
6 It may be that this is sometimes due to ability rather than willingness – that employees would like to squeeze in clients but lack the managerial prerogative to do so. This issue was not mentioned in interview. It is however possible that in some instances owners encourage employees to let 'their' clients be seen by other workers, in order to diminish the power of any particular worker.
7 Where stylists 'rent chairs' or earn commission from their styling, their relations with clients are individualised and the situation described here is altered.

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