

**F R O M   R E S E A R C H   W O R K S H O P S***ERIKA ANDERSSON CEDERHOLM**Department of Service Management and Service Studies  
at Lund University***RELATIONAL WORK IN LIFESTYLE ENTERPRISING:  
SUSTAINING THE TENSION BETWEEN THE PERSONAL  
AND THE COMMERCIAL****INTRODUCTION**

The phenomenon of lifestyle entrepreneurship has been discussed in various academic fields. In tourism, and particularly in studies of tourism in rural contexts, there is an emerging literature discussing small businesses such as bed & breakfast and farm stay, where the business owners base their commercial enterprise on personal lifestyles (Ateljevic, Doorne 2000; Getz, Carlsen Morrison 2004). These business owners make a living while they simultaneously pursue their own lifestyles, sometimes around a specific leisure interest (Andersson Cederholm 2015; Andersson Cederholm, Åkerström 2016). Quite often, their choice of work and life is connected to ideals of the rural idyll. Some of them are lifestyle migrants, combining their shift in lifestyle with a shift in geographical and cultural contexts (Hoey 2005).

What these businesses have in common is the blurring of a personal, private sphere with a professional and commercial arena. Although the concept of lifestyle entrepreneurship implies self-employment, the more general phenomenon of blurred boundaries between work and leisure has been analysed as phenomena such as “serious leisure” (Stebbins 1982) and “consumption work” (Glucksmann 2005), or conceptualized as a form of “recreational labour” (Ransome 2007).

The phenomenon of lifestyle enterprising evokes questions on the characteristics of this work, and in particular, how it is performed in everyday prac-

tice among those business owners who value the self-actualizing dimension inherent in the concept of lifestyle business. Furthermore, by studying a commercial practice such as lifestyle businesses, the blurred distinction between an economic and non-economic sphere is highlighted. How this blurriness is constructed and sustained is the focus of this article.

The business owners in this study work in the tourism and hospitality industry in southern Sweden. Similarly to what other studies on lifestyle entrepreneurs have demonstrated, they are not primarily interested in economic growth and profit (Di Domenico 2005; Helgadóttir, Sigurdardóttir 2008). Instead, creating a quality life in a rural environment, preserving family heritage, fulfilling an old dream or quite simply enjoying themselves while socializing with people are some of the values expressed by the owners themselves. Socializing by means of running a business seems to be an underlying theme. This highlights questions on what this work identity implies when it comes to traditional boundaries between friendship and business, and between the personal and the professional. Furthermore, lifestyle entrepreneurship brings to the fore a specific social and economic phenomenon—the emergence of emotional values in service work as a commodity in itself. In the tourism and hospitality industry, lifestyle enterprising does not only seem to be about making a living based on one's lifestyle and personal interests, it is also an economic practice where emotional products are offered as tourist experiences (Andersson Cederholm, Hultman 2010; Andersson Cederholm, Sjöholm 2014). The business owner's own lifestyle is thus part of the product.

Viviana Zelizer's (2005, 2013) seminal investigations of relational work provides an analytical framework for studying the intersection between personal and economic spheres. One of Zelizer's main argument is that economic and non-economic spheres of lives are always connected. Drawing on the concept of embeddedness developed by Granovetter (1985), Zelizer argues that the social and the economic worlds are always interconnected. Still, people draw boundaries between various life spheres and different types of economic transactions as a means of ordering social reality. Relational work in practice thus often implies an effort to reduce ambiguity, and to draw lines between different forms of relationships, such as between "true" friends and business partners in professional networks.

In this article, I would like to contribute to the discussion on relational work and, more generally, on the intersection between market relations and personal spheres, by bringing ambiguity to the foreground (see also Andersson Cederholm, Åkerström 2016). In particular, I will show how ambiguity and structural tensions between different roles and life spheres can be sustained. The article has two aims. First, to analyse how ambiguity is sustained through narrative practices forming ideals on lifestyle enterprising. Second, to discuss how the sustainment of an ambiguous relationship between the personal and the commercial is related to a process whereby intimate relationships in professional

and business environments are valourized as products, in a market producing emotional experiences.

### RELATIONAL WORK AND AMBIGUITY

The notion of relational work as put forward by Zelizer is a general critique against an economistic view of economic practices. Zelizer emphasizes the symbolic value and accompanying everyday practices that come with the negotiation of boundaries between different types of social relationships and spheres of society. In defining “relational work”, she says:

For each distinct category of social relations, people erect a boundary, mark the boundary by means of names and practices, establish a set of distinctive understandings that operate within that boundary, designate certain sorts of economic transactions as appropriate for the relation, bar other transactions as inappropriate, and adopt certain media for reckoning and facilitating economic transactions within the relation. (Zelizer 2012: 146)

Some economic relationships entail specific forms of interactive practices, as well as certain types of media—such as money—that define and valourize such transactions and interactions. This is accompanied by negotiated meanings and categorizations of such relationships. This implies that some relationships are categorized as purely instrumental and business-like, others as friendship or kinship-oriented. In the latter cases, the economic media used may be exchanges of favours rather than money. Neither of them are more or less “economic”; they are just different varieties of economic practices.

The notion of relational work has close similarities to the notion of boundary work, signifying the more general ordering practices in which we create, maintain, and recreate cultural binary categories (Allen 2001; Gieryn 1983). Zelizer’s concept of relational work is, however, more specifically oriented towards economic practices (cf. Bandelj 2012). In the context presented in this article, binary categorizations are discernible, for instance, when a bed & breakfast host promotes his own familiar and home-like accommodation in contrast to what he views as the commercial non-personal style of a Hilton Hotel. This is not only a categorization of different modes of running a business, it also entails different forms of relationships between hosts and guests, and different forms of relational work.

In line with Bandelj’s (2012) discussion of the concept of relational work, as employed by Zelizer, I would like to highlight the ambiguous context. Bandelj points out that relational work seems to be more vivid in ambiguous economic practices than in the clear and scripted ones where boundaries are clearly defined (cf. Andersson Cederholm, Åkerström 2016). The more ambiguous, the more prone are the actors to ordering the social reality and defining the

boundaries. However, it seems as if some contexts do not necessarily sharpen the boundaries between, for instance, friendship and market relationships, but rather, blurs them (Andersson Cederholm 2015; Andersson Cederholm, Åkerström 2016). In this article I would like to continue this line of argumentation, by introducing a reinforcing cultural and economic circumstance. I will discuss how an ambiguous non-business-like business is valourized on a market that celebrates and promotes the emotional and the personal.

The notion of sociological ambivalence developed by Merton (1976) recognizes the structural contradictions behind individual experiences. Binary categorizations such as home and work, the personal and the commercial, have as their counterparts the separation of social roles, for instance, being a mother and a business woman. Although this study primarily adopts an interactionist perspective, the structurally formed expectations of, for instance, the entrepreneurial role, or divisions between work and family/leisure, are taken into account when tensions and ambiguities are discussed. So also is the context of the market, where cultural ideals of what forms of social interactions are considered valuable are embedded in a process of commodification.

In organization studies, the field of study labelled as “paradox theory” (Luscher, Lewis, Ingram 2006) provides valuable insights into how contradictions are played out and, sometimes sustained, in organizations and work places. In particular, the literature that discusses how vagueness and contradictions are constructed and sustained through discursive and interactive practices is in line with this study (cf. Abdallah, Denis, Langley 2011; Bednarek, Paroutis, Sillince 2016; Jarzabkowski, Lê 2016). Lifestyle entrepreneurs do not only seem to reduce ambiguity by drawing boundaries between different types of relationships and, thus, use different types of media such as money or personal favours, but also to sustain the tension between the social spheres of home and work, and the personal and the commercial. In organization studies, the role of ambiguity is often brought forward as a means to visualize goals and facilitate change. Abdallah, Denis, Langley (2011), for instance, discuss the notion of “discourses of transcendence” as visions or proposals for future directions that appear to dissolve or overcome contradictions in an organization. This type of sustainment of ambiguity or tensions in an organization is primarily related to strategic work in large-scale organizations. However, the sustainment of ambiguity in small-scale lifestyle businesses is more related to identity of the business owners, and how they enact the role of lifestyle entrepreneur. It is also, I would argue, related to and reinforced by a market and a cultural context that celebrates the emotional.

#### EMOTIONAL CLOSENESS AS A SERVICE COMMODITY

In a society where service offerings are ubiquitous and penetrate all aspects of life, the relationship between commercial and non-commercial so-

cial exchange is close. Encounters with the hairdresser, car-mechanic or doctor may provide occasions for sociability, as well as professional services. In the literature on emotional labour, pioneered by Hochschild's (1983) study on air attendances, the complexities involved in service worker's abilities and skills in encouraging emotional well-being in their customers have been thoroughly discussed. For instance, the notion of the voluntary or non-voluntary dimension in emotional work has been debated, where the notion of gift-giving in emotional work has evolved to emphasize the voluntary dimension (Bolton 2000). The conditions provided by ownership in small service businesses have been discussed as making up one important dimension to consider that will affect the emotional involvement in customers (Cohen 2010). In this article, the notion of emotional work and the potential gift-giving it entails is analysed in the context of friendship in work environment.

The concept of commercial friendship (Lashley, Morrison 2003; Price, Arnould 1999) has been used for a phenomenon in which a sense of intimacy, mutual trust and personal disclosure emerges within a context featuring economic exchange. This type of relationship embodies a structural tension, since it calls into question socially constructed and historically consolidated boundaries between "purely" professional versus personal relationships. This tension may also be reinforced when the workplace is the service provider's home (Di Domenico, Lynch 2007). Although many types of service encounters take place in the service provider's home, the home as a workplace is charged with a special meaning when it comes to commercial hospitality.

The specific character of the commercial home may, however, not fully explain the emergence of the intimate provider/customer relationship as a product. There is a growing body of literature in tourism studies on the notion of togetherness as a touristic value. The focus has primarily been on sociality among tourists, not merely between provider and customer. There is an emerging discussion on the notion of intimacy and sociality in tourism (Andersson Cederholm, Hultman 2010; Trauer, Ryan 2005), corresponding with an increasing emphasis on the "sense of togetherness" in tourism marketing discourse, where "the possibility of socializing with the hosts" is articulated as a specific offering (Andersson Cederholm, Sjöholm 2014). The possibilities for intimate encounters thus seem to be a value that is increasingly articulated and commodified in tourism and hospitality marketing and discourse. Valuing sociability in the experience economy thus seems to be embedded in a process of economic valuation. Intimacy, or close encounters, is a product comprising an aura of uniqueness due to its emotional character and promises of personalized social encounters, and may be ascribed an authentic label on the tourist market. It has an "experience value", offering the possibilities of authentic experiences in a homely environment.

## RESEARCH SETTING AND METHODS

The empirical context of the study is small, rural commercial homes, such as bed & breakfast or farm stay settings. These businesses offer accommodations, sometimes in combination with particular activities, like horse riding or arts and crafts courses. Data from interviews and observations presented here were collected between 2009 and 2013, and includes ethnographic interviews with owners of 25 businesses, transcribed verbatim and anonymized. The businesses often operated as family businesses, and the interviews were sometimes with a couple and sometimes with only one person. Since the aim was to study relational work in practice, a narrative perspective was adopted to acknowledge the situated interactive practices of the interview situation. The analysis thus focuses on *how* the interviewees talk as well as *what* they say (Holstein, Gubrium 1997). Thus, how the interviewees and interviewers do things with words, what type of rhetorical devices are used, and what they do by saying them, for example, through bodily gestures, by walking around or pointing, touching or moving things, make the interview into a set of practices. Since the interviews took place in a combination of the hosts' homes and workplaces, it was often conducted in the form of a go-along (Kusenbach 2003), with the interviewee pointing and showing the physical spaces of the private, the public and the fuzzy grey zones in-between. These walks were a performed boundary negotiation, since we were simultaneously walking the borderlines and talking about them, combining a narrative analysis and ethnography (Gubrium, Holstein 1999). After the introductory sightseeing walk, the interviews often continued indoors. The actual settings for the interviews were significant, since it was notable that in the more "professional" type of commercial home, where there were more clearly demarcated boundaries between private and public space, the interviews took place in professional zones such as a separate restaurant-part of the farm. In those cases, the interviewer was not even invited into the private zone. In places with more fuzzy boundaries, not only physically but visible in the narratives as well, the interview was conducted in the home/workplace of the kitchen or in the more private zone of the living room.

The tension between closeness and distance between the hosts and the guests became an important and overarching analytical theme in the early phase of the study, a sensitizing concept (Blumer 1954) that has guided the analysis. In this article, the notion of ambiguity work and relational work developed in earlier publications (Andersson Cederholm 2015; Andersson Cederholm, Åkerström 2016) has guided the theoretical sampling (Charmaz 2006) in investigating further how this is made in practice, reinforced by the context of a specific market of emotions. The fact that the lifestyle entrepreneurs operate in a market of experiences, in tourism and hospitality, sheds light on the analytical dimension of valourization practices—how emotional values are transformed into commodities.

## RUNNING THE NON-BUSINESS-LIKE BUSINESS

*Negotiating friendship*

When telling the story of how it all started, and what motivated the owners to start this type of business, the socializing motive is underlined. Leading a lifestyle that makes it possible to combine work and life is something strived for. For some, running a business becomes a means of stabilizing the relationship with their partner, fulfilling a dream of the common life project. But to a large extent, it entails socializing with guests. They emphasize how they enjoy meeting people, and that running the business is a means of socializing. Emotional work seems to be a form of gift-giving, as Birgitta, the owner of a farm stay, says:

*You get so much back from the guests, if you dare to give something of yourself. That is the way it is. And it is not only me who has that experience. All of us who work for the organization Stay on Farm say the same thing: "Wow, we have got so many new friends!"*

Reciprocity is often regarded as an important ingredient in friendship (cf. Spencer, Pahl 2006), and stories of reciprocity are common. These could be small things, such as how guests have invited their hosts to coffee during their stay and vice versa. However, the expression of "true" friendship seems to imply whether they will continue the relationship beyond or between visits. A common narrative concerns *potential* reciprocity—how guests have invited hosts back to their home:

*Some guests who are like our friends /---/we have those from the Iceland, we know them very well. And their children now live all over the world. And they are married and...our children keep the contact with them. One lives in Brazil, the other in Guatemala, the other two in Germany. But it is so great, because we know that if we would like to go to Guatemala we are always welcome. (Gunilla, the owner of a bed & breakfast)*

In fact, it is rare that hosts actually visit their guests, that they fulfil their part of the reciprocal relationship. The value of the relationship is, rather, the potential for friendship. Although they value the potential friendship, the guests are kept at arm's length. The emotional work with guests is thus brought to the fore: they are close, but it is a friendship limited in space and time:

*We have this family from mid-Sweden, and we would like to visit them but... we are not very... I mean...we are not social in the sense that we make lots of new friends who we will then not have the time to socialize with, but we talk with those who come here as guests, and that is enough for us. We hardly have time for our friends at home, so that is enough. (Christer, the owner of a bed & breakfast)*

Taking care of the guests consumes time and energy, and the time for socializing with other friends is limited. This is, however, not only due to practical reasons. Emphasizing that they do not encourage close friendships with their

guests seems to be more about cultivating a commercial friendship—a friendship characterized by a touch of instrumentality. As Lars, the owner of a farm stay, explains:

*You are not close friends. You are kind of friends. But there are extremely few that are close friends. But most of them are friends... if you know what I mean. And his wife fills in: You can call them summer friends.* (see Andersson Cederholm, Sjöholm 2014).

According to the notion of emotional work discussed by Bolton (2000), the hosts often emphasize how they allow spontaneous actions and “give something” of themselves simultaneously, as they recognize the economic potential in these practices:

*When they [the guests] arrive on Saturdays we invite them for coffee, usually in our kitchen, and we have a chat [...]. And then we offer them to go with us one evening [if they stay a full week] on a tour... when it suits them and it suits us... we go with them in the car, guide them around... [...] they think it is fantastic! And there is no economic costs involved for us, it is just that we want to give something of ourselves. And we will get something in return... (Birgitta)*

The commercial dimension in the friendship relationship sustains a tension between, on the one hand, ideals of friendship prevalent in Western society, where the separation of business and friendship should be clear (Österberg 2010), and, on the other hand, the commercial home hosts’ blurring of the two spheres. This work of ambiguity requires a certain type of emotional work, sustaining the *potentiality* of reciprocating. Boundaries in time and space can be regarded as tools in maintaining the balance.

### *Stories of the improper guests*

The ambiguous role of the commercial-home host, and the ambiguous character of the interactions taking place at the commercial home, is further highlighted through typification of the guests. The interview conversations sometimes took the character of gossiping, where the host talked freely about special types of guests. By typifying the deviant guests, norms of the ideal guest and ideal type of relationship emerge. Visible in the interviewees’ narratives are two types of guests who do not fulfil the criteria of a proper guest or customer. First, there are the guests who do not acknowledge, or appreciate, the homely character of the commercial home. These are the guests who prefer the standardized and professional services of a hotel, and do not appreciate the spontaneity and flexibility that some of the hosts find important in order to construct a lifestyle professional identity. Several of the hosts in the study emphasized that they wanted to have personal telephone contact with the guests when they booked, to make sure what type of customer they are:

*We have one category of guests... my wife gets so angry with them... who calls and we answer with our names and then they ask “what does it cost?” [laughter]. And Maria*



[Axel's wife] *almost always says "no sorry it is full" before they have the chance to say anything else. Because she means that if you have that attitude you are not a very good guest... then you don't know how to behave.* (Axel, bed & breakfast owner)

Not being a "good guest" according to this owner, does not necessarily mean that customers are mean or not polite, but that they have a too "commercial" or instrumental attitude. Not reciprocating the invited friendliness and personal tone is regarded as a form of customer deviance.

Second, customers who are too close, or too familiar, are also deviating from the norm. There are those who are too intimate, who transgress the physical boundaries between private and public space. Some examples are those guests who do not respect time boundaries and call late at night in order to book or to get information, or more obvious rule-breaking practices such as bringing uninvited, non-paying guests into the rooms. The sexual overtone in this type of story, such as when a bed & breakfast hostess told an anecdote of two boys who brought girls to the room and caused embarrassment at breakfast, implies another type of boundary negotiation, where "policing sex" (Di Domenico, Fleming 2009) in commercial homes is about guarding inappropriate or "too much" intimacy between the guests, rather than that between the hosts and the guests.

Stories about guests who does not live up to the ideals of the proper guest are another means of confirming the role of a lifestyle entrepreneur. The matching process is important, since the guests are not only customers, but also a type of friend. These stories reinforce the commercial friendship relationship sustained through lifestyle enterprising.

### *Distancing from the profit-oriented entrepreneur*

It is a delicate balance between running a business and being a professional, on the one hand, and pursuing a lifestyle interest, on the other hand. One means of both embracing the fact that one is running a commercial business but simultaneously distancing one's self from the "pure" economic sphere is through negative identification with a popular image of the growth-oriented "rational" entrepreneur. Expressions such as *I am not a typical business woman* are common and indicate a role-distance where ambiguity is played out, rather than suppressed (Andersson Cederholm 2015). Above all, the distancing from the "typical" entrepreneur seems to be about downplaying commercial appearances, stressing that these constitute "special" form of enterprise. The following quote is from the farm stay owner Kristina. She has just told the interviewer about the harsh economic conditions in running such a business and has explained that she also works part time as a primary schoolteacher. This means that she is not ignorant about economic matters, and the following comment is instead to be interpreted as part of a self-narrative on the non-business-like entrepreneur:

*I have to say that I am unfortunately uninterested in money and primarily my own money. I think it is pretty uninteresting. But as long as the business is running, I am pleased. I don't feel that I have to earn a lot of money but I am not the kind of person that calculates how many thousand kronor we have spent on finishing this or that, and how many years it will take until we have... no, it is not of value to me. /---/ my husband is a bit more of an entrepreneur, or what you may call it. He keeps me on the track so that I don't float away with my non-money interest [laughter]. But I do like the paperwork, book-keeping and such. I am a mathematician by training [she works as a math teacher] so I do like to fill in my... as long as I have enough money so I can pay all my... then I am pleased.*

Kristina emphasizes the non-commercial interest in the business as part of her role as a lifestyle entrepreneur. The disinterest in money is, however, counterpointed by stressing that this is not due to incompetence—she is indeed a math teacher. Furthermore, ascribing entrepreneurial competence, or, rather, attitude, to someone else—in this case, her husband—seems to be common in the narratives. This “someone else” may be a partner or another adult child, or a friend who is helping out. This seems to indicate that the owner is aware that this kind of business-oriented thinking could be of value for the enterprise, and it is just not part of their own identity.

### *Tokens of standardization: money and formalities*

As demonstrated above, one important dimension of the non-commercial attitude as a lifestyle entrepreneur is the display of the non-commercial, sometimes expressed as a more general non-monetary interest: “We are not very good at shoveling in money”, as one bed & breakfast owner says. Except from these more general accounts of dissociating from a “money-interest” or growth-oriented entrepreneurship, stories of specific interactions with customer concerning money are abundant. The role of money in relational work as discussed by Zelizer is one of the most important media in drawing boundaries between economic and non-economic life spheres. Money is often regarded as a dissociating factor (Simmel 2004 [1900]; Zelizer 1994), and its symbolic effect lies in how it is used and communicated in the specific situation (Andersson Cederholm, Åkerström 2016). This bed & breakfast owner describes his approach to the payment situation:

*I don't stand there and ask for their money the first thing when they arrive, I take the payment in the morning /---/ if I had been standing there, and asked for the money... just like a hotel, then I show that I don't trust them, I show them that I am afraid they will just leave... that is... I would have felt offended if I had come here and... at least in this type of business.*

Narratives on monetary issues demonstrate a delicate token of trust. It is not only about money per se, but how monetary issues are communicated. It is, however, not only money that serves as a medium for marking or blurring boundaries between economic and non-economic spheres. Other forms of

standards that regulate and specify either value or conduct are booking rules or other house rules. Displaying such rules, in a mode similar to displaying a price list, seems to be a sensitive issue.

Anna, a woman who operates a bed & breakfast, illustrates this distancing act of not being too business-like by juxtaposing her own flexible and informal way of interacting with the guests with colleagues who clings to formalities. She says there are many firms similar to hers that have long descriptions on their websites on regulations and procedures on how to book and cancel a booking. Even though during the interview she experiences difficulty articulating why she resents this, it is clear that even though she thinks it is practical, she also thinks it is too formal, creates a distance, and thus diminishes the welcoming, homey atmosphere she wants to create. Rules are in and of themselves tokens, but they are sometimes connected to money, as the bed & breakfast owner Axel says when indicating that trust is good for business: *I never charge for a late cancellation, if they cannot come this time maybe some other time.*

Through the tokens representing money and rules, by stating what the owners think is *not* appropriate service work for this type of enterprise, they are reinforcing the in-between character of the lifestyle business owner. The avoidance of visible signs of money and rules is a means of emphasizing its non-standardized, personal character. Hence, playing down or hiding the more obvious symbols of making money or reinforcing rules stresses the importance of trust and strengthens the friendship-oriented relationships that owners enjoy with customers.

## CONCLUDING DISCUSSION

The analysis has demonstrated different types of narrative practices that sustain the ambiguous relationship between hosts and guests, and more generally with respect to the personal and commercial spheres. First, this is done through negative identification. This is partly enacted through distancing from an image of the profit-oriented money-interested entrepreneur, partly through distancing from guests who do not match—who are either too commercial in their appearance, or who do not respect the professional boundaries that are still there. Through narrative statements emphasizing that the work identity as a commercial-home host is “something different” or, rather, in-between the image of a “typical” business manager and the personal self, and through a performed boundary negotiation that oscillates between being close to the guests and being distant, a tension is sustained in the relationship between hosts and their guests.

Second, boundary making and boundary blurring are enacted through tokens of standardization—money and formalities. Money is what Zelizer calls a media, working as the most important symbolic boundary maker in relational work. Although Zelizer emphasizes the complex role of money, in contrast to

Simmel's (2004 [1900]) classic study on how money works as a distancing mechanism, the notion of relational work stresses boundary defining. In this analysis, I would like to emphasize how money can work as a token of trust and closeness, by the mode in which it is handled in the specific situation. I would also like to emphasize the similarity between the media of money and the media of formalities such as rules and regulations. They are both tokens of standardization. Money standardizes value, and formalities standardize social conduct. I would like to argue that it is the standardization effect that makes these two tokens such powerful media when the tension between closeness and distance is at stake. They are powerful tokens of ambiguity that evoke distrust as well as trust.

Elsewhere I have described the narrative practices of lifestyle entrepreneurs as ambiguity work (Andersson Cederholm 2015), staying in-between the economic and non-economic spheres. In lifestyle entrepreneurship, indistinction seems to have a value (Andersson Cederholm, Åkerström 2016). In this article, I have more explicitly discussed the role of the narrative practices that construct a lifestyle work identity. Theoretically, by combining Zelizer's notion of relational work with an interactionist approach to ambiguity, I have demonstrated how tensions between non-market and market relations can be sustained in work life today. The distinction between friendship and professional relationships is blurred through the narrative practices of lifestyle entrepreneurs. It demonstrates an active, albeit unintentional, indistinction.

What does this mean in a wider social context? Other studies of lifestyle entrepreneurs in tourism and hospitality have pointed out that some of these businesses intentionally constrain economic growth in order to be able to pursue their own lifestyle motives and to attract customers of their own kind, who value the same small-scaleness as they themselves do (Ateljevic, Doorne 2000). There is apparently a matching process in this market that seems to be about sharing the same values. Furthermore, the providers seem to be an integral part of the product, since it is their lifestyle that is on display. In the tourism industry, this lifestyle becomes an experience product in its own right. Several of the business owners in this study provided accounts of how they realized that it is actually *they themselves* are the product, that people choose their place because they want to meet and socialize with the owners themselves.

This seems to entail something beyond emotional labour, as discussed by Hochschild (1983), and the more voluntary emotional work, discussed by, for instance, Bolton (2000). Emotional work in this context seems to point to two seemingly contradictory dimensions. First, emotional work is closer to the reciprocity characteristic of friendship, or commercial friendship. Although it may be about providing good service, the owners enjoy socializing with their guests and cultivating a form of friendship in the intersection between home and business. Second, it also seem to be part of a market of experiences where emotional products, that is, socializing with others, are valued. The analysis has

shown how the value of intimacy emerging through boundary relational work is a value that is not merely personal and not merely commercial, but something in-between.

Previous studies of markets where emotional value is at stake, such as therapeutic or dating services (Illouz 2007), and studies on commodification processes raising controversial moral issues (Hochschild 2011; Zelizer 1985) have pointed to the general tendencies of marketization of intimate spheres and the blurred boundaries of economic and social spheres in late capitalist societies. Although this study is primarily on a type of work environment where relational work blurs boundaries, and focuses on how that is enacted in specific contexts, the more general societal changes and blurred boundaries between intimate and commercial spheres are worth considering. The study highlights a tendency of marketization toward emotional value and provides a framework for an analysis on *how* boundaries between markets and non-markets are blurred, re-ordered, and possibly resisted, in specific work-life contexts.

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### *Abstract*

This article focuses on the negotiated distinction between commercial and non-commercial spheres of life through the phenomenon of lifestyle entrepreneurship. Lifestyle entrepreneurship is a concept used for a form of self-employment, based on the business owner's own hobby or lifestyle. The article is based on a study of lifestyle enterprising in the tourism and hospitality industries in southern Sweden. The study comprises ethnographic interviews, field observations, and go-alongs with owners of small businesses that can be described as commercial homes, such as bed & breakfast and farm stay. The article uses the context of lifestyle entrepreneurs to theorize and discuss the dynamics of blurring and/or marking the distinction between personal and commercial relations. The theoretical point of departure is the notion of relational work in combination with the notion of sociological ambivalence. By combining these two strands of literature it is argued that the business owners' narrative practices sustain ambiguity and blurred boundaries, rather than draw lines, between commercial and non-commercial spheres. It is also argued that lifestyle-oriented work identity constructs a friendship-oriented form of service encounter, reinforced by a market where emotional closeness emerges as an experience product.

*Key words:* relational work, ambiguity, lifestyle entrepreneurship, hospitality, commercial friendship