# Overview of the study:

Vincent & Braun (2013) investigated the emotion labor performed by students in the United Kingdom who are studying to become childcare workers. Specifically, they focus on how the expectations surrounding the students’ management of their emotions (in addition to the emotions of the children they are tasked with caring for) is influenced by their class and gender identity. They interviewed 42 students enrolled in childcare courses at two different colleges in London: 1. Westbrook, a diverse school located in the inner city. 2. Cedar Park, a large college on the outskirts of Greater London with a largely white British population.

# Differences in gender, race, or other social identities that surfaced in the research:

All participants, except 3, were women, and the majority (24) came from working class backgrounds. They described their work as satisfying and rewarding, but their working conditions were often stressful and afforded them low pay and low status. Additionally, the younger working class women discussed having to put on a “wholesome” persona and hide any aspect of their identity outside of childcare (p. 759).

# The challenges associated with this profession:

Students studying childcare and early education are told that they are “role models” and, therefore, must model the behavior that they expect from the children in their care and perform emotions in particular ways (p. 758).

# How workers in this profession perform emotion labor in response to the challenge:

Vincent & Braun identified several “feeling rules” associated with early education and childcare work. Feeling rules are what dictate how an employee can show emotion to customers or clients. Childcare workers were expected to be “happy, fun, and smiley” at all times and not express any negative emotions in front of the children. They had to demonstrate that they cared about the children, but, at the same time, they could not get too involved in their personal lives.

# The potential toll emotion labor can take on workers in this profession:

Some students expressed frustration with hiding aspects of their identity, as well as some of their authentic emotions. Furthermore, if a childcare worker does end up getting involved with the children’s personal lives, they may experience distressing emotions and feel emotionally drained.

# Strategies suggested:

Childcare workers are advised to practice “detached attachment” by treating each child equally and showing that they like and care about them in the moments where they interact. However, they should remain detached by leaving these feelings in the moment and in the classroom.

# Discussion questions:

* What challenges do workers in the profession detailed in this case study tend to face?
* How do they perform emotion labor in response to that challenge?
* What toll does emotion labor tend to have on employees in that profession?
* What are the differences in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, or other social identity markers that were identified within the case?
* What strategies for coping for managing emotion labor were suggested by the case study authors?