

CHAPTER 13

Emotional Labor in Parenting

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In her groundbreaking book, *The Managed Heart: The Commercialization of Human Feelings*, Arlie Russell Hochschild (1983) described the phenomenon of an organization delineating a set of emotion display rules and pressuring employees to hide their identity in order to comply with them. As Goffman (1959) had discussed earlier, people play their social roles just like in a drama; and employees, Hochschild noted, follow emotional display rules, showing “appropriate” emotions and refraining from expressing “inappropriate” emotions to control the impression they make on others, maintain relationships, and achieve personal goals (Thoits, 2004; von Scheve, 2012; Wharton & Erickson, 1993). Lin and colleagues (2021) suggested that a similar phenomenon occurs in modern parenting, given the recent culture change in parenting (see Hays, 1996): society defines a set of rules for emotion management in parenting and pressures parents to hide their identity in order to conform to these rules and expectations. In this chapter, our goal is to review the literature that supports Lin and colleagues’ study on emotional labor in parenting.

13.1 Modern Parenting

13.1.1 *From Common Sense to Science*

Parenting has undergone a major shift in recent decades. This can be traced back to the late twentieth century, when enormous economic and political changes occurred that were directly or indirectly caused by the two world wars (Overy, 2009): the triumph of capitalism (Habib, 1995), the generalization of the democratic spirit (Kettenacker & Riotte, 2011), United Nations General Assembly, 1948), and the emergence of globalization (Barkawi, 2006). These factors have intersected, eliminating authority and prompting people to doubt their own traditions (Giddens, 1999; Hobsbawm, 1995). In parallel, science has acquired a higher status and it is to science (instead of traditions) that many people now turn to know how they should run their lives (Giddens, 1994), including parenting. Science can check whether the evidence supports traditional behavior, for example, the “common sense” practices that

parents used to feel obliged to follow in parenting. Based on its findings, science can suggest that a specific traditional practice be abolished or preserved. Alternatively, science can advocate innovative parenting strategies. In any case, recent decades have witnessed science playing a more critical role in instructing parents on child-rearing (Furedi, 2002; Pursell, 2007).

Science relating to the parenting domain has flourished for decades. Since the mid-nineteenth century, scientists have come to view children not only as unique and important, but also as fragile beings who require extra protective effort (Hoghughi, 2004). This ideology became more widespread after the Second World War. Many scholars, such as John Bowlby and Donald Winnicott, began to emphasize the importance of high-quality child-rearing and a sound mother–child relationship, contending that they create a supportive and warm family and thus ensure the harmonious development of children (Hendrick, 2016). Such an emphasis – along with empirical research on the effects of parenting on children – has attributed to parenting a key, if not a decisive role in children’s development (Bornstein, 2015). This ideology has been intensified to the point where some even believe that parents’ actions and choices with regard to their children irreversibly influence children’s development (for a critical discussion, see Furedi, 2002). Belief in the importance of parenting in child development has thus reached unprecedented levels and continues to grow (Lee, 2014b).

13.1.2 From Science to Prescribed Rules in Parenting

Given the importance of parenting, many people believe that parents should implement “correct parenting,” namely the practices approved by science and society (for related discussion; see Furedi, 2002; Lee, 2014a). Parenting has gradually become prescribed. The prescriptions concern what parents should do (e.g. provide their children with an emotionally secure environment, give them five helpings of fruit and vegetables a day); and what they should not do (e.g. use corporal or disproportionate punishment, put their very young children in front of screens). Along with these prescriptions there are expectations in terms of results: for instance, children should be physically healthy, emotionally secure, etc. If parents fail to meet some of these expectations, the authorities may punish them and remove their children from their custody. Some parents are terrified that they may be assessed as failing in their role (e.g. being judged as neglectful parents) and that they could receive a dire sanction: loss of custody of the child (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2020, p. 200). The fulfilment of the parental role is now more or less controlled by implicit or explicit prescriptions.

13.1.3 *Emotional Display Rules in Parenting*

Among these prescriptions, particular attention is paid to parental emotions. This is not surprising if we consider the current scientific evidence concerning parental emotions. First, parenting occurs in a social context conducive to spontaneous emotional feelings. For example, research has shown that mothers report a greater variety of discrete emotions when they care for their children than when they do not (Kerr et al., 2021). These emotions may be self-oriented, such as anger at themselves for not giving the child enough time and attention, or child oriented, such as anger at the child for not keeping their room tidy (Dix et al., 2004). Often, parenting activities evoke more negative emotions than other activities (Kahneman et al., 2004), causing parents to experience more worry, stress, and anger than non-parents (Deaton & Stone, 2014). Parents' negative emotions undermine parenting strategies, making them less supportive/positive and harsher (for a meta-analysis, see Rueger et al., 2011), predicting poorer adjustment of children later on (e.g. more school aggression; Chang et al., 2003).

Second, how parents express and regulate emotions plays a crucial role in children's social emotional development (Duncombe et al., 2012). On the one hand, how parents handle their own emotions acts as a model that provides children with important information about how to appropriately recognize, express, and regulate emotions in specific situations, which in turn socializes children's emotion regulation (Eisenberg et al., 1998; Morris et al., 2017). Research has shown that parents' capacity for adaptive emotion regulation is associated with better emotion regulation and social adjustment in children (for a meta-analysis, see Zimmer-Gembeck et al., 2022). On the other hand, how parents respond to their children's emotions is also crucial. Research has demonstrated that a warm and supportive parental response to children's emotions facilitates children's acquisition of emotional knowledge and social competence, whereas harsh and unsupportive responses are detrimental to children's social-emotional development (Eisenberg et al., 1996, 1998, 1999; Hajal & Paley, 2020; see also Chapter 10).

This scientific evidence converges and shapes emotional display rules that revolve around parental emotions. Parents are now expected to feel and express the "right" emotions, with the "right" intensity and in the "right" situations. To this end, parents are increasingly encouraged to manage their emotion expression during their interactions with their children. They should refrain from expressing too many negative emotions, such as fear (which can make their relationship with their children insecure; e.g. Manassis et al., 1994) or anger; and they should also express more positive emotions such as warmth and affection, to sustain their children's emotional safety (e.g. Bai et al., 2016). Such prescriptions have spread and prevailed to

the point where they now constitute a crucial aspect of parenting culture. A survey in 37 countries of more than 10,000 parents showed that Western parents believe that to be an ideal parent, they should show positive emotions and control their negative emotions (Lin et al., 2023).

Based on these observations, one may want to ask the following questions. What are the possible results of regulating parental emotion? Should parents simply follow these prescriptions and carry them out? Is compliance with them costly? Aiming to answer these questions, Lin et al. (2021) came up with a pioneering adaptation to the parenting context of the emotional labor framework initially developed in the context of work (e.g. Grandey et al., 2013). They borrowed this framework in order to describe the impact of display rules governing parents' emotions and to summarize the consequences of complying with those rules. Before describing their adaptation, we first introduce the emotional labor framework in the work context below.

13.2 Emotional Labor Framework

13.2.1 *The Origin of the Concept of Emotional Labor*

The emotional labor concept dates from the 1980s, when Arlie Russell Hochschild, an American sociologist, published her foundational book, *The Managed Heart: The Commercialization of Human Feelings* (Hochschild, 1983). Hochschild described in detail the job requirements of Delta Airlines flight attendants. What drew her attention was that to ensure that passengers felt comfortable, the flight attendants were expected to express appropriate emotions regardless of how they felt and how the passengers behaved. They were expected to possess traits such as emotional stability, interpersonal warmth, concern for others, and a collective orientation. These qualities allowed them to employ what Hochschild termed "emotional management," that is, cognitive, behavioral, and expressive strategies that enable them to align their emotional experiences and expressions with the feelings and rules of expression required by the organization. Based on this observation, Hochschild concluded that certain jobs are not only defined by the physical or cognitive work performed but also involve emotional management. Hochschild termed such emotional management – regulating and expressing the "right" emotions to satisfy the emotional requirements of the job in exchange for a wage – as "emotional labor."

13.2.2 *The Definition of Emotional Labor*

Hochschild (1983, p. 7) described emotional labor as "the management of feelings to create a publicly observable facial and bodily manifestation."

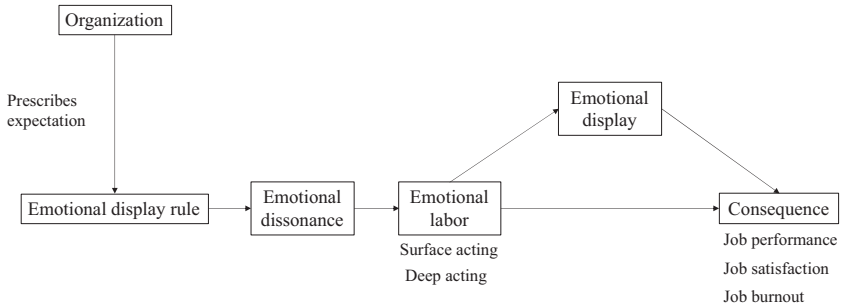


Figure 13.1 Emotional labor framework in the job context

Three main characteristics of jobs involving emotional labor were also enumerated: (1) they involve a high level of direct contact with customers (“voice to voice” or “face to face”) in terms of duration, frequency, or intensity of interaction (Morris & Feldman, 1996); (2) they require the use of specific emotional displays (either explicitly or implicitly specified) to elicit the desired affective responses from customers; and (3) the organization directly or indirectly controls employees’ emotional displays.

13.2.3 The Emotional Labor Framework in the Work Context

Hochschild’s (1983) pioneering work has inspired a great deal of research and theoretical work, resulting in several detailed emotional labor models (Grandey, 2000; Grandey & Melloy, 2017; Morris & Feldman, 1997; Rubin et al., 2005; Totterdell & Holman, 2003). Despite the differences in these theoretical models, researchers have concurred that emotional labor is a form of emotional management requiring effort from employees and should be positioned within a broader integrative framework. This framework includes (1) emotional demands of work (e.g. Morris & Feldman, 1996) as an antecedent to emotional dissonance experienced when perceived emotions do not match the demands of the job (e.g. Abraham, 1999; Zerbe, 2000), causing (2) the employee to make an effort to engage in emotion regulation through deep and surface acting (Bono & Vey, 2005; Scott & Barnes, 2011),¹ and to produce the desired emotional displays, ultimately leading to (3) consequences for the employee (see Figure 13.1).

¹ Deep acting refers to changing felt emotions to achieve the desired emotional display. Surface acting refers to changing emotional displays without changing internal feelings. Both concepts are discussed in detail later in this chapter.

13.2.3.1 Emotional Demands of Work: Emotional Display Rules

The cornerstone of all emotional labor models is the view that organizations set emotional display rules that specify which emotions are appropriate and how and when they should be expressed during interactions with customers (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Cropanzano et al., 2003; Diefendorff et al., 2006; Grandey, 2000; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1990). Emotional display rules are imposed on employees as early as the recruitment process and are later reinforced by activities such as training, performance appraisal, and supervision (Kruml & Geddes, 2000; Sutton & Rafaeli, 1988). These rules have both a positive aspect, requiring employees to show certain emotions (e.g. "Put a smile on your face!" or "Show interest and excitement!") and a negative aspect, prohibiting employees from showing certain emotions (e.g. "Don't raise your voice!" or "Don't show boredom!").

Such emotional display rules – requiring employees to conceal negative emotions and express positive emotions – is especially common in customer service work (Wharton & Erickson, 1993). The organization sets out these rules based on the assumption that employee behavior influences customer satisfaction and interest in the products or services offered (Grandey et al., 2005), and studies have in fact shown this to be true. When employees directly follow the rules and perform the emotional behavior expected by their customers such as greeting, thanking, speaking in a rhythmic voice, smiling, and maintaining eye contact (Grandey, 2003; Tsai, 2001), customers are in a better mood (Luong, 2005), buy more, rate the service better, and are more loyal to the organization (Korczynski, 2005; Pugh, 2001; Tsai, 2001).

13.2.3.2 Emotional Labor and Its Implication for Employee Well-Being

However, what happens when the emotions employees experience are not the same as those they are required to display? Researchers argue that incongruence between the emotions experienced and the expressions expected by the organization induces a negatively affect-laden state of emotional dissonance in employees (Holman et al., 2008; Zapf & Holz, 2006). Jansz and Timmers (2002) point out that the concept of emotional dissonance underlines both the negative nature of this state and its motivational implications. When they experience a feeling of dissonance, employees are motivated to take action to reduce this feeling, which has implications for regulating the emotional process. Undertaking a regulatory effort is vital because emotional dissonance, if prolonged, threatens employees' mental and physical well-being (Dijk & Brown, 2006; Hartel et al., 2002; Schaubroeck & Jones, 2000). However, the impact of this regulatory effort may depend on how it is made.

Hochschild (1983) followed Goffman's (1959) metaphor of different ways of acting in a drama, describing two ways in which employees work to

regulate their emotions, that is, two emotional labor strategies: surface acting and deep acting. Surface acting refers to modifying emotional expressions without changing internal feelings. It involves suppressing the display of felt emotions and faking the emotion required by the organization. Deep acting, on the other hand, refers to modifying actual feelings so that they are consistent with the employer's emotional display rules. It entails an effort to change the felt emotion in order to elicit the appropriate emotional display. As discussed later, the distinction between surface and depth acting is critical in demonstrating and explaining the varying impact of emotional labor on employees' well-being (see also Grandey, 2000; Grandey & Gabriel, 2015; Grandey & Melloy, 2017; Scott & Barnes, 2011).

Following Hochschild's (1983) description of emotional labor strategies, studies have accumulated evidence that the two forms differ in their effects on employees' well-being. Most studies have found that surface acting reliably and consistently predicts unfavorable consequences such as worse job performance, less job satisfaction, more psychological stress, more psychosomatic complaints, and more burnout symptoms (Bono & Vey, 2005; Grandey & Gabriel, 2015; Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011; Huppertz et al., 2020; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013); however, the findings regarding the effect of deep acting are not as consistent across studies (Grandey, 2000; Grandey & Sayre, 2019). Although some studies have shown a damaging effect of deep acting (although it is still thought to be less harmful than surface acting; Mikolajczak et al., 2007), most studies have found that deep acting is neither beneficial nor detrimental (e.g. Brotheridge & Lee, 2002; Hülsheger & Schewe, 2011).

The concept of "regulatory effort" further explains the different consequences of surface and deep acting (Huppertz et al., 2020). Although surface and deep acting are both effortful, the amount of regulatory effort they require differs. In particular, if individuals rely more on surface acting to meet the organization's rules, their effort and cognitive resources are more strained due to the need to monitor emotional expression constantly. The constant depletion of resources eventually causes tension and strain; if it becomes chronic, it can result in burnout (Brotheridge & Grandey, 2002). Deep acting also requires cognitive resources to manage emotions, but these efforts are only needed at the beginning; this explains the weaker predictive relationship of deep acting with poor adaptation (see Grandey & Sayre, 2019).

13.3 Extending the Emotional Labor Framework to Parenting

13.3.1 Rationale

Does emotional labor also occur in parenting? Hochschild (1983) had already foreseen this possibility in her seminal book. She suggested that

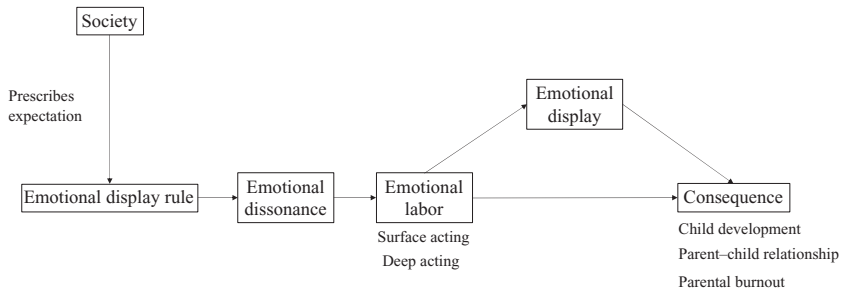


Figure 13.2 Emotional labor framework in the parenting context

emotional labor may occur in the professional context and in private life, such as in the family. Hochschild pointed out that of all relationships in the family, emotional labor may be most pronounced in the parent-child relationship, given the strong bond between parents and their children (therefore, more contacts). However, for decades the idea remained at the stage of Hochschild's early reflections and some pioneering work (see Wharton & Erickson, 1993, 1995 for how emotional labor may be performed within the family). Research on emotional labor has so far mainly focused on the professional sphere, and the assumption seems fairly widespread that emotional labor is only performed in return for salary, bonuses, or rewards (Grandey & Melloy, 2017; Hülshager & Schewe, 2011; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013; von Scheve, 2012). However, with recent developments in parenting, this picture is changing (see Section 13.1, Modern Parenting); emotional labor in parenting may have been a long-standing phenomenon that has been ignored because it is a taboo subject. In a pioneering study, however, Lin and colleagues (2021) extended the emotional labor framework to the parenting context (see Figure 13.2).

Lin and colleagues (2021) point out that features of contemporary parenting present characteristics of emotional labor. First, the parent-child relationship is one of the closest social relationships (it includes "voice-to-voice," "face-to-face," and even "body-to-body" interaction; Bornstein, 2015). Second, as also briefly summarized in Section 13.1, Modern Parenting, modern parents are now increasingly expected to regulate their emotions during interaction with children. This phenomenon is particularly evident in Western countries, where mothers and fathers are supposed to show positive emotions (e.g. being loving) and maintain patience to be considered ideal parents (Lin et al., 2023). Third, such emotional display rules have been explicitly expressed in government policies such as the Council of Europe's policy on positive parenting

(Rodrigo, 2010) or the positive parenting tips recommended by the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities (2020), etc. The implementation of these rules is therefore institutionally monitored and controlled. As we have seen, these characteristics are consistent with Hochschild's (1983) observation on the characteristics/determinants of emotional labor in the work context, confirming that the concept is eligible to be applied in parenting.

Given such eligibility, Lin and colleagues (2021) proposed their framework model of "emotional labor in parenting." As they describe in this framework, society, like an employer, sets explicit rules on emotional expression. And just as employees need to follow emotional display rules to meet organizational expectations and to be recognized as good employees, parents need to follow emotional display rules to meet societal and institutional expectations and to be recognized as parents who are at least good enough (and preferably ideal). As in the work context, these efforts may lead to an immediate beneficial outcome, that is, children may feel positive just as customers do when they observe positive emotional expressions from employees; yet these efforts may eventually jeopardize parental well-being, for example by leading to parental burn-out. Together with other studies, the research by Lin and colleagues provides support for their proposal, as described next.

13.3.1.1 Emotional Demands of Parenting: Emotional Display Rules

To begin with, as we saw in Section 13.1, Modern Parenting, social institutions such as governments (e.g. Rodrigo, 2010) and media (see Douglas & Michaels, 2004) have presented parents with a specific set of emotional display rules. As we might expect, Lin and colleagues (2021) have shown that some parents internalize these rules to the extent that, as shown in a later study, parents think they need to show positive emotions and control their negative emotions in order to be perceived as an ideal parent (Lin et al., 2023). It is true that parents may make efforts to align their expressed emotions with the rules, and that this may indeed result in better parenting strategies (Minnotte et al., 2010). Such strategies may eventually benefit children in terms of improving their emotional state (Olszanowski et al., 2020) and subsequent social functioning (e.g. Chen et al., 2019). However, this is only one side of the coin. As discussed next, there is disturbing evidence that parents' regulatory efforts can also be detrimental to their children's well-being.

13.3.1.2 Emotional Labor and Its Implication for Parents' Well-Being

Parental regulatory efforts may be costly for parents, just as emotional labor is costly for employees. Le and Impett's (2016) pioneering daily diary study found evidence that parents' efforts to control emotional

expression can have a negative impact on their emotional well-being and the parent–child relationship (see also Karnilowicz et al., 2019; Waters et al., 2020). Lin and colleagues (2021) went a step further by demonstrating that such efforts (to satisfy emotional display rules) may be so demanding that they put parents at risk of parental burnout, although this depends on how parents make their efforts. Parents are at greater risk of burnout when they prefer surface acting (or expressive suppression; see Lin & Szczygiel, 2022) but are at lower risk when they prefer deep acting (or cognitive reappraisal; Lin et al., 2022). Either way, research has shown that when parental burnout occurs, some parents may become neglectful or violent toward their children (Brianda et al., 2020; Mikolajczak et al., 2018, 2019), and that this maltreatment may eventually compromise children’s development (Cicchetti, 2016). It is, therefore, plausible that well-intentioned parental regulatory efforts may have a paradoxical, undesirable effect and work against the child.

13.4 Future Research Directions

As discussed in this chapter, Lin and colleagues (2021), together with other pioneering researchers, provided convincing evidence to support their proposal to adapt the emotional labor framework identified in the work context (see Figure 13.1) to the parenting context (see Figure 13.2). Parents perceive the existence of emotional display rules and put effort into aligning their emotions with those rules through different emotional labor strategies, which ultimately have different consequences (such as different vulnerability to parental burnout). The strengths of this framework are that it provides a backbone connecting society and individuals. It specifically delineates the interplay between society’s rules for emotional expression and parents’ regulatory efforts, emotional responses, and well-being. For this framework to be useful, it should not only contribute to theoretical understanding but also provide direction for future studies. As we will see next, this backbone framework has the potential to open many future research directions in the study of parenting, just as it has contributed to organizational literature.

13.4.1 Within the Emotional Labor Framework

Most obviously, parenting researchers can examine the components of this backbone framework in detail. First, Hochschild (1983), in her conceptualization of emotional labor, emphasized the importance of culture in shaping emotional display rules. Following this reasoning, we can expect that rules on parental emotional display, such as which emotions can be expressed and which should be hidden, may differ across cultures

(see Matsumoto & Hwang, 2012). Cultural differences in emotional display rules may further influence how parents follow the rules and thus their effect on their well-being; however, future research is needed to verify and investigate this. Second, in this chapter we have followed Hochschild's (1983) original approach, focusing on only two emotional labor strategies. In real-world parenting, parents use a broader range of emotion regulation strategies to comply with the emotional display rules (see Part II of this book), and these affect their well-being differently. In fact, researchers have already suggested that deep and surface acting are not the only ways to tune emotions to emotional display rules (see Diefendorff et al., 2008; Mikolajczak et al., 2009). Pursuing the investigation of the impact of parents' emotion regulation in their parental role and its impact on their well-being through a wider range of emotion regulation strategies will prove fruitful.

13.4.2 Beyond the Emotional Labor Framework

Researchers may also find it promising to include exogenous moderators in this backbone framework. First, there may be factors influencing parents' propensity to choose specific emotional labor strategies, resulting in different consequences for parental well-being. In organizational literature, service employees' personality traits have been shown to be a key variable affecting the type of emotional labor they perform (Austin et al., 2005). For example, research findings indicate that individuals with high negative affectivity are more likely to use surface than deep acting (Bono & Vey, 2005; Hülshager & Schewe, 2011; Kammeyer-Mueller et al., 2013; Mesmer-Magnus et al., 2012). This may be because, for people who have a dispositional tendency to experience negative emotions and are therefore inclined to process information in a way that directs them towards negative affective states (Larsen & Ketelaar, 1991), using deep acting to evoke positive emotions can be a real challenge. Thus, feigning positive emotions becomes the only way to meet their role expectations. On this basis, we can expect that negative affectivity may moderate parents' adoption of emotional labor strategies. Lin and Szczygiel (2022) provided preliminary evidence by showing that parents who place more emphasis on their mistakes in parenting have a higher propensity for expressive suppression.

In addition to employees' personality traits, research on emotional labor also points to the importance of the circumstances – customer behavior such as mistreatment – in predicting the use of emotional labor strategies. These studies have found that employees who experience rudeness and mistreatment from customers find it easier and more convenient to use surface acting than deep acting and are therefore more likely to do so (Adams & Webster, 2013; Sliter et al., 2010; Szczygiel &

Bazińska, 2021). In view of such evidence, we predict that in the parenting context, children's challenging behaviors (like those of customers in the organizational context) may act as a crucial factor predisposing parents to use surface acting more often than deep acting and thus put them at risk of ill-being. In a recently published study, Zhang et al. (2023) demonstrated that mothers whose children exhibited more challenging behaviors experienced more negative emotions, which was associated with using multiple emotion regulation strategies. Although children's challenging behavior was not directly significantly related to mothers' emotion regulation strategies, the associations found between it and suppression and cognitive reappraisal support our reasoning here. Specifically, children's challenging behavior was positively, albeit insignificantly, related to mothers' expressive suppression and negatively, albeit insignificantly, related to cognitive reappraisal.

Finally, moderating factors may mitigate or exacerbate emotional labor's consequences for parents' well-being. When employees have no choice but to use emotional labor, their personality traits can mitigate the potential harm it causes. As a personality trait, emotional intelligence seems to be a promising moderator of this kind. Emotional intelligence (also known as emotional competence) refers to individuals' ability to identify, express, understand, regulate and use their own and others' emotions (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). Mikolajczak et al. (2007) showed that when employees have higher emotional intelligence, their regulatory efforts to perform emotional labor are reduced, which in turn predicts a lower risk of job burnout. Based on this line of research, it can be expected that parents' high emotional intelligence can reduce the regulatory efforts inherent to emotional labor and, consequently, its negative impact on their well-being. Lin and Szczygiel (2022) provided initial evidence for this. They showed that parents' emotional intelligence moderates the effects of expressive suppression on parental burnout such that the effects are reduced (although they remain significant) when parents have higher emotional intelligence.

To sum up, after our introduction to the emotional labor framework in the work context, in this section we have summarized the reasons for extending the emotional labor framework to the parenting context, described current evidence in favor of this proposal, and finally suggested a few fascinating areas that future studies may find it fruitful to explore further. Taken together, this demonstrates what a promising approach this is.

13.5 Conclusion

The goal of this chapter was to introduce Lin and colleagues' (2021) attempt to adapt emotional labor, originally intended for work, to the

parenting context. As they themselves also noted, equating parenting with labor activity is controversial, as parenting does not meet the fundamental characteristic of “labor”: being financially rewarded. With this in mind, Lin and colleagues (p. 2703) pointed out that their import of emotional labor to the parenting context “does not amount to reducing parenting to a job”; rather, it should be seen as a metaphor to describe the situation faced by today’s parents, who are expected to adhere to rules regarding emotions when raising their children.

As we have seen in this chapter, Lin and colleagues’ (2021) emotional labor framework offers a compelling theoretical lens to explain the mechanism by which desirable goals – to show more positive and demonstrate fewer negative emotions while interacting with children – can be so demanding in terms of emotional labor that they lead to poorer parent–child relationships or even severe costs such as burnout. The emotional labor framework emerged from the need to understand the service industry’s new labor form (Hochschild, 1983). It has subsequently generated hundreds of studies about the cost of emotion management in service jobs. Although a handful of studies exploring emotional labor in a family context have already emerged (e.g. Wharton & Erickson, 1993), there has been little investigation of parents’ regulatory efforts (the main exceptions being Le & Impett, 2016 and Lin et al., 2021). Yet these regulatory efforts probably resemble the emotional labor concept very closely in that modern parenting culture places external pressure on parents by prescribing emotional display rules (Lin et al., 2021). In this sense, this framework contributes to a better understanding of the emotional experience of modern parents.

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