

# Children's socialization into cleaning practices: a cross-cultural perspective



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**ABSTRACT.** Focusing on everyday hygiene and household cleaning tasks, this study examines the socialization practices and parenting strategies that foster familial and cultural values such as autonomy, interdependence and responsibility. Through the micro-analysis of videotaped family interaction in Los Angeles and Rome, this article looks at actual practices and activity trajectories to reveal the ways in which families organize themselves, attach values to different aspects of activities, and build diverse perspectives on authoritativeness. The comparative analysis points to differences across cultures, families and activities in the style and amount of parental control over cleaning tasks, and the number of options given to children in the process and sequence of tasks. Examinations of diverse parenting and conversational strategies reveal how particular practices may lead to the construction or limitation of children's agency

**KEY WORDS:** *autonomy, children's agency, choice offers, cleaning, directives, family, interaction, interdependence, negotiation, parenting strategies, socialization*

## Introduction

Hygiene and household cleaning are central to the organization of family members. Like many other activities in the home, the organization and accomplishment of cleaning tasks, through interaction and practices, contributes to the social order of a family. Through everyday communicative practices and activities, children are socialized into processes of cleaning, and simultaneously into particular family interaction styles and moral understandings. This article argues that cleaning and hygiene tasks are crossroads where socialization and organizational practices meet. Parents often encourage children to perform tasks not only for organizational purposes, but also for the socialization into certain skills and values as its own goal. Socialization goals that parents may feel are important to foster in their

children, such as responsibility, interdependence or autonomy, are often imbued with cultural and familial ideologies and assumptions. This article explores children's socialization into cleaning practices in eight families from Los Angeles and eight families from Rome to illuminate the ways in which families organize themselves within a household, create family social order, and pass onto children cultural and familial values. It examines diverse parenting and conversational strategies used to accomplish hygiene and household cleaning tasks, and the possible implications of various strategies and practices, particularly focusing on the construction and limitation of children's agency.

Anthropological reflections on cleanliness and organization of the immediate material world show that such practices are related to a sense of moral, cognitive and material order (Douglas, 1966; Bateson, 1979). The 1970s saw heightened scholarly attention to notions of cleanliness, greatly due to Mary Douglas' publication, *Purity and Danger* (1966), and its success in both the anthropological and the sociological arenas. Douglas' work rendered cleanliness inseparable from ideas of cognitive and ritual order. According to Douglas, things are not considered dirty in and of themselves, but because of where they stand in a system of categories. Classifying something as dirt helps to bring order and establishes boundaries for a given culture. She suggests that things that exist at the borders of society, or on the boundaries between categories, threaten social order because they do not fit neatly into a society's classification of the world (e.g. death, birth and pregnancy exist at the border between different stages of life, and are frequently surrounded by taboos). Though it emerged from observations in religion, the model proposed in *Purity and Danger* was quickly applied to many other domains, and the connection between rituals of purification and social order soon saturated the discourse on cleanliness. While notions of cleanliness in the scientific community have often gotten lost in meanings and symbols, this article turns the lens back on the place of its origins: the home and the person.

Taking a fresh look at cleaning as a set of practices, the study presented here returns the issue of cleaning back to the household space by drawing on a two-site study of children's apprenticeship into hygiene and household cleaning tasks. Looking at the ways in which families of different cultural backgrounds and countries of residence deal with cleaning cues us to questions concerning perspectives on socialization, social organization, and hierarchies of values and socialization goals in various families and communities.

Echoing Neff (2003), examinations of parenting *practices* can illuminate the various ways parents meet multiple socialization goals. Such goals as independence and interdependence coexist not only intra-culturally, but also intrapersonally, and autonomy and connectedness in parent-child relationships are often mutually supportive rather than mutually exclusive. Elements of different values and goals can be interwoven through various practices and even into one activity or interaction. Certain values can, and often do, carry more weight in a community. However, instead of focusing on the relative emphasis of autonomy and interdependence in different cultures, this article argues that it is more useful and informative to identify the practices that foster ideologies and socialization goals within and across families. Here, we would also like to note that parenting strategies, such as exerting parental control over tasks or offering options to

children, varies not only across communities and families, but also depending on different tasks and activity domains.

According to social domain theory as articulated by psychologists (Turiel, 1983; Nucci and Weber, 1995; Nucci and Smetana, 1996), parent-child interactions will differ according to whether they are perceived as moral, conventional, prudential or personal issues. Within the moral domain, parents are concerned with teaching children how they ought to behave towards one another in relation to others' well-being and rights (e.g. not to hit another person). Conventional reasoning is based on concerns for cultural and familial rules, routines, tradition, and authority that facilitate and maintain social organization (e.g. good manners). The prudential domain pertains to safety and health. Prudential rules regulate acts that have negative physical consequences to the self (e.g. climbing a tall tree; not bathing). Finally, the personal domain includes actions that pertain only to oneself and falls beyond the realm of social and moral regulation. Instead of being subject to right or wrong, these issues call for preference and choice (e.g. hairstyle one chooses; clothes one wears). In studies examining white, middle-class mothers and their children, Nucci and Weber (1995) and Nucci and Smetana (1996) found that personal choice and freedom are often viewed by parents as important elements in a child's development that foster autonomy, self-esteem, agency, and competence.

Nucci and Weber (1995) and Nucci and Smetana (1996) found that mothers restricted and responded to children differently during interactions in which they perceived as personal events than they did in response to events of a social-normative nature. Interactions were qualitatively different, in that mothers responded to personal issues by giving their children indirect social messages, including prerogatives and choice offers, while mothers gave more commands and unmitigated directives (i.e. talk designed to get someone to do something) to their children when the event involved moral, conventional or prudential reasoning. Events, however, do not always fall into one, clear-cut category, and when they border multiple domains, they become 'mixed events' (Nucci and Weber, 1995: 1441). When mixed events include the overlap of personal domain and conventional or prudential domains, interactions often lead to negotiations between parent and child, where the child sees the event as strictly a personal choice (e.g. the child doesn't want to take a bath because it is his/her body or doesn't want to clean the room because it is his/her space), while the mother sees it as possibly dangerous (e.g. germs are harmful) or going against family obligations (e.g. the child's room is part of the larger household).<sup>1</sup> Nucci and Weber (1995) posit that because personal issues define the boundaries between individual and social authority, family interactions within this domain often include negotiations.

This article suggests that there is considerable cultural and familial variation in the specific content of what is considered personal, and that the concepts in each domain may vary qualitatively with such factors as age and gender. We hope to enrich and expand on the psychological research by not only looking at domain-specific parental responses to children, i.e. parents' direct and indirect social messages depending on particular events, but also at, cross-culturally and micro-analytically, the *trajectories* of interactions situated within ongoing activities, and the possible implications of parents' domain-specific practices and conversational

strategies for the development of autonomy, agency, interdependence and responsibility in children.

Through fine-grained analysis, this study reveals the ways in which various activity domains and cleaning tasks are organized moment-to-moment in everyday family interaction, and provides a deeper understanding of how children acquire socio-cultural knowledge and worldviews necessary for them to function as competent members of society through interactions with other family members (Ochs and Schieffelin, 1984; Schieffelin and Ochs 1986; Ochs et al., 1996; Fader, 2000). Additionally, examinations of naturally-occurring interaction shed light on the heterogeneity of practices, ideologies and socialization goals across, and even within, families.

To better understand the social organization and relations of power between family members, this work draws from previous research on directives (Ervin-Tripp, 1976; Goodwin, 1990, 2003, in press) and structures of control (Ervin-Tripp et al., 1984; Goodwin, 1990; Pontecorvo et al., 2001). This study has been particularly informed by Goodwin's work on directive/response sequences, which stresses the importance of analyzing such interactional features as mutual orientation, facing formations, affect, mitigation, negotiations and accountability in the construction of power relations in ongoing activities. Following Goodwin (2003, in press), the present article suggests that disparities between asymmetrical, hierarchical relations of power in households and more symmetrical, egalitarian ones, greatly stem from parents' interaction styles,<sup>2</sup> particularly in the types of directives used, the amount of negotiation allowed with children and in the number of choices offered to them. This examination pays particular attention to trajectories of activities, to observe, over time, the impact of alternative parenting strategies on children's actual practices.

### *Data and methods*

The data corpus includes ethnographic video-recordings of naturally-occurring interaction in the home of 32 families living in Los Angeles and eight families living in Rome. Included in the study are dual-earner families with two or three children, one child being between the ages of eight and 10. Both research teams filmed during two weekdays and two weekend days. For comparative purposes, eight of the 32 families from the Los Angeles data have been analyzed. These eight families have children whose ages are similar to those of the Roman families.

To shed light on children's socialization into power relations, family organization and socialization goals, and to particularly elucidate the everyday practices that construct or limit children's agency, this article micro-analyzes both verbal and non-verbal practices and interaction in the accomplishment of everyday household and hygiene cleaning tasks. The analytic foci used to examine socialization practices are:

1. Activity beginnings: Does the parent give directives or choices to children at the onset of a cleaning activity, or is there no discussion at all about the activity since the parent performs the task on his or her own?

2. Children's uptake of the request or demand: Does the child respond to the parent's request in a serious manner? Are negotiations involved? How long is the activity trajectory?
3. Level of parents' attention and preoccupation for task process: How much is the parent concerned about the fine-grained details of the process and results of the cleaning task? How much parental control is exerted over the details and steps of the task?
4. Parental assessment of child's performance: Is the parent rigid about the process and results of the task or is he or she more effort-oriented and willing to recognize different degrees of competence?
5. Child's accountability: Is the child held accountable for his or her actions and for performing the task?

The two major themes that emerge out of the comparative analyses are: (a) the style and amount of parental control over tasks varies across families and activities, and (b) the number of options given to children in the process and sequence of tasks varies across families and activities. Analyzing these diverse parenting and conversational strategies reveals how particular practices can lead to increases in, or the reduction of, children's autonomy, responsibility and accountability.<sup>3</sup>

Data are transcribed using the conversation analysis transcription system developed by Gail Jefferson and described in Atkinson and Heritage (1984: ix–xvi; see Appendix).

### *Parenting strategies: varying styles and degrees of parental control*

When looking at the ways in which household cleaning and hygiene duties were accomplished in the Los Angeles and Roman data sets, salient differences in parenting and conversational strategies across families were observed. The first theme to emerge out of the collaborative analysis was the variance in degrees and style of parental control over cleaning tasks. Parental control, or parental preoccupation for the process and results of cleaning and hygiene duties, involves the amount and detail of instruction given to a child to perform a task and the extent to which children are made responsible for accomplishing the task. Depending on the amount and detail of instruction given and the style and level of parental control over the task, parents give children a sense that there is either a proper and fixed way or a more flexible and negotiable way to do things. The following examples illuminate the diverse types of parental control at different stages of a hygiene or cleaning task. Examples range from cases in which children are encouraged to perform autonomously, to cases in which parents take almost complete control and responsibility over task accomplishments. In the former case, parents seem to be willing to give up some control of task process and results to foster independence and competence, while in the latter, parents' heightened concern for cleaning does not allow for what they perceive as children's inability to complete the task properly. Here, children are often exposed to repeated observation, but are rarely involved in collaboration and action.<sup>4</sup>

Bed-making sequences from the Los Angeles and Roman data have been selected to illustrate different levels of parental control and diverse parenting strategies used during the accomplishment of a task. In the Los Angeles data, the video-recordings captured a number of instances in which young children were instructed to make their bed even though they claimed incompetence in the activity. Despite children's protests, they were encouraged to do the activity, and the results were approved without much inspection. Quite a different parental approach was observed in the recordings of Roman families: small children were not expected, perhaps not even allowed, to do the bed-making task themselves.

The excerpts below are taken from video-recordings of the American Anderson family. It involves 5-year-old Molly learning how to make her bed.

### Example 1a

Anderson family (Los Angeles)- Mother; Laura (8 years); Molly (5 years)  
 Filmed on the first weekday:

1. ((Mother is dressing Molly who is standing on her bed. Laura stands nearby.))
2. Mother: Wo:w! Good Laur<sup>↑</sup>a. (0.7)
3. **Okay, can you guys make your b<sup>↑</sup>ed?**
4. Molly: Ha- I don't know ho:w [to make it. ((Whiney voice))
5. Laura: [Yeah, you did it bef<sup>↑</sup>ore!
6. Mother: **>Remember< you just pulled the covers up, ok<sup>↑</sup>ay?**
7. Molly: Ok<sup>↑</sup>a:y= ((sing-songy tone))
8. Laura: = But first you have to take all the pillows off.

### Example 1b

Filmed on the second weekday

9. ((Laura is kneeling on her own bed while straightening out Molly's sheets on Molly's bed, which is located side-by-side. Molly climbs up onto her own bed, and stands on top of it while pulling up her blankets.))
10. Molly's bed, which is located side-by-side. Molly climbs up onto her own bed, and stands on top of it while pulling up her blankets.)
11. Laura: There!
12. Molly: ((Sing-songy voice)) I don't want to just pull the covers up, I wanna make it perfe::ct!
13. Laura: ((Climbs down from her bed and begins to straighten out her own blanket.))
14. Molly: So can you h<sup>↑</sup>elp me Laura:?
15. Laura: **No, it doesn't need to be perfect.**
16. Molly: <sup>↑</sup>I w<sup>↑</sup>ant °it to be perfect°=
17. Laura: ((Pulls her comforter up.)) ='**Cause- 'cause when (.) you put up th<sup>↑</sup>e:se (.) all of-, y- it won-, people won't c<sup>↑</sup>are what- what the other ones look like.**
18. Molly: ((Still standing on bed, pulling up her comforter.)) I w<sup>↑</sup>ant the whi:te one °and the pink one°=((referring to blankets))
19. ((Laura leaves her bedside and walks over to help Molly. Laura looks over to the bedroom door where mother is entering. Molly looks at mother and keeps pulling up the comforter while standing on top of the bed.))
20. Molly: ((Still standing on bed, pulling up her comforter.)) I w<sup>↑</sup>ant the whi:te one °and the pink one°=((referring to blankets))
21. ((Laura leaves her bedside and walks over to help Molly. Laura looks over to the bedroom door where mother is entering. Molly looks at mother and keeps pulling up the comforter while standing on top of the bed.))
22. Molly: ((Still standing on bed, pulling up her comforter.)) I w<sup>↑</sup>ant the whi:te one °and the pink one°=((referring to blankets))
23. ((Laura leaves her bedside and walks over to help Molly. Laura looks over to the bedroom door where mother is entering. Molly looks at mother and keeps pulling up the comforter while standing on top of the bed.))
24. Mother: **Good w<sup>↑</sup>o:rk you g<sup>↑</sup>u:ys!**

In the first segment, mother addresses both daughters by asking them to make their beds. Molly protests, claiming that she does not know how to make it;

however, her older sister, Laura, and her mother reassure her that she can do the task, framing it as something that can be performed after having done it just one other time, thus easy to accomplish (lines 5 and 6). The second segment shows an instructional sequence in which Laura once again downgrades the complexity of the task in opposition to Molly's request for a 'perfect' result: the sister explains that once the covers are pulled up, no one will notice what imperfections lie underneath. The segment is a good case in point since it shows that the relative carelessness of the task is not due to lack of time or instructional effort: on the contrary, Laura devotes a considerable amount of time and discourse to instruct her sister. In fact, seven minutes of scaffolding takes place, including step-by-step instructions, and discussion about the kinds of sheets that go with each season. Yet, as shown in lines 6, 18, and 20, the family ideology goes explicitly against excessive attention and refinement. Both Laura and her mother are oriented to having the child complete the task without much preoccupation for the end result or the time-consuming pulling and straightening. Mother's final assessment seals the entire practice as well done, even though Molly is standing on top of her bed, pulling up the comforter as mother walks into the room. Mother's appreciation appears thus directed to sheer effort and accomplishment rather than the quality of accomplishment.<sup>5</sup>

Moving to another bed-making scene, we can find a remarkably different attitude from parents. Example 2 below illustrates how parents may pay a lot more attention to bed-making by taking total control of the activity. Here, the father of the Italian Giti family performs the task himself, with no collaboration from his 8-year-old daughter, Elena, who is sitting next to the bed. Father has climbed upon the top bunk to put away Elena's stuffed animals on the shelf above her bed. In a conversation with the researcher, he describes the operation in a humorous key, complaining about the enormous amount of stuffed animals Elena currently sleeps with. Father claims that his life has gotten much more complicated since Elena has moved up to sleep on the top bunk because now, the toys can no longer be left on the top bunk where she sleeps, as they once could when she slept on the bottom bunk.

### Example 2

Giti family (Rome)- Father; Elena (8 years); Researcher

- |            |  |   |
|------------|--|---|
| 1. Res:    | Paolo, but do you have to do acrobatics <u>every morning</u> ?   | Paolo, ma ti tocca fa' le acrobazie ogni <u>mattina</u> ?   |
| 2. Father: | No, I have to say that before, when Elena slept there, (.) ((referring to <i>bottom bunk</i> )) if she happened to make a mess like this we would leave it on the top bunk. Now that she sleeps up here, though, | No, devo dire che prima col fatto Che Elena dormiva li:. (.) se propio:: faceva questi pasti:cci, li lasciavamo sul letto di sopra. Adesso che dorme Quassù, invece |
| 3. Res:    | <b>we have to-</b>   | ci tocca-   |
| 4. Res:    | I se(h)e hh. hh.   | Ho capi(h)to hh. hh.  |
| 5. Father: | <b>tidy up.</b> Also because, instead of just sleeping with <u>one</u> stuffed animal, which would be-.h norma:l,  | mettere a posto. Anche perché, anziché dormire con <u>un</u> solo pupazzo cosa che sarebbe-.h regola:re,  |
| 6. Res:    | (21.00) (( <i>Father is viewed from behind</i>   | (21.00) (( <i>Il padre è ripreso di</i>   |

- |             |   |  |
|-------------|---|--|
| 15.         | <i>while he straightens up the</i>              | <i>schiena mentre tira su</i>                      |
| 16.         | <i>sheets and duvet)</i>                        | <i>lenzuola e piumino)</i>                         |
| 17. Elena:  | Da↑ddy! ((Probably reacting to Father           | Pa↑pà! ((Probabilmente in reazione al              |
| 18.         | <i>bumping into her as he is coming down</i>    | <i>padre che sbatte su di lei scendendo dal</i>    |
| 19.         | <i>from the bed)</i>                            | <i>letto)</i>                                      |
| 20.         | (24.00) ((Father straightens the duvet,         | (24.00) ((Il padre liscia la fodera del            |
| 21.         | <i>then takes off his shoes to climb on the</i> | <i>piumino, poi si toglie le scarpe per salire</i> |
| 22.         | <i>bottom bed to reach the top bunk</i>         | <i>sul letto di sotto e raggiungere il letto</i>   |
| 23.         | <i>and continues making</i>                     | <i>disopra, e continua rifare</i>                  |
| 24.         | <i>the bed)</i>                                 | <i>il letto)</i>                                   |
| 25. Father: | <b>&gt;Anyway the-&lt;the quality of my</b>     | <Comunque la-< la qualità della mia                |
| 26.         | <b>life has gotten slightly worse since</b>     | vita da quando Elena dorme in questo               |
| 27.         | <b>Elena started sleeping in this bed.</b>      | letto è lievemente peggiorata.                     |
| 28. Res:    | Oh yeah? hh.hh.                                 | Ah sì? hh. hh.                                     |
| 29. Father: | Yes because it was, definitely easier           | Sì perché era, decisamente più                     |
| 30.         | to make tha other ↓ b(h)ed.                     | semplice fare quell'altro ↓le(h)tto.               |
| 31. Res:    | hehehe  | hehehe   |
| 32. Elena:  | Well ↑then y- you are >la:zy.>=                 | All↑ora t-tu sei <pi:gro.>=                        |
| 33. Father: | =There you go!                                  | =Ecco!   |
| 34. Res:    | hehehe  | hehehe   |
| 35. Father: | We'll put it like that.                         | Mettiamola così.                                   |

This bed-making activity differs from the previous example from the very onset. Instead of constructing Elena as an agent who is perfectly capable of making her bed, the Giti father walks into Elena's bedroom and begins working on the bed, leaving the child peripheral to the activity. Responding to a comment launched by the researcher while he climbs up the bottom bunk (line 1), Father describes the difficulties of the task, the sense of the parental duty to accomplish it (i.e. 'we *have to tidy up*' in line 9), and the accommodation to the child's habits (i.e. her taste for more stuffed animals than would seem 'normal' in line 13). In line 25, Father then concludes with a statement about his 'quality of life' getting worse since the child moved up to the top bunk bed.

The peculiarity of this father's attitude is foregrounded by a comparison with the previous segment of the Los Angeles Anderson family, which involves an even younger child. Parental responsibility is taken for granted by the Giti father and the task is framed as difficult. A sacrifice theme is emergent throughout the interaction, and the parental burden and responsibility for household chores is displayed in front of the child. When Father says, 'it was definitely easier to make that other bed', Elena exclaims, 'Well, then y-you are lazy' (line 32). This particular comment by Elena points to an ideology that it is dad's responsibility to make the bed and complaints about the burden are unacceptable.

In cases of total parental control, where parents perform tasks with no child collaboration, routines, traditions and the right accomplishment of activities seem to supersede the need for children to develop a sense of autonomy or confidence from performing tasks on their own. When children are not constructed as competent and are not expected by parents to participate, they may not even attempt to do certain tasks, especially if the risk of parental judgement of task processes and results exists.

In what follows, the article will be addressing similar socialization issues through examinations of personal hygiene tasks. This is an area central to the construction of parent–child relationships given that children's personal hygiene often involves body examination and physical contact by parents. Relative to household cleaning duties, hygiene is an area of greater parental concern and control across all families. The various parenting strategies used to accomplish hygiene tasks, however, have diverse effects on the children's area of personal responsibility and self-initiated actions. Help, instruction and control can be overtly displayed or downplayed. It can be made into a covered, silent assistance, or instead be accomplished overtly, to the point of theatrical performance.

The next two examples illustrate parenting strategies that allow for some amount of autonomous performance, but also involve monitoring, assistance and direct intervention when parents feel it necessary. Results of tasks are inspected and controlled. In this next example, 4-year-old Isaiah is brushing his teeth while his mother monitors and scaffolds the activity.

### Example 3

Morgenstern family (Los Angeles) - Mother; Isaiah (4 years)

1. *((Isaiah is sitting on the sink in the bathroom. He closes the cupboard door where mother puts the toothpaste back.))*
2. *door where mother puts the toothpaste back.))*
3. Mother: Thank you.
4. Let me see this.
5. *((Mother lifts his face by touching his chin. Passes her finger over his bottom lip.))*
6. *bottom lip.))*
7. Mother: Little cut on you (.) lip.
8. The side of your lip, does it ↑hurt?
9. Isaiah: Uh uh.
10. Mother: Okay. Let's brush.
11. Isaiah: Uh, if you touch (.) it=
12. Mother: =Come on, ↑Honey. Okay, don't touch it.
13. ***((Mother steps back, leans on sink counter and watches Isaiah as he begins to brush.))***
14. ***begins to brush.))***
15. Mother: *((Nods))* Good job.
16. Mother: In the back there, on the top.
17. Isaiah: *((spits))* It's green.
18. *((Mother puts water in the rinse cup. He rinses the toothbrush off, then puts the toothbrush back in his mouth, then sets it down on the sink. Mother rinses it off again without saying anything.))*
19. *off, then puts the toothbrush back in his mouth, then sets it down on the sink. Mother rinses it off again without saying anything.))*
20. *the sink. Mother rinses it off again without saying anything.))*
21. ***Isaiah pours out the water Mother put in the cup, refills it, then rinses his mouth out. She puts the toothbrush back in the drawer.))***
22. ***rinses his mouth out. She puts the toothbrush back in the drawer.))***
23. Mother: Okay. Honey, I want you to- Excuse ↑me.
24. *((Wets a rag under the faucet))*
25. Mother: >Don't spit it on this< *((referring to rag))*
26. (3.0) *((Isaiah spits. Mother takes the cup and gives him the rag.))*
27. Mother: Ok. Good job. Clean off your eyes please, a little bit.
28. Isaiah: **Why'd you get it hot?**
29. Mother: It's wa:rm.
30. Isaiah: It's. not.

In this excerpt, Mother prompts her 4-year-old son to brush his teeth by using the first person plural (line 10) to suggest a joint activity. She then steps back to give him personal space to brush his own teeth, but monitors him very closely. As she watches Isaiah, mother offers positive evaluation (line 15), and in line 16, verbally instructs him to brush, 'In the back there, on the top', but does not attempt to physically help him. In preparation for Isaiah's mouth rinse, mother fills a cup with water, but then puts it down on the counter instead of giving it directly to him. After he rinses his toothbrush, he puts it back into his mouth, then sets it down on the sink instead of handing it to her. Mother re-rinses the toothbrush without any verbal criticism and places it back into the drawer. Claiming autonomy in line 21, Isaiah pours out the water his mother put in the glass and refills it for the mouth rinse. She applauds his accomplishment of the activity in line 27, then prompts him to start a new one: to clean off his eyes with the wet rag. Mother scaffolds the activities and sets a rhythm for her son, but she also constructs a sense of individuality and personal domain by offering him physical space, encouraging him to do the different steps on his own, and using mitigated directives such as, 'Honey, I want you to', and 'Clean off your eyes please, a little bit'. When she does help him, such as re-rinsing the toothbrush, it appears as if she is trying to sweep her assistance 'under the rug'. Her repairs are silent (line 20). Her strategy is not to be authoritarian, but to build authoritativeness. This building of autonomy is actualized in line 28, where Isaiah questions his mother's action of getting the rag hot, and then challenges her answer in line 30.

Example 3 illustrates how parental assistance and direction can assume mitigated forms where one restrains oneself from verbal and non-verbal direct intervention, and establishes an action-pause rhythm that allows the child to perform the steps in his own way. But families can assume very different expressive styles when it comes to fashioning assistance. The capacity of parents to anticipate their children's moves can be emphasized, their interest and preoccupation for hygiene and health underlined, and the back and forth movement of instruction and enactment can assume much more dramatic overtones.

The following is another example in which a mother encourages her son to complete a hygiene task. However, the parenting and conversational strategies used are rather different from Example 3 above. The noncompliance of Leo, the 13-year-old son, together with alternative parenting strategies, leads to a very different activity trajectory than seen in the previous sequence. The main exchange takes place between the Ripe family's mother and her oldest son Leonardo.<sup>6</sup> It is a negotiation over personal hygiene in which questions of autonomous pace, bodily distance and directivity are addressed in quite distinctive ways. At the beginning of the sequence, Mother enters the bathroom where her two sons are getting ready for school on a weekday morning.

#### **Example 4a**

Ripe family (Rome) - Mother: Leonardo (13 years); Andrea (10 years)

- |    |                               |                                    |
|----|-------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. | ((To Leonardo)) Let me see? = | ((A Leonardo)) Fa' un po' vede'? = |
| 2. | =↑Don't you have to take a    | =↑Tu non te devi fa' la            |
| 3. | <u>shower?</u>                | <u>doccia?</u>                     |

- |             |   |   |
|-------------|---|---|
| 4. Leo:     | No I took one yesterday.                    | No l'ho fatta ieri.                               |
| 5. Mother:  | The arm <sup>↑</sup> pits?                  | Le asc <sup>↑</sup> elle?                         |
| 6. Leo:     | (2.0) ((?))                                 | (2.0) ((?))                                       |
| 7. Mother:  | Let me smell? (( <i>goes in bathroom</i> )) | Famme senti'? (( <i>entrando in bagno</i> ))      |
| 8.          | Come here.                                  | Vieni qua.  |
| 9.          | (3.0) (( <i>Mother smells Leo's</i>         | (3.0) (( <i>Madre odora le ascelle di Leo.</i> )) |
| 10.         | <i>armpits.</i> ))                          |   |
| 11. Mother: | OO:EFH::[: <sup>↑</sup> STI::NK!=           | U::FF::[F! <sup>↑</sup> FETENZI::A!=              |

In line 2, Mother asks Leo in a negative interrogative form whether or not he has to take a shower. The negative interrogative (Heritage, 2002; Monzoni, 2005) asks the respondent to confirm a certain piece of knowledge the questioner already possesses or thinks she possesses, and it also has an adversarial key to it, implying that something should have happened that in fact did not take place. This question format hints at mother's knowledge and control over her son's state of affairs.

Leonardo disconfirms mother's suspicion that it is shower day by saying that he took one the day before. Mother, however, keeps pursuing the investigation of her son's washing duties by asking specifically about the armpits in line 5. Leo's initial responses are hardly audible, although there is enough material to infer a negative response. It is Mother, herself, who upgrades the drama of the exchange by bursting out in the cry 'FETENZIA!' or 'STINK' after smelling her son. In what follows, mother and son are involved in high-tuned negotiation, consisting of repetitions, overlap, summons, directives and threats from the mother, and plain denials and rebuttals by the son.

#### Example 4b

- |             |  |  |
|-------------|--|--|
| 12.         | OO:EFH::[: <sup>↑</sup> STI::NK!= (( <i>Coming</i> | U::FF::[F! <sup>↑</sup> FETENZI::A!= (( <i>Uscendo</i> |
| 13.         | <i>out from bathroom and staying</i>               | <i>dal bagno e restando sulla</i>                      |
| 14.         | <i>by the door</i> ))                              | <i>porta</i> ))  |
| 15. Leo:    | [Cut it ↓o:ut [°plea:se°]                          | [Ma piantala per [favore!]                             |
| 16. Mother: | = [WASH  | = [LAVATI  |
| 17.         | THOSE] ARMPITS AT LEAST!                           | QUELLE] ASCELLE ALMENO!                                |
| 18. Leo:    | No I'm not gonna wa[sh them <u>Mom</u>             | No non me le la[vo mamma                               |
| 19. Mother: | [ <u>MOVE IT</u>                                   | [MUOVITI   |
| 20.         | <u>LEONARDO PLEA</u> [SE!                          | LEONARDO PER COR[TESIA!                                |
| 21. Leo:    | [CUT IT OUT  | [PIANTALA  |
| 22.         | [plea <sup>↑</sup> :se Mo:m:,                      | [per favo <sup>↑</sup> :re mamma!                      |
| 23.         | (( <i>between protest and lament</i> ))            | (( <i>tra protesta e supplica</i> ))                   |
| 24. Mother: | [ <u>LE</u> :O? PLEA:SE.                           | [LEO? PER FAVORE!                                      |
| 25.         | >You have to wash your armpits<                    | >Te devi lavà le ascelle!<                             |
| 26. Leo:    | [Plea:↓se cut i:t out::                            | [Per favo↓:re! pia:ntala::                             |
| 27. Mother: | [Do you want <u>me</u> to come wash                | [Vengo <u>io</u> a lavartele?                          |
| 28.         | them for you?                                      |  |
| 29.         | (( <i>playfully</i> )) °Come on they sti:nk °      | (( <i>scherzosa</i> )) °Dai che pu:zzano °             |
| 30. Leo:    | They don't stink!                                  | Non pu:zzano!  |
| 31. Mother: | °Yes° (( <i>still playful</i> ))                   | °Si° (( <i>ancora scherzosa</i> ))                     |
| 32. Leo:    | You can't <sup>↑</sup> smell it.                   | Non si <sup>↑</sup> sente!                             |

The pattern of exchange is that of consistent overlap (lines 12–28). The interactional rhythm in Example 3, then, is very different from the action-pause interaction discussed above. The participants do not wait for one another's uptake, but intercept and start acting on each other's turn while it is still in progress. The effort is not directed to leave space for the amplification of the other's free initiative, but to erase portions of the verbal move that is considered ill-intentioned. The word choice of 'fetenzia' by Mother (a southern dialectal word evoking an imaginary context of underdevelopment and savagery), together with the highly emphatic facial expressions, volume and intonation, frames the sequence as a dramatized and histrionic exchange. The confrontation of wills explodes at the verbal level, rather than being downplayed as in the former example with Isaiah. In line 25, Mother ends the confrontation with a directive, a threat (line 27), and a playful invitation (lines 29 and 31). The pitch and volume of the exchange come down, but Leo is still non-compliant. The following excerpt, which is the conclusion of the sequence, illustrates how the area of independence can be progressively reduced and eventually nullified.

#### Example 4c

- |             |  |  |
|-------------|--|--|
| 33. Mother: | You can't <u>↑</u> smell it.                 | Non si <u>↑</u> sente!                         |
| 34.         | (( <i>serious tone</i> )) Andrea please will | (( <i>seria</i> )) Andrea per favore           |
| 35.         | you tell him?                                | ce lo dici?                                    |
| 36.         | (4.0) (( <i>Brother supposedly smells</i>    | (4.0) (( <i>Forse Andrea conferma la</i>       |
| 37.         | <i>and reports.</i> ))                       | <i>puzza.</i> ))                               |
| 38. Mother: | There you go. Wash your armpits              | Ecco, appunto lavati le ascelle                |
| 39.         | right now, come on.                          | va.  |
| 40. Leo:    | Oh my G[o:d NO! NO! =                        | Mamma mia ma'! [NO! NO! =                      |
| 41. Mother: | [Right then I'm coming, =                    | [Va be' ve[ngo io! =                           |
| 42. Leo:    | = [Mom! NO::!                                | = [Mamma! [No no! =                            |
| 43. Mother: | = [I'M COMING!                               | = [VENGO IO!                                   |
| 44.         | (( <i>goes in bathroom</i> ))                | (( <i>entra in bagno</i> ))                    |
| 45. Leo:    | No::!  | No::!  |
| 46.         | (3.0) (( <i>Mother closes door, leaves</i>   | (3.0) (( <i>Mother chiude la porta, lascia</i> |
| 47.         | <i>juice on the piano, smiles to</i>         | <i>il succo sul pianoforte, sorride ai</i>     |
| 48.         | <i>Researcher, and enters bathroom</i> ))    | <i>ricercatori, e entra in bagno</i> ))        |
| 49. Leo:    | No::! No excuse me no!                       | No::! No scusa no!                             |
| 50.         | no::: no=no no=no=no=no                      | no::: no=no no=no=no=no                        |
| 51. Mother: | LEONARDO?                                    | LEONARDO?                                      |
| 52.         | ONE NEEDS TO WASH THEM!                      | TOCCA LAVARLE!                                 |
| 53.         | THAT'S IT (.) [eh::!                         | BASTA! (.) [eh::!                              |
| 54. Leo:    | [No::  | [No::  |
| 55. Mother: | Please!                                      | Per cortesia!                                  |
| 56. Leo:    | What a <u>ball</u> -breaker!                 | Che <u>palle</u> !                             |
| 57. Mother: | Uh? What a ball-breaker?                     | Eh? Che palle?                                 |
| 58.         | (3.0)  | (3.0)  |
| 59. Mother: | What a ball-breaker is what I say=           | Che palle lo dico io=                          |
| 60.         | Come <u>↑</u> on!                            | Fo <u>↑</u> rza!                               |
| 61.         | There's no use in doing that.                | E' inutile che fai così.                       |

The young brother is called to express consensus about the smell, but even this ultimate tactic is met with failure. The threat of intervention is turned into action

and Mother, after announcing it repeatedly, goes into the bathroom and washes her son's armpits. Mother's intervention is not performed tacitly, but broadcasted. This strategy, which uses a great deal of verbal and non-verbal parental control, weakens the child's sense of agency and autonomy by constructing the parent as an expert who is unwilling to compromise.

### *The construction and limitation of agency: choice vs no choice*

Another salient difference found across the two data sets in parenting and conversational strategies is the extent to which children are left with choices both in the process and sequential order of tasks, so not only in *how* to do things, such as make a bed or mop a floor, but also in the *order* various activities are completed (e.g. 'Do you want to make your bed first or brush your teeth?').

At one end of the spectrum is the strategy of offering choices and asking open-ended questions for both the process and sequence of everyday cleaning activities. Example 5 involves the negotiation of personal domain between 6-year-old Nellie and her mother.

#### **Example 5**

Baker Family (Los Angeles) - Mother; Nellie (6 years)

1. ((Mother walks into laundry room next to living room where children are watching TV.))
2. watching TV.))
3. Mother: ((To Nellie)) Shower-time baby.
4. (4.0)
5. Mother: ((Opens cabinet and grabs towels)) **You wanna goup ↑stairs or downstairs?**
6. (10.0)
7. Mother: ((Walks into the living room)) ↑Ne:llie ↑bu:ggý:. ↑Upstairs or ↓downstairs?
8. Nellie: Um. (1.0) Up (.) s:tairs.
9. ((Mother stands and waits for Nellie while the TV program comes to an end. Nellie gets up from her position on the floor after 30 seconds and walks over to the stairs with her mother.))
10. Nellie gets up from her position on the floor after 30 seconds and walks over to the stairs with her mother.))
11. ↑**Wanna grab some paj↑amas, or =**
12. Mother: ↑**Wanna grab some paj↑amas, or =**
13. Nellie: =No. ((Walks up stairs))
14. Mother: ((nods)) **Wanna take off your ↑boots?**
15. (2.0)
16. ((Mother shrugs shoulders jokingly to camera since Nellie did not respond, then walks up stairs. Mother tickles Nellie, closes the bathroom door and Nellie gets undressed as she giggles.))
17. Mother tickles Nellie, closes the bathroom door and Nellie gets undressed as she giggles.))
18. ↑**Okay, pick out your shampoo.**
19. Mother: **Okay, pick out your shampoo.**
20. Nellie: Huh?
21. Mother: Pick out your shampoo.
22. (5.0)
23. Mother: Okay.
24. Nellie: **I don't need your help!**
25. Mother: Oh, you don't want my ↑help? ((high-pitched))
26. Nellie: No::

27. Mother: I can scrub for ↑you=I don't mind, and then you could do, the rest on your  
↑own?
28. (4.0)
29. Nellie: N:o tha:nks
30. Mother: N:o tha:nks? ((*high-pitched voice*))
31. Nellie: ↑(na)
32. Mother: ↑ Okay, let me see you shampoo.
33. Nellie: Maybe anoth<sup>er</sup> night (.) or day. ((*sing-songy*))
34. (3.0)
35. Mother: Mkay, go ahead, shampoo please. ((*sounding a bit offended*))
36. Nellie: Okay.

Mother's first request to begin the showering activity, 'It's shower-time baby', is an indirect imperative that gains no uptake from Nellie. From the laundry room (line 5), Mother asks, 'You wanna go upstairs or downstairs', and receives the same dispreferred response: silence. Only after Mother physically moves into the living room in line 7 and repeats her question does Nellie finally answer, 'Upstairs'. On her way to the stairs, Mother asks Nellie a series of questions, giving her choices as to whether or not she wants to grab her pajamas or take her boots off before going up to the shower. Nellie answers 'No' to the first question (line 13) and completely ignores the second (line 15). Nellie is not held accountable for an answer and, in fact, there is no response by Mother except a shrug of the shoulders and a smirk to the camera recognizing that the dispreferred response of silence was indeed dispreferred. Once Nellie is in the shower, Mother gives her yet another choice by telling her to pick out her shampoo (line 19). By offering all of these choices, Mother is empowering her child with agency, and creating more of an egalitarian relationship between them than a hierarchical one. This is evidenced by Nellie's move in line 24 where she tells her mother that she does not need her help shampooing. From Mother's surprised response in line 25, it seems as though this is the first time she has heard this statement from her 6-year-old. Mother tries to intervene and to make the shampooing a joint activity by saying in line 27, 'I can scrub for you, I don't mind, and then you could do the rest on your own'. Here, Mother is respecting her daughter's wish to be independent, but also wants to make sure that the job is done properly. After questioning her daughter's decision three times in lines 25, 27 and 30, she gives in and allows Nellie to wash her own hair. Mother does not trust Nellie's competence, but does create a space to acquire that competence. Perhaps realizing that her mother is surprised by her request and maybe even offended by it, Nellie offers, 'Maybe another night or day', a statement that indexes that there is no absolute, habitual way to do the task, and that every shower could involve a different process. This interaction is very illustrative of the parent-child negotiation of personal domain, where the personal (i.e. the child's body) and prudential (i.e. ensuring that the child's body is clean) domain boundaries meet. The verbal dance engaged in by Mother and Nellie not only shows Mother's understanding that her daughter should have areas of personal control, but also illuminates how children, by creating spaces of autonomy and resistance, provide parents with clues about their need for personal choice.

The following interaction concerning garbage duties in the Richardson household further illustrates the parenting and conversational strategies that offer

numerous choices, construct children as active agents and open up the possibility for protracted negotiations.

### Example 6

Richardson Family (Los Angeles) - Father; Linda (10 years); Luke (8 years)

1. ((Father, Luke and Linda are standing in the kitchen after Father has brought
2. kids home from school))
3. Father: **So what do you guys want to do next, do you wanna do piano or do**
4. **you wanna do garbage?**
5. Linda: **Homewo:rk!**
6. Luke: **I'm going to ea:t.**
7. ((3 minutes later, Father grabs a piece of garbage from the sink))
8. Father: Well=I'm gonna take the garbage ou:t.
9. Linda: Ya:y we [don't have to ↓do: -
10. [((Father turns to her and glares.))
11. (2.0)
12. Father: You have to do: i:t. ((softly)) That's why [I think you should do it no:w.
13. [((turns his back on her, walks away
14. her, and attends to dinner and son))
15. ((20 seconds later))
16. Father: ((To Linda just after she turns away from him)) Are you- do you need a ↑snack
17. and you're gonna do homework ↓right? So ↑what are you doing Linda?
18. Linda: Me? I'm doin' my homework! I'm gonna ↑finish it.
19. Father: Well Luke you're supposed to do homework [too.
20. Luke [((walking away)) But I'm- I ca:n't.
21. ((because he has left his homework at school))
22. (2.0)
23. Father: Then do ↑pia:no, go do your piano.
24. Luke: ((Sucking on a lollipop)) **I'm ea:ting!**
25. (2.0)
26. Father: That's going to take like (.) twenty minutes to eat that.
27. Linda: Oh boy.
28. Luke: ((Shrugs shoulders as if saying, "Oh well".))
29. ((Father walks to the sink, and after 12 seconds he says "**I'm going to take the**
30. **garbage out.**" Camera follows Father to garbage cans outside.))

This example reveals how possibilities can be endless when children are offered choices. Even when given specific options from which to choose, children's responses are not constrained to those options. When the Richardson children are given choices by their father to either do piano or garbage next in line 3, they respond, 'homework' and 'I'm going to eat', both different options from what their father gave them. In the end, both children wind up doing their desired activities. With so many choices being offered to them, they learn that reality is negotiable and that they are recognized as active social agents that have the power to make decisions. Additionally, this parenting style empowers children by not demanding accountability. After neither of the children respond to Father's question with 'garbage', Father, in line 8 says, 'Well, I'm gonna take the garbage out'. When the daughter hears that statement, she yells, 'Yay, we don't have to do-', knowing very well that it is one of her weekly chores. When Father hears the first sign of

her celebrating, he turns around in line 10 and glares at her. She does not finish her sentence, realizing that she should have just kept her mouth shut. Father then says, 'You have to do it. That's why I think you should do it now.' In the middle of his statement, however, he turns his back and walks away to attend to another task. As Goodwin (in press) has demonstrated, 'Facing formations, eye gaze, and active pursuit of compliance are all entailed in socializing a child to be accountable to others' actions'. Instead of creating a common spatial orientation and focus of attention, all parties ignore orientation to the garbage task, and a competing framework is introduced as Father moves toward the refrigerator and begins talking about dinner.

In line 16 Father, still concerned with upcoming activities, asks Linda in a question format, 'Are you- Do you need a snack?', then in the same move uses a directive, but adds a tag question on to the end of the sentence, 'and you're gonna do homework right?' He then directly follows that directive/question with another open-ended question to Linda, 'So what are you doing Linda?' The complex question/statement format shown in this example makes it very difficult for Father to receive a compliant response. Even when Father directs Linda to do her homework in line 17, he gives her the opportunity to give a dispreferred response. Moreover, he ends the questioning sequence with an open-ended question, giving her even more room for non-compliance. In line 24, after Father tells Luke to go practice the piano, Luke exclaims, 'I'm eating!' and in fact finishes his lollipop. In the end, Father takes the garbage out himself. This interaction style offers an enormous number of choices, autonomy and agency to children that lead to protracted negotiations and little accountability for actions.

At the other end of the spectrum is the strategy of giving little or no choice in the process or sequence of activities.<sup>7</sup> In this strategy, practices are finely organized and routinized, and directives and repetition in speech are pervasive. The following example portrays the wife and mother of the Richardson family from the previous example. The sequences demonstrate how two diverse parenting strategies can be seen even within the same household.

### Example 7a

Richardson Family (Los Angeles) - Mother; Linda (10 years); Luke (8 years)

1. ((*Mother and Linda are in the living room, getting ready for work and school.*))
2. Mother: **Okay, go get your clothes ready: and then (.) go take a shower**
3. **as soon as Daddy gets out.**
4. Linda: My clothes ar::e all read↑y=
5. Mother: =**We:ll, then make your bed.**
6. ((*Linda walks into her room and proceeds to put away clothes and*
7. **make her bed.**))

### Example 7b

Richardson Family (Los Angeles) - Mother; Linda (10 years); Luke (8 years)

8. ((*Mother is sitting on the couch in the living room and tying her shoelaces.*))
9. Mother: Luke, the-the green uh rai:n coa:t? Just put it in your backpack in case it
10. rains again.

11. ((Luke washes his hands in the kitchen sink))
12. Mother: **DON'T WA- DON'T WASH YOUR H↑A:NDS! That's good lo↑tion.**
13. Luke: ((Walks over to mother sitting on couch tying shoes.))
14. Mother: **Go get your sh↑oes [↑on**
15. Luke: [I was just trying to get it off=
16. Mother: **=Go get your shoes ↑on.**
17. Luke: I'm just trying to get it off ((Sits on couch across from Mother))
18. Mother: ((achieves mutual eye gaze)) **Go put your shoes ↑o:n.**
19. Mother: ((still maintaining mutual eye gaze, slightly nods head upward, gesturing for Luke to get up from the couch)) **Go put your shoes on.**
- 20.
21. Luke: **((Luke gets up from the couch and puts his shoes on.))**

When given unmitigated directives and little or no choice, children get socialized into a more habitual, routinized way of doing things, and they learn that reality is less negotiable when it comes to particular activities. Offering choices and asking questions gives children more autonomy and agency, and constructs them as having a say in the day-to-day, moment-to-moment decision-making processes. When a parent constantly gives options to a child, he or she may be creating an identity and pattern that is hard to break. It is then difficult to counter children if one does not agree with their response. At times, the Richardson children try to counter or negotiate with their mother who rarely even gives them choices with regards to cleaning, and who has an entirely different approach from her husband of getting her children to accomplish tasks. Because they have been socialized into negotiation and debate by their father, the Richardson children attempt the same discourse strategies with their mother. Mother is faithful to her approach, however, and does not allow for much negotiation in her interactions with her children. Mother's repetition and escalation of directives during the moments her children attempt to negotiate results in relatively shorter activity trajectories. Yet, while the Richardson mother uses directives and does not give her children many choices, she *does* expect them to take care of themselves and their morning duties. Therefore, giving no options is *not* necessarily in opposition to offering autonomy. Again, two socialization goals can be met within one interaction or activity.

In families where the content and order of children's activities are more under parents' supervision, it is common for children to go ask a parent for direction, as illustrated in the next excerpt where Andrea stops in the kitchen to ask Mother about getting dressed on his way to the bathroom.

### Example 8

Ripe Family: (Italian) – Mother; Andrea (10 years)

- |    |   |                                     |
|----|---|-------------------------------------|
| 1. | ((Andrea enters the kitchen                 | ((Andrea entra in cucina dove la    |
| 2. | where Mom is sitting))                      | madre siede))                       |
| 3. | Andrea: What shall I wear?                  | Cosa mi devo mettere?               |
| 4. | Mother: Now, just think about dress-        | Adesso, pensa a vesti-              |
| 5. | washing=then after=                         | a lavarti= poi dopo=                |
| 6. | Andrea: =No, so I could bring it there with | =No, è che così poi me lo porto là. |
| 7. | me.   |                                     |
| 8. | Mother: I will bring it to you.=Go.         | Te lo porto io.=Vai.                |
| 9. | Andrea: That's even better.                 | Meglio.                             |

Ten-year-old Andrea asks Mother what he should wear that morning, but she redirects him to only concentrate on the very next activity, namely washing. In a repair form (as indicated by the turn beginning 'no' in line 6), Andrea tries to have his mother understand that he is in fact doing things in the 'right' sequence, but that it would be better if he also had his clothes in the bathroom with him. In line 8, Mother says that she will take care of the clothes and bring them to him, and then reiterates her instruction ('go'). Such a brief and condensed exchange using only directives (compared to the lengthy ones seen above) clearly illustrates that parents can exert much control over children's duties and self-governing actions, be present at every punctuation of the flow of activities and keep cognitive, as well as practical control, on the what, how and when of task execution.

### *Conclusion*

Socialization into cleaning practices entails an extensive set of behaviors, including explicit instructions, as well as illustrative execution of tasks, evaluative perspectives, negotiation, silent assistance and parental control. All of these components may be performed in various ways, not only giving different meanings to the activities and practices but also contributing to the moral understandings of the family as well. Specifically, while parents attend to their children's cleaning practices, they adopt modes of behavior that either emphasize children's agency – thus downplaying the parental role in the accomplishment of actions – or instead emphasize parental involvement in execution and outcome, to the extent of restraining children's decisional sphere and individual responsibility.

The modes of behavior are somewhat different when seen in the area of personal hygiene in comparison to household cleaning and tidying; as for the latter, preoccupation with proper accomplishment can go from serious to virtually none, as demonstrated in the bed-making sequences (examples 1 and 2). More often visible in the Los Angeles recordings, parents may have children take on responsibility for their own spaces as soon as possible, and encourage children to do chores by downplaying tasks' difficulties and constructing them as competent performers. Parents are seen to sustain children's effort with positive assessments, sometimes regardless of results, and monitoring and control and even sheer presence during the task accomplishment are often absent. While conveying a sense of personal obligation towards helping out and taking care of one's own property, such an approach does not develop a detailed technicality, nor an attachment to the material objects or environment involved in the process.

Scenes from the Roman recordings show, with greater frequency, higher parental investment of attention to and preoccupation with household cleaning tasks involving their children's belongings, more discussions of tasks' specific characteristics and difficulties, children observing parents clean and tidy the home without practical participation, and verbal mentioning or hinting at parental sacrifice and responsibility. When cleaning duties are approached in this way, a stronger interdependence is built both among family members and also between family members and their physical objects and environments. Children's spaces see a more frequent and significant presence of parents. The cleaning or tidying

processes are presented as complex and in need of expertise and children are therefore not constructed as sufficiently skilled to perform them. The ethics of the socialization domain does not seem to request the hiding of parental involvement but, on the contrary, provides space for displays of family bonds as instantiated in help and efficient control.

Regarding personal hygiene, parental monitoring and care for results is consistently high. No signs of carelessness have been found in this area in any families of the corpus. Different perspectives on children's autonomy are thus conveyed more subtly, yet observably, through differences in interactional patterns and bodily dispositions. Overall, parents tend to stay physically closer to the child, instead of leaving the scene, especially with small children. Parents inspect processes and results more often and are, in general, more attentive during hygiene tasks. Yet, even when children need step-by-step instructions, as shown in Example 3, where Isaiah brushes his teeth, the scaffolding can be fashioned in such a way as to minimize visibility of parental engagement and to structure moments wherein children can perform autonomously. Limiting verbal explicitness of parental action and establishing an interactional rhythm that allows for children to proceed at their own pace are the apt practical strategies to such outcomes. Mitigation of directives is consistent within this set of options.

Parents, however, can be less concerned about a tactful attitude toward children's abilities and autonomy and can display much more openly, both their co-participation and their control during hygiene tasks, as seen in the Ripe 'stink' example (Example 4). Additionally, the resulting psychological space is different: the body space is more public, and there seems to be an easy switch from ordinarily alternate dialogue to verbal confrontation where participants, for instance, through loud tones and overlaps, try to establish their own view at the expense of the other's. Humor can exploit the looming danger of children's 'savage' state, similarly to what was done in the bed-making scene in Example 2, with the obligation of parental care and the everyday burden it represents.

Directing children throughout cleaning duties can be done by relatively open or more limited-option strategies; asking children about their preferences concerning many details of an activity – the when, how, and what of hygiene or tidying tasks – constructs a type of agency that we see at work when children disagree, select third options or even don't answer at all. Whereas asking children questions in the midst of everyday routines is observed in every family of the corpus, there is a tendency for the questions to be much more numerous and more frequent in the Los Angeles recordings; routine activities are separated into tiny fragments, any of which can be changed and chosen. The routine character of the activity itself is diminished, insofar as the steps are no longer taken for granted. Through sustained questioning, a degree of arbitrariness is introduced in domestic life, and the opportunity for children to enact agency is increased.

In excerpts from this section on choice, it is also visible how parents' sphere of agency shrinks and authority is made uncertain: questions – be them completely open or multiple choice – assign a degree of responsibility which cannot easily be retracted when the answers go in unpredictable directions. On the other hand, we see parents, like the Richardson and Ripe mothers, who direct children along

tasks, sometimes providing justifications, other times just prompting behaviors, giving the activities a status of non-negotiability or grounded regulation, and building a domain-specific parental authority.

Here, it is important to return to Nucci's (1995, 1996) discussion regarding domains. Parallel research shows that the differences in parental orientation in the Los Angeles and Roman corpus do not cover all domains of family life and socialization areas. For example, school work seems to be an area where the tendency is somewhat reversed, where parents in Los Angeles exert high amounts of control over children's homework (Forberg and Wingard, 2006) and Roman parents are more prone to leave children greater autonomy (Liberati, 2005). In general, it seems that Roman children's personal domain is much smaller than in Los Angeles, especially when it comes to household cleaning. What parents in Los Angeles might consider personal domain (e.g. a child's bedroom or playroom) Roman parents would almost certainly consider part of the conventional domain (e.g. family rules, tradition and obligations) for which they take control and responsibility. In Rome, home spaces are considerably smaller, and ideas about privacy and personal space are far less salient. The absence of personal domain and child responsibility in Rome leaves little room for negotiation in parent-child interactions regarding cleaning. In general, domain boundaries seem to be more blurred in Los Angeles, leaving more room for counters and negotiations from children.

#### NOTES

1. We imagine that all interactions and activities are 'mixed events' to some degree; Morality most likely cuts across all domains and activities. What influences the trajectory of the parent-child interaction, however, i.e. whether there will be choice offers by parents or whether there will be protracted negotiations between parents and children, is whether the participants, themselves, interpret the event as moral, social or personal.
2. 'Style' is used here as a synthesis between discourse, observed behaviors and participants' interpretations of interaction and practices. Disparities in relations of power also stem, of course, from parents' ideologies and goals.
3. The purpose of this comparison is not to produce an essentialist view of culture. Instead, it is an attempt to foster interest in cultural variance using a practical dimension; our goal is to put a finger on some of the ways by which differences are locally reproduced in the family.
4. We would like to note that we certainly recognize variation within and across families, and that these two polarized strategies are not the only two existing alternatives. We can think about differing levels of control as points along a continuum. The amount of parental control over tasks often depends on such factors as activity domains, age of child, and time of day.
5. We would like to note that in this sequence, Laura straightens her sheets out for almost 5 minutes. Laura repeatedly straightens her bed because she keeps kneeling on her own bed to help Molly out with the other bed. What is interesting is the disparity between Laura's ideology of non-perfection and her actual practice. One possible explanation is that in this socialization strategy, more expert participants recognize that children, depending on age, are capable of performing tasks at different levels. Standards are

- therefore lowered for the young child, and some control is sacrificed to foster autonomy and improve competence.
6. This is not a direct comparison with the former example since Leo is 13 and Isaiah is only 4. However, if age can account for Leo's protests regarding his mother's proximity, it does not explain away the Morgenstern mother's concern for her son's autonomy. The comparison thus deepens the contrast between the modes of performing assistance.
  7. Again, we want to emphasize that there is variation within and across families, and that these two polarized strategies are not the only two alternatives. We have chosen extreme examples to better illuminate the range of parenting strategies and their resulting activity trajectories. Again, the amount of parental control and agency given to a child depends on such factors as activity domains, age of child and time of day.

## APPENDIX A

### TRANSCRIPTION SYMBOLS

The transcription notation system employed for data segments is an adaptation of Gail Jefferson's work (see Atkinson and Heritage, 1984: ix-xvi). The symbols may be described as follows:

:	<u>Colon(s)</u> : Extended or stretched sound.
<u>    </u>	<u>Underlining</u> : Vocalic emphasis.
(.)	<u>Micropause</u> : Brief pause of less than (0.2).
(1.2)	<u>Timed Pause</u> : Intervals occurring within and between same or different speaker's utterances.
(( ))	<u>Double Parentheses</u> : Contextual information.
( )	<u>Single Parentheses</u> : Transcriptionist doubt (best guest).
.	<u>Period</u> : Falling vocal pitch.
?	<u>Question Marks</u> : Rising vocal pitch.
!	<u>Exclamation Points</u> : Animated speech tone.
WORD Caps:	Extreme loudness compared to surrounding talk.
[	<u>Brackets</u> : Marks the beginning point at which current talk is overlapped by other talk.
↓↑	<u>Arrows</u> : Pitch resets; marked rising and falling shifts in intonation.
=	<u>Equal Signs</u> : Latching of contiguous utterances, with no interval or overlap.
°°	<u>Degree Signs</u> : A passage of talk noticeably softer than surrounding talk.
> <	<u>Less Than/Greater Than Signs</u> : Portions of an utterance delivered at a pace noticeably quicker (> <) or slower (< >) than surrounding talk.
-	<u>Hyphens</u> : Halting, abrupt cut off of sound or word.
h	<u>h's</u> : Audible outbreaths from such events as laughter or breathlessness.

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