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Plenary title: Multimodality in Family Directive-Response Sequences

This paper examines first, the syntactic, prosodic, and embodied shapes of directives used by parents to initiate and sustain courses of action with children and second, the subsequent next actions by children to such directives. Dialogic and embodied characteristics of social action and accountability are demonstrated through the ways in which participants overlay directive sequences with different forms of affect. Analysis focuses on a specific activity, getting children ready for bed, using as data videotaped interactions in American families, part of the UCLA Center for Everyday Lives of Families (CELFL) video archive. I examine the multimodal transactions used to launch, choreograph, and monitor the ongoing progress of the communicative projects (Linell 1998) entailed in such activities occurring across temporal and spatial dimensions. Participants' actions are calibrated within embodied spatial frameworks, and are responsive to the participants' heterogeneous employment of a range of modalities. In their responses, children, through prosodic contours and ways of positioning the body, express a range of affective stances including displeasure, reluctance, indignation, and cheerful compliance. The voice quality of defiant refusals often displays high pitch and extended vowel length and contrasts with plaintive protest moves that accept the validity of the parental directive but protest the conditions for compliance. Alternative action formats can constitute very different forms of participation and co-alignment resulting in quite distinctive forms of family ethos (Bateson 1972) as families overlay their activities with different forms of embodied affect. By focusing on trajectories of directive/response sequences, we can examine the practices through which child and parent(s) co-construct local identities for children and mutually socialize each other.