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Habits of the hearth: Children's bedtime routines as relational work

[Karen Gainer Sirota](#) 

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Abstract

Drawing from a corpus of naturalistic videotaped data documenting everyday activities of 32 middle-class dual-earner families in Los Angeles, California, this article explores children's bedtime routines as an interactional matrix for carrying out culturally salient relational work, illustrating how family members co-participate in a 'discourse of anticipation' that prepares for—yet simultaneously forestalls—the moment of bedtime separation. Integrating research from psycho-cultural studies, language socialization, and conversation analysis, the article builds upon prior work on everyday routines as rich vehicles for cultural learning, discerning and tracing how parents and children co-constitute bedtime activities as collaboratively negotiated closing routines that foster autonomous self-initiative in tandem with a growing capacity for relational communion with others.

Keywords: [children](#); [closing routines](#); [conversation analysis](#); [family communication](#); [language socialization](#); [relational work](#)

About the article

Karen Gainer Sirota

Karen Gainer Sirota is a doctoral candidate in Anthropology at University of California, Los Angeles. In addition, she holds a Master's degree in Social Work. Her long-range experience as a social work practitioner informs and enriches her research focus on discourse processes involving children and families.

*Address for correspondence: Department of Anthropology, 341 Haines Hall, University of California, Los Angeles, Box 951553, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1553, USA

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