

# Power and socialization in sibling interaction

## Establishing, accepting and resisting roles of socialization target and agent

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This paper analyses socialization processes in the interaction between two Belgian, Dutch-speaking sisters, aged 10 and 8, more specifically with regard to power dynamics and establishing the roles of socialization target and agent. Socialization is collaborative, but usually entails some division of roles, which is intricately linked to power dynamics. Consequently, socialization efforts, and the socialization roles of target and agent, can be discarded or contested as part of these power dynamics. The analysis shows that socialization efforts between the sisters are often accepted, but also regularly contested and resisted. Moreover, the data indicates that roles and goals of some socialization efforts are so unclear that the boundaries between socialization efforts and interactional actions that aim to gain control become blurred. In conclusion, socialization must not only be considered in terms of its learning potential, but also as a power struggle with intricate and complex negotiation dynamics.

**Keywords:** socialization, sibling interaction, power, connection, family talk, deontic authority

### 1. Introduction

Socialization is the process of members of a community developing communicative competence and/or community membership, through exposure to and participation in recurrent interaction with other, often more expert members of a community (Duff 2010; Ervin-Tripp Jiansheng, and Lampert 1990; Goodwin and Kyratzis 2007; Grusec and Hastings 2015; Moore 2008; Schieffelin and Ochs 1986). It includes learning about and through language; members acquire or adapt to new linguistic and pragmatic skills and norms, but, through language, also

learn about the “rules, roles, standards, and values across the social, emotional, cognitive, and personal domains” (Grusec and Hastings 2015, xi). These rules and roles include the habits, plans, world views, values, and social order of the community. Socialization is part of human life throughout the whole lifespan (Duff and May 2017; Grusec and Hastings 2015; Schieffelin and Ochs 1986). It is part of entering new communities of which social and cultural habits, ideologies and norms are (partially) unfamiliar. However, socialization does not only happen as a form of initiation; as the social world and habits, norms and ideologies are dynamic and incessantly socially negotiated, socialization processes continue to be part of any community’s members’ interaction (Grusec and Hastings 2015; Streeck 1983; van der Schaaf 2016).

In socialization research, relatively fixed roles of expert-novice, teacher-learner, or socialization agent and target are often ascribed to participants (Duff 2010; Ervin-Tripp, Jiansheng, and Lampert 1990; Goodwin and Kyratzis 2007; Grusec and Hastings 2015; Moore 2008; Schieffelin and Ochs 1986). However, as socialization is a life-long and context-dependent phenomenon, it is equally dynamic as the community in which it takes place (Duff and Talmy 2011; van der Schaaf 2016). For instance, the effect of a particular socialization effort will not have a uniform effect on different participants (Grusec and Hastings 2015; Schieffelin and Ochs 1986; van der Schaaf 2016). But socialization roles are also not fixed: in the case of sibling interaction, for example, longitudinal research has shown that dynamics of power between siblings, and the establishing of socialization roles and dominance changes over time, and that the impact of birth order becomes less pronounced (Cho 2018; Dunn 2015).

Sibling talk is an important locus for learning, but is less clearly hierarchical than parent-child talk, and thus is more dynamic in its power relations. Therefore, this paper aims to open up our understanding of how socialization and power dynamics are related in sibling talk by examining how roles of socialization target and agents are interactionally negotiated in this context. To do so, this paper draws on the interactions between two Belgian, monolingual Dutch-speaking sisters aged 8 and 10, as they chat, play and bake at home, without elder siblings or parents participating in the interaction. The analysis includes a range of forms of socialization efforts among the children; both language socialization and other socialization efforts, for instance relating to what constitutes a qualitative drawing. The data was recorded by the author, who is an elder sibling herself, and thus has an emic perspective on and in-depth understanding of the sisters’ relationship and familial context, and of the range of sociocultural norms made relevant in the socialization efforts.

To contextualize the analysis of the data, the literature on both socialization in family contexts, (2.1) and on power and deontic authority in family talk (2.2)

will be explored. Section 3 contains the methodology and discusses the data background and context, including on the role of the researcher (3.1) and data processing and analysis (3.2). In the analysis, accepted socialization efforts (4.1) and more unclear and contested socialization efforts are presented (4.2), and interactions that are ambiguous as socialization efforts (4.3). The implications of these findings are then discussed in the conclusion (Section 5).

## 2. Theoretical framework

### 2.1 Socialization in families and among children

Although socialization takes places throughout the whole human lifespan, it is especially pervasive during childhood. Parents, other caretakers, and teachers play essential roles in socializing children. In family contexts, parent-child interaction is a primary locus of language learning, and an important point of reference for talk in other contexts (Blum-Kulka 1997). In families, children learn that *being* and *doing* a community, in this case a family, is a discursive endeavour, as family relations and family-related roles and identities are shaped and experienced through talk (Tannen et al. 2007). Consequently, scholars have examined socialization during story-telling and (or as part of) dinner talk (Blum-Kulka 1997; Pontecorvo, Fasulo, and Sterponi, 2001); parents socializing children on using hints or honorifics; on code-switching, language policies and language heritage in multilingual families (Nilep 2009; Seals 2017); on socialization and the dynamics of multicultural, multilingual, globalised and post-colonial communities (Duff and May 2017; Moore 2008; Schieffelin and Ochs 1986), and so on.

However, socialization in families is not limited to parents and their children, but is also an essential part of interaction among children in families, i.e. siblings. The literature on sibling talk, and by extension on peer talk, has shown that interactions between children are important loci for learning (Goodwin and Kyratzis 2007; van der Schaaf 2016). With regard to siblings, research has shown older siblings do a lot of direct language teaching and play word games with younger siblings (Blum-Kulka and Snow 2004; Cho 2018; Goodwin and Kyratzis 2007). Sibling talk and peer talk, however, also socialize children beyond linguistic skills. Maybin (2006), taking a Vygotskian perspective, describes children's dialogue as

an important vehicle for constructing knowledge about their social world as well as more formalised educational knowledge, and as fulfilling a number of simultaneous individual and social functions. Talk is referential, in the sense of referring to and representing the world, evaluative in making some kind of comment

on experience, interpersonal in its contribution to children's construction of relationships with others and emotive in presenting children's inner feelings. (3)

In line with Maybin's (2006) general perspective on children's talk, Zukow's (1989) extensive literature review specifically on sibling socialization already showed that younger siblings also often assume the role of learner in game settings, request advice from older siblings, and follow their guidance. In line with this, they also imitate their older siblings more than they are imitated (Brody et al. 1982; Pepler et al. 1981). Tannen et al. (2007) also found that older siblings urged younger siblings more to talk about something, rather than the other way around. Older siblings also teach younger siblings practical skills, such as washing and cooking (Dunn 2015).

Much research on socialization in sibling interaction above thus often suggests there are relatively fixed roles of socialization agent and target, in which the eldest usually is the agent and the younger sibling the target. However, longitudinal research has also shown that processes of socialization between siblings also change as children grow older; younger siblings take increasingly active roles in sibling dyads, initiating more games, cooperating and participating more in joint play, and become more effective in using their understanding of power in situations of conflict (Cho, 2018; Dunn, 2015). Dunn (2015) points out this is intricately connected to a change in power relations, but that it remains unclear what this exactly means for the siblings' abilities to influence one another, and establishing dominance in interaction. In what follows, the role of power in families will be explored.

## 2.2 Power in family talk

Research in pragmatics and related fields has long established that power is dynamic in any interactional setting (Streeck and Mehus, 2005; Wilson and Stapleton, 2007). Several more specific scholarly perspectives on power in family talk have been developed. In some perspectives, parent-child talk is seen as asymmetric, as parents often take up a more powerful role, especially in the context of the constant process of socialisation, and sibling relations are usually considered more equal (Ervin-Tripp, Jiansheng, and Lampert 1990; Blum-Kulka 1997; also see Tannen et al. 2007). In this perspective, power and intimacy are often seen as two opposites of a continuum.

However, research has shown that the complete picture of power dynamics is more complex. Tannen et al. (2007) argue that, both in general but also in the context of family talk, "we need to understand power (or hierarchy, or control) not as separate from or opposite to solidarity (or connection, or intimacy) but

as inseparable from and intertwined with it" (5), rather than power and connection being inversely proportional or mutually exclusive. In this view, intimacy and power are seen as prerequisites for one another; powerful positions can only be taken up and voiced through talk exactly because there is a close connection between participants. Tannen et al. (2007) illustrate this with a theoretical example. One family member says: "I'm going to take a walk", to which another responds "Wait, I'll go with you. I just have to make a phone call first." In this case, requesting to take the walk together expresses and reinforces closeness of relationship (solidarity/connection), but at the same time is a power manoeuvre, as it makes the one intending to make the walk wait for the other. Thus, solidarity entails power, and vice versa. Consequently, power and solidarity are seen as ambiguous and polysemous, as utterances can either reflect and create either power or solidarity, and reflect and create both at once. For Tannen et al. (2007), this link between solidarity and power is relevant in many contexts: 'telling your day'-interactions, in giving directions, and in homecoming encounters.

Although the concept is not explicitly used in the framework by Tannen et al. (2007), the analysis in the book often touches upon how deontic authority is established, accepted, resisted and ceded in interaction (Heritage and Raymond 2005; Landmark et al. 2015; Stevanovic and Peräkylä 2012; Weidner 2015). When establishing deontic authority, an interactant exhibits a point of view not on how the world is, but how it ought to be, and thus has the intention to change the status of the world in some way (Stevanovic and Peräkylä 2012; Weidner 2015). This includes changing the world through other participants' behaviours, or some aspect of other participants' behaviour itself. How deontic authority is established is specific to the particular interactional context; it is gradated rather than binary, and can be challenged and ceded in interaction (Heritage 2012).

In any case, Tannen et al.'s (2007) analysis also shows that power moves can be easily contested in family talk, because of the connection between participants. Socialization efforts in this context, too, have the potential be met with resistance (Ladegaard 2009), and strategies to establish roles such as socialization agent and target can always be unsuccessful. Socialization thus also depends on the acceptance of establishing power and hierarchy. I will therefore use the term 'socialization effort' in the analysis to indicate instances in which one sibling establishes a role of socialization agent or target, trying to initiate a form of socialization.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Background and context

The siblings under scrutiny are two youngest sisters of a Belgian family, Katie (aged 10:7) and Hannah (aged 8:6). The siblings were videotaped in 2014 by the author, who was present during recording. Katie and Hannah are native monolingual speakers of Dutch and have normal hearing and intelligence. Recording took place over the course of 4 consecutive days, resulting in 5.2 hours of recording. The recordings feature daily interactions at home such as chatting, playing games, drawing together, verbal play, and one mealtime recording. Other family members were sometimes around during recording, but were asked not to interact with them, ignore their conflicts and stay at a distance, except during the mealtime recording.

The author is an older sibling of these two sisters, which made observations more unobtrusive than with unfamiliar observers, and allowed for the sisters to easily indicate when they did not wish to be observed. Moreover, this meant the author had a good understanding of the context, both familial and of the larger sociocultural contextual elements that are made relevant in the interactions. However, this also means a few other methodological considerations come into play. First, being present as an older sibling means that the sisters sometimes interacted with the author. These parts of the data set were excluded from the analysis. Second, this means that informed consent was initially orally and informal, and then formalised later into a written informed consent, after data collection.

The participants also have six more, older siblings, which were not included in the study, for several reasons relating to scope. First, this study focuses on dyadic interaction, as multi-party interaction has its own particular dynamics (Hakulinen, 1999), to allow for comparison to the existing literature, which tends to focus on sibling dyads. Second, the great age differences between Katie and Hannah and the older siblings (the eldest being 23 and 22 at the time of data collection) has its own particular dynamic, which too is beyond the scope of this paper. Consequently, data in which other members of the family were actively interacting with the sisters were also excluded from the analysis, as well as interactions right before or right after interactions with other family members.

As data was collected over the course of four days, this analysis does not take the longitudinal approach that is often considered the gold standard in socialization research (Duff and Talmy 2011; Rowlett 2020). However, this paper also does not focus on the traditional socialization research topic of how members learn and become more equipped members of a community – something that inevitably happens over time, and for which a longitudinal approach often is the

most logical one. Rather, it focuses on how socialization efforts can be interactionally responded to. As Duff and Talmy (2011) also indicate, a non-longitudinal approach with smaller data sets can be valuable in socialization research, especially to study the dynamic aspects of socialization, for instance in relation to power, as is the case for this paper. Another reason to do long-term (ethnographic) research in socialization research is because understanding the community and its norms is key to study socialization. In this case, this understanding was already there as the author was a member of the same community, and thus already well acquainted with the context in which the data was collected.

### 3.2 Data processing

The data were initially coded in accordance with the Blum-Kulka's (1997) framework on social control acts, to get a general overview of the data. After the focus of this particular study was determined, the corpus was rewatched twice and partly recoded, based on the existing inventory and codes, to focus more on socialization and identify as wide a range of trends relating to socialization possible. Data points used for the analysis were transcribed using a simplified version of transcription conventions developed by Weidner (2012). First, a collection was built of instances in the data in which some form of socialisation took place. Subsequently, extracts were selected for in-depth analysis to illustrate as wide a range of socialization as possible, and which exhibited different power dynamics, and dynamics of resistance and acceptance to socialization roles.

## 4. Analysis

This analysis illustrates the diversity of the socialization efforts in the data, and the power dynamics in negotiations of socialization roles. First, a number of accepted, cooperative socialization efforts are analysed, which is followed by an overview of partly and wholly challenged or resisted efforts (4.2). In Section 4.3, several extracts will be analysed to illustrate that in some interactions, the boundaries between interactions meant to gain control, and interactions that have the potential to socialize, become blurred.

### 4.1 Accepted socialization efforts

The data set contains many instances of cooperation during socialization efforts. Many of them are short, because they are accepted by the socialization target without further interactional work. Socialization domains range from practical

skills and relational and sociocultural norms, to linguistic skills such as pragmatic norms and spelling. In the data set, especially in the accepted instances of socialization, it is clear that the oldest sibling Katie is usually the socializing agent, and the younger sibling Hannah the target. In what follows, four examples are discussed to gain a better understanding of the sisters' establishing of socialization roles, and of the domains that are the subject of the socialization effort.

In Example (1), the sisters are designing their own rebuses, and solving each other's rebuses. At the beginning of this extract, Hannah is correcting and explaining the rebuses she has designed, which Katie has just filled out. As rebuses depend on playing with the rendering of small segments of words such as graphemes/phonemes, the Dutch items that are part of the rebus are not translated and are indicated with double slashes in the translation (for instance //Dutch word//).

- (1)
- 1 Katie *groot is me 'n I*  
//groot// (big) is spelled with a T
  - 2 Hannah *ja ik wist het niet*  
yes I didn't know that  
(Hannah tosses her rebus aside and starts filling out  
a rebus Katie has designed)
  - 3 Katie *ale doen*  
go on then, do it
  - 4 Hannah *ma ik [snap dat niet dat snap ik]*  
but I [don't get that that I don't get]
  - 5 Katie *[wat is dat hier kip] hh dat is sip min s is ip*  
what is this here //kip// hh dat is //sip// minus //s// is //ip//
  - 6 Hannah *ja*  
yes
  - 7 Katie *en de p is een k dus*  
and that P is a K so
  - 8 Hannah *ik*  
I
  - 9 *jaaaa en het is niet kip hu nee kou min*  
yeees and it's not //kip// huh no //kou// minus
  - 10 Hannah *de K (2)*  
the K (2)
  - 11 Katie *K is gelijk aan de H dus hou min w dus ik hou*  
K is equal to the H so minus W so //ik hou//
  - 12 Hannah *hou*  
//hou//
  - 13 Katie *mouw oke ik hou VAN en hier is het min w is mou en de*  
*m is jou dus is jou ik hou van jou en nu moet je de*  
*zin hier schrijven (2) en hier is het dan en (2) de*  
*zin mooi schrijven he*  
//mouw// yes okay //ik hou van// and here it is minus  
W is //mou// en the M is //jou// so //Ik hou van jou//  
and now you have to write down the sentence here (2)  
and here it is and (2) write down the sentence nicely  
okay

In turn 1, Katie tells Hannah that a word that Hannah included in her rebus is spelled incorrectly. Because of this, Katie was not able to fill out Hannah's rebus correctly. Therefore, Katie's spelling correction may have both an instructive and a face-saving goal. In any case, Hannah accepts Katie's proposition on spelling, saying she indeed did not know about the spelling of the word (turn 2). These two turns are thus a first example of spontaneous language socialization relating to spelling. Here, the sisters' roles, and their underlying hierarchy and power dynamics, remain uncontested.

From turn 3 onwards, a second socialization effort starts when Hannah tries to fill in the rebus Katie designed. When Hannah elicits help from Katie by saying she does not understand how to solve the rebus (turn 4), Katie helps Hannah to fill it in by walking her through each item and explaining the principles of rebus solving, from turn 6 to 13. In doing so, Katie seems to teach Hannah how to solve the rebus, but also how to design one, as Hannah did not get the principles of substituting letters and building a full sentence or saying with one rebus. At the end, a small, final socialization effort regarding norms of handwriting is included. In these efforts, Katie thus orients to her expertise on several language aspects, and successfully establishes deontic authority to guide Hannah's actions. Throughout the whole extract, Hannah follows Katie's instructions and does not resist her sister's instructions, accepting all forms of socialization, and the hierarchical division of roles between the sisters.

The data set contains many instances of socialization of Hannah in which Katie successfully takes up the position of the socialization agent, such as the following extract:

(2) The sisters are having dinner with the family, eating hot pizza:

- 1 Hannah ((shouts)) M:: M:: (1) *n:u heb ik me n echt verbrand wi  
mmmm (1) now I have really burnt my mouth*
- 2 Katie Hannah rusti::g (.) *blaast dan hé*  
Hannah, take it easy. (.) then blow (on your food)

In this case, Katie utters two orders, which each serve different socializing goals: she first tells Hannah her loud reaction to the hot pizza is not appropriate, reminding her of politeness norms during dinner talk, and also teaches her a practical skill to deal with hot food, by telling her how she can prevent burning her mouth. Other older family members are present, including the mother, but are engaged in a parallel, multi-party conversations. Hannah therefore takes it upon her, or can take it upon her, to establish comment on Hannah's behaviour and socialize her into the conventions of eating together. Hannah does not verbally respond to Katie, but it seems that both socialization efforts are accepted as she does not shout again, and blows on her pizza before taking the next bite.

The next example shows how socialization also happens through commenting and evaluation rather than orders or explicit instruction. The data set contains many metapragmatic comments on each other's interactional behaviour, including the frequent comment that the other is not a good listener. These comments are often more implicit as a socialization effort, and, in this analysis, it is not possible to directly analyse whether they have an impact or effect on future on the interactant that is the target of the evaluation. However, as the literature discussed above indicates, this implicit socialization is a crucial tool for learning, especially on implicit norms. An example of this is the following extract:

- (3) Katie and Hannah are playing with their Barbie dolls and claiming horses for the dolls they are playing with:

- 1 Katie *da 's haar paard*  
that is her horse  
2 Hannah (2) *da 's 't mijne*  
(2) that is mine  
3 Katie *ja ja 'k weet et ondertussen al*  
yeah yeah I know that by now

In this interaction, Katie makes explicit that Hannah's information is not new, which can serve two purposes. First, in turn 3, it points out that Hannah's turn 2 violates the maxim of relevance. Second, Katie's utterance can also orient to certain norms they share, being that it is impolite to keep making it explicit that a toy is yours, and/or even not wanting to share toys. Either way, Katie's utterance indicates that Hannah's action of reinstating that her horse is hers is dispreferred, and in that way can have deontic effect.

Another set of socialization efforts in the data set take place during pretend play or during joint activities. During pretend play, the sisters (especially older sibling Katie) give each other instructions or discuss practices of other communities; for instance when they re-enact class interactions, or when they pretend play that they are producing and recording a news broadcast (also see Example (9)). In doing so, they get socialized about norms and practices of (other, sometimes related or also familiar) communities.

In sum, the instances of both linguistic and other socialization efforts by Katie are numerous; it is clear that Katie takes up the role as older sister teaching her sister different kinds of skills and knowledge. There is a form of asymmetry and hierarchy in this division of roles, and in these examples, these are unproblematic. The first three examples thus also confirm what the literature shows: Katie, as an older sister, socializes her younger sister in all kinds of domains. However, both explicit and implicit socialization efforts such as in the first two examples are not always accepted, as the next section will show.

## 4.2 Partly accepted and partly challenged or resisted socialization efforts

In the following example, Hannah and Katie are drawing in Katie's room, and Hannah considers copying a painting in the room. Hannah is sitting on the floor, Katie is sitting at her computer to find an image she can print and colour.

- (4) 1 Hannah *mag ik uw schilderij overtekenen*  
can I copy your painting
- 2 Katie *welk schilderij*  
which painting?
- 3 Hannah ((points at painting))  
*dat daa:r*  
the one over there
- 4 Katie *ja ma ge moet dan wel hh er naar kij:ken hé*  
yes but then you actually have to look at it okay
- 5 *ge moet nie uw blad erop leggen en zo doen hé*  
you don't put your sheet on top of it and then do like  
that okay
- 6 *(.) die jommeke hebbekik zonder dat gedaan hoor*  
*(.) that Jommeke [cartoon figure] I have done without*  
that you know
- 7 *ik heb dat gewoon geschat en hh met een gewoon*  
I have simply estimated that and hh with a normal
- 8 Hannah *(2) OOH ik kan dat niet ik beef daar te hard voor ik ga dat niet doen*  
*(2) ohh I can't do it I tremble too much to do it I'm*  
not going to do it
- 9 Katie *maar je moet SCHETsen je moet zo heel lichtjes ezo*  
but you have to sketch you have to very lightly like  
that
- 10 Hannah *(.) ja maar ik doe dat maar dat lukt nie*  
*(.) yes but I do that but it doesn't work*
- 11 Katie *(.) je moet een beetje oefenen he mijn jommeke is ook*  
*niet perfect*  
*(.) you have to practice a bit my Jommeke is not perfect*  
either
- 12 Hannah *(1) ma (.) ik sss- ik kleur dat in ovalen rond hh en ik*  
*ga daar dan rond met een zwart stiftje [en]*  
*(1) but (.) I sss- I colour that in ovals around hh and*  
then I go around it using a black marker and
- 13 Katie *[ja] en dan moet je dat inkleuren*  
yes and then you have to colour it

In this case, Katie spontaneously and explicitly starts socializing Hannah, this time in the domains of drawing skills and of socio-cultural norms on practicing skills. The effort is prompted by Hannah asking Katie whether she can copy Katie's painting (turn 1). Katie gives her permission, but only conditionally (*ja maar* ("yes but")) in turn 4), the condition being that Hannah uses a particular strategy of drawing (turns 4–5), establishing her deontic authority regarding the drawing techniques used. She then starts explaining the technique, which Katie does using directives such as orders and sentences including the epistemic modal of obligation *moet* ("have to"). However, this socialization effort is about more

than just technical skill; Katie seemingly also tries to socialize Hannah into a standard of what can be considered qualitative and worthy copying of images, which becomes apparent in turns 6–7. Katie refers to a copy she made herself, emphasizing she copied it without carbon paper (marked by the prosodic emphasis on *dat* (“that”)), saying she *gewoon* (“simply”) estimated it. Katie thus establishes she has certain expertise on norms and techniques of drawing that may be of interest to Hannah, to know about but to also use when drawing, thus legitimizing deontic authority over Hannah’s following actions. This is also strengthened by Hannah’s first turn, which constructs of the painting belonging to Katie, which further legitimizes Katie’s deontic authority on how it can be copied.

Hannah then indicates she is not capable of doing what her sister proposed/ordered (turn 8). Hannah thus accepts Katie’s expertise in the domain of drawing techniques, which elicits further advice and tips from Katie (turns 9–11). This socialization effort not only includes practical advice, but also seems to socialize Hannah into dominant socio-cultural ideas that practice makes perfect, and that going through a learning process also means producing imperfect end products in the early stages.

This second part of the socialization effort, however, seem to be not accepted, because Hannah decides to use a different drawing strategy than the one proposed by Katie. Hannah does not explicitly refute Katie’s propositions about drawing, and thus does not explicitly deny her sister’s expertise, but does deny her deontic rights with regard to her drawing plans. In turn, she starts describing her own preferred drawing technique to her sister (turn 12), in which she positions herself as having a degree of expertise on drawing. This may be an attempt to reverse the direction of the socialization and the sisters’ roles as agent and target. However, Katie does not take up the role of the target, but interrupts her sister and further describes/gives advice on this other strategy as an agent of socialization (turn 13), overruling Hannah’s attempt to establish similar or equal expertise. Hannah then does not react to this, as this turn is met by silence. The sisters stop talking as Katie continues to look for an image on the computer, and Hannah starts drawing. This socialization effort thus is an example of how rapidly the initial acceptance can shift to an interactional struggle over who more expertise and deontic status on the subject of drawing techniques, and who can exert what kind of control over whose actions.

In this example, however, Hannah’s ignoring of Katie’s tips happens implicitly- she switches to a different strategy and does not explicitly verbally resist Katie’s proposition. The data set also contains examples in which socialization efforts are denied and resisted more explicitly and up-front, causing interactional tension between the sisters. In the following example, the sisters are still drawing:

- (5) 1 Katie *ge moe 'n beetje groter tekenen,*  
*want nu (.) zie je de ogen nie zo goed*  
*you have to draw a bit bigger, because now (.) you can't*  
*see the eyes very well*  
 ((3 lines omitted, continues giving drawing advice))  
 5 *'t is gewoon tips hé als je als je*  
*it is just a tip, you know, if you if you*  
 6 Hannah *ja maar ik teken graag klein*  
*yes but I like drawing small*  
 7 Katie *oke misschien kun je- dat is een werkpuntje misschien*  
*okay maybe you can- that's a feedback point.DIM maybe*  
 8 Hannah *(2)en nu het gezicht afwerken*  
*(2) and now finish the face*

Katie again proposes a drawing technique (turns 1–4), explicitly establishing deontic authority by using the modal of obligation *moet* (“have to”), but even before Hannah has responded, she uses a mitigation strategy (turn 5), by adding the metalinguistic/metapragmatic comment that her initial utterance serves as just a tip. This can be a general mitigation and politeness strategy, but may also indicate that Katie already knows that she is entering a contested area of deontic authority, anticipating Hannah refuting her statement. Consequently, she still establishes her expertise on drawing, but makes clear she understands this does not give her deontic rights. Either way, Hannah indeed does not align with the advice Katie gives (turn 6). By saying she adheres to a different style norm of small-sized drawing, she reframes bigger-sized drawing as a personal preference rather than a standard of quality. This denies both Katie’s expertise and deontic rights, which Hannah seems to experience as face-threatening. Katie tries to save her face by re-establishing she is the most experienced and knowledgeable drawer, adding that drawing is still something Hannah may need to improve on (turn 7). She does so calling her remark on Hannah’s drawing strategy *een werkpuntje* (“a feedback point”), a term that is typically associated with school and other apprentice environments in Dutch. She does express this more tentatively this time, as the use of the diminutive and double use of *misschien* (“maybe”) indicates, and the repair of *kun je* (“you can”) into *dat is* (“that is”), which turns a direct, agentive second-person pronoun into a non-agentive, assertive construction using a third-person pronoun in subject position (turn 7). However, Hannah meets this statement with silence, and then starts thinking aloud about her drawing. She thus does not react to Katie’s last turn, a form of non-cooperation that implicitly again denies Katie’s proposition about drawing. Katie’s socialization effort thus is resisted.

In the last extract of this section, one of the few socialization efforts with Hannah as an agent and Katie as a target is discussed. However, as we will see, it is another example of refusal of a socialization effort. The girls are still drawing;

Hannah suggests Katie erases the pencil sketches before she finalizes her drawing with marker pens:

- (6) 1 Hannah *en op het einde moet jij dan a::l die schetsen uit(.)gommen*  
 and at the end you have to e(.)rase all these sketches  
 2 *dat is echt geen schets he*  
 that really is not a sketch you know  
 3 Katie *maar KOMaa:n laat mij nu nen keer (.) ik doe wat ik wil*  
 but come on leave me be (.) I do what I want  
 ((6 turns omitted, Hannah sings to herself and spills some of  
 her lemonade))  
 11 Katie *eerst zeg je dat ik zeg dat zozegzegd dat ik zeg zozegzegd zeg*  
*van u dat het lelijk is maar nu zeg je het zelf wel he van*  
*mij*  
 first you say that I say supposedly that I say supposedly say  
 that yours is ugly but now you're saying it of mine right  
 12 Hannah *joaa ge ga ge ge neemt mijn gommeke niet aan*  
 yeeeah you you you you do not take my eraser  
 13 Katie *aja omdat ik het niet nodig heb sorry hoor*  
 yes because I don't need it sorry  
 14 Hannah *ja omdat je het niet nodig had*  
 Yes because you don't need it  
 ((7 turns omitted, Hannah talking to herself about her  
 drawing))  
 22 Hannah *da zijn betere schetspotloden dan*  
 these are better drawing pencils than  
 23 Katie *ja:: 't is goed*  
 yeah right  
 24 Hannah *gewone schetspotloden*  
 regular sketching pencils  
 25 Katie *met alle potloden kun je schetsen*  
 with all pencils you can sketch  
 26 Hannah *ma zulke zijn het beste vo te schetsen*  
 but those are the best for sketching  
 27 Katie *aja dat valt mee*  
 sure they're alright  
 28 Hannah *vind ik toch*  
 that's what I think

In the extract, Hannah initiates two socialization efforts. In turn 1, she proposes a drawing technique, much like Katie in Example (4). In this proposition, she not only establishes her experience and knowledge on drawing, but claims deontic authority based on this, as indicated by the use of the modal of obligation *moet* (“have to”). She continues taking an authoritative, evaluative stance when discussing Katie’s work (turn 2) with an impersonal, assertive statement, strengthened by her modifying adverb *echt* (“really”). However, this elicits explicit resistance from Katie (turn 3), who tells Hannah that she does what she wants, denying Hannah any deontic rights.

In turn 11, Katie states that Hannah’s earlier evaluative utterances with tips imply that her work is ugly, while she reminds Hannah that such evaluations made earlier during the drawing session by Katie were considered unacceptable



cally saying Hannah must have swapped their roles, which she labels as “swapping names” (*namen*), in that discussion. Hannah wants to interrupt (turn 3), but Katie continues making her point by repeating Hannah is being impolite (turn 4), and explaining why (turn 5). Hannah refuses this proposition saying her song was meant to be humorous (turn 6), which in turn is challenged by Katie (turn 7). After this, Hannah starts singing again, this time sticking to the original lyrics. This may indicate that she accepts that her modification was impolite, but it remains unclear whether this is the case. The sisters thus both try to claim the role as socialization agent, or at least as being the one with a better understanding of norms of politeness, humour, and family politics. However, they both deny each other that role or expertise.

These examples show that the sisters do not have a consistent asymmetric relation, and that sometimes certain utterances that have the potential to socialize, but take shape of a negotiation in which their socialization roles are contested, or become blurred. However, the discussions between the sisters in these examples can still have some socializing effect- they learn about each other’s norms and values, for instance on sister politics and relations, and how these relate to language choices, in Extract 7. The examples show that the boundaries of socialization and negotiation are not always clear-cut; and that any role or hierarchy the sisters try to establish is easily challenged and denied.

### 4.3 Blurring boundaries between socialization and gaining control

In this section, examples are discussed that indicate socialization not only is related to power struggles because of the importance of accepting expertise and the establishing of socialization roles. It also is because the sisters sometimes have other interactional goals that relate to gaining control over the other’s actions, when constructing an interaction as a potential moment of learning. In the next example, the sisters are making cookies:

- (8) 1 Katie *en we moeten dat mengen ik ga een klopper pakken*  
 and we have to mix that I’ll take a whisk  
 ((7 turns omitted; Katie collects utensils and Hannah  
 measures the ingredients, while both chatting and  
 singing, and while Katie helps Hannah correctly  
 to measure the flour. Once they are done, they put the  
 ingredients in the mixing bowl. Both girls put a  
 utensil in the bowl: Hannah the wooden spoon, and  
 Katie a whisk.))
- 8 Hannah *IK GA HET MENGEN*  
 I’m going to mix it
- 9 Katie *nee:: nie met de houten lepel dat mag nie*  
 no, not with a wooden spoon, that is not allowed

- 10 Hannah *JAWE::L DA STAAT HIER ME NEN HOU:TEN LE:PEL*  
**yes it is!** It's in ((points to the recipe)): with a  
 wooden spoon!
- 11 Katie *ahja doe het fdan he*  
**oh yes well do it then**  
 ((The girls both put their utensils in the bowl and mix  
 ingredients; they both start laughing))
- 12 Katie *gaat er een keer uit*  
**get out of it now**
- 13 Hannah *hoezo het staat zelfs hier op het prentje met een*  
*houten lepel*  
**why it even says here in the picture with a wooden  
 spoon**
- 14 Katie *je doet het fout Hannah*  
**you're doing it wrong Hannah**  
 ((The sisters start pulling at each other's utensils))

In turn 1, Katie discusses how to prepare for the recipe's next step. She then explains Hannah how to measure ingredients on a scale and gives her instructions, which Hannah follows. Here, Hannah clearly is a target of socialization regarding baking skills, a role she accepts. However, in turn 9, Katie orders Hannah to not use a wooden spoon, saying that this is not allowed. She establishes deontic authority and hints to some kind of knowledge on baking in an impersonal, general construction ('it is not allowed') as a motivation for that, but it remains unclear why it is not allowed. This elicits a strong refusal of Hannah, as the high volume of the whole utterance and the lengthened vowels in the initial response *jawel* ('yes it is') and the subject of discussion *de houten lepel* ('the wooden spoon') show. Hannah supports her refusal by referring to the recipe, to which she also physically points, establishing that the recipe has a higher epistemic authority on baking than Katie. This is accepted by Katie, as her order to use the wooden spoon after all in turn 9 indicates, which overrules her previous order. However, Katie produces another order in turn 12, again establishing deontic authority and saying that Hannah has to remove her spoon. This is not accepted by Hannah, who again refers to the recipe (turn 13). Katie then evaluates Hannah's mixing technique as wrong, but does not account for this assessment. However, she again seems to want to influence Hannah's actions with regard to mixing the dough. When this also proves to be ineffective, she starts pulling at Hannah's spoon.

Katie's order in turn 9 thus initially seems a continuation of her socialization effort, but it becomes increasingly clear that is not really trying to teach Hannah something, or help her, but that she wants to be the sole mixer of the dough. This is especially clear when comparing turns 1 to 7 with turns 8 to 14. As long as Katie gives Hannah instructions and tips but lets her do the actual work, Hannah accepts Katie's socialization efforts (turns 1–7). However, in turn 9, Katie draws on inaccessible knowledge, after which it becomes increasingly clear she wants

Hannah to remove her spoon, while she has her whisk still in the bowl. Interestingly, Hannah does not react to any of the deontics, but keeps her response in the domain of epistemic authority, as she uses knowledge from the recipe to do invalidate Katie's claim.

Another example illustrating this strategy as used by Katie is the following. Hannah and Katie are engaged in a pretend play in which they are simulating a news broadcast. Hannah is the reporter and Katie is the director:

- (9)
- |   |        |  |
|---|--------|--|
| 1 | Hannah | <i>v:anochtend is er .h een [brand]</i><br>this morning, there has been a fire   |
| 2 | Katie  | [brand]<br>fire-   |
| 3 | Hannah | <i>in het stadhuis geweest en .h dat was vre:selijk</i><br>in the town hall and it was terrible  |
| 4 | Katie  | <i>puntje puntje- en nu moe j' namen verzinnen</i><br>dot dot, and now you must make up some names   |
| 5 | Hannah | <i>en nu gaan we kijken [naar]</i><br>And now we are going to look at-   |
| 6 | Katie  | [NEE] <i>nee nee puntje puntje</i><br><i>stond daar ter plaatse</i>  |
| 7 |        | <i>en die puntje puntje moe je een naam verzinnen</i><br><i>stond daar ter plaatse moet je zo zeggen</i><br>No no no, "dot dot" was standing there on location,<br>and those dots you have to fill in with a name:<br>"stood there at the town hall". You have to say it<br>like that. |

Generally, in this data set, Katie tends to direct all the pretend play, in line with the existing literature, and is doing so in this extract too. In this case, this dynamic is also strengthened by the division of pretend play roles; when filming a news broadcast, the director is also in charge and gives the reporter instructions. Consequently, in her role of director, Katie orders Hannah to list the names of the main protagonists (turn 4). However, Hannah does not follow Katie's instructions; instead, she announces a video they will watch (turn 5). Katie therefore reinstates her order (turn 6), and then, slipping out of her role as director, explains that *puntje puntje* ("dot dot") is a metalinguistic term to mark that some information still needs to be filled in in that slot of the sentence (turns 7–8). After this clarification, Hannah follows the order.

Here, Katie's orders can serve two purposes: they have the potential to socialize Hannah on the use of metalinguistic markers, but also revert control over the pretend play session back to Katie. It is unclear whether Hannah intentionally ignored Katie's initial order in turn 4, but the socialization effort seems to give Katie deontic authority over Hannah's utterances as a reporter, and thus increases her impact on the structure and content of the pretend play. In sum, Katie's instructions and orders again show how intricately power, control and socialization can be linked, and that the boundaries between explaining aspects of the

world and the community, negotiating expertise and norms, and gaining control over the situation, can be blurred.

This strategy is also occasionally used by Hannah, for instance in the following extract. The girls are pretend playing that they are recording a video clip. Katie has divided the roles: she is the singer and Hannah a dancer. Katie also picked a song and decided they would first play that they are recording the song in a studio. Hannah strongly disagrees with all three ideas, shouting that she does not want to be the dancer, and that the song has already been recorded. About the song itself, she says:

- (10) 1 Hannah *da 's ECHT voor marginalen sorry ik vin da echt*  
 that's really for morons, sorry but that is what I really think.  
 ((Katie keeps singing and Hannah wraps herself in the curtain))

In this utterance, Hannah evaluates the song very negatively. *Marginalen* (lit. "marginals") is a colloquial swear word derived from the Dutch adjective *margin-aal* (lit. "marginal"). In this use, it refers to people that behave weirdly or stupidly, or that have bad or no taste. Hannah thus puts forward a strong judgment of taste, which has the potential to teach Katie something about artistic norms and good taste. However, Hannah may want to have used this as another strategy to change the course of the pretend play, which she has already tried before by saying she does not want to be the dancer, and trying to change the timeline of the pretend play with regard to the recording of the song. As this strategy does not seem to work as Katie keeps singing, Hannah disengages from the pretend play and starts playing with the curtain. This too is a way of regaining some form of control, as the joint pretend play no longer exists when she no longer participates.

## 5. Conclusion

This paper examined power and socialization in sibling interaction by analysing the interaction between two sisters aged 8 and 10. The analysis has shown that a rich array of socialization efforts takes place in the sisters' interaction, in the domains of practical skills, language and sociocultural norms. When socialization takes place, the older sibling is usually the socialization agent and the younger one the target. In this way, the findings confirm and/or relate to relevant trends found in the scholarly literature on socialization, family talk, peer talk and sibling talk.

However, when taking a closer look at how the sisters establish roles as agent and target in socialization efforts, it becomes clear that this can lead to power struggles, and that socialization efforts are often resisted and contested. There is a pattern of asymmetry in the sisters' relation which relates to the sisters' age and

birth order, but this asymmetry also is unstable, and the co-constructed legitimacy of the socialization efforts is context-dependent. More precisely, this entails that the whole socialization effort as such is sometimes simply ignored, in the sense that no action is undertaken and no verbal response is given; sometimes the expertise evoked or the evaluation made is contested; sometimes deontic authority in the form instructions, and tips, often formulated with modals of obligations, are ignored or explicitly refuted and resisted; sometimes no clear division of roles as agent and target is established.

Moreover, sometimes it is unclear whether something can be classified as socialization, or whether a socialization-like interaction actually also has (also) other goals that relate to power and control, such as controlling the course of pretend play, or being the (only) one to mix cookie dough. In these cases, one sister tries to establish deontic authority, which can be based on expertise or evaluations and value judgements, which seemingly is (also) meant to change the other sister's behaviour. This is in line with Dunn's (2015) findings, who says that "in the face of conflict with a sibling, children exploit their understanding of social rules within the family to their own advantage" (184). In this data set, such exploitation does not only occur in situations of conflict, but more generally in situations of trying to gain control over the other. In this sense, the sisters' interaction is also a constant socialization process on the social dynamics and the boundaries of social value, power, face, (im)politeness, authority in their own small community of sisters, including an understanding that these boundaries are fluid. This also confirms that socialization, between the siblings and more generally, is bidirectional, as also indicated by Cho (2018), and confirms that power and connection indeed are closely related, and a prerequisite for one another (Tannen et al. 2007).

When comparing sibling socialization to other settings in which socialization takes place, the dynamic of unstable asymmetry is likely specific to sibling interaction. According to Keel (2016), children do not orient as epistemically competitive to their parents in socialization in parent-child interaction. In her study, parents do not use resources to upgrade and display greater epistemic rights, nor do children use resources that index epistemic subordination; Keel (2016) labels the interaction between children and parents "epistemically unmarked". Other researchers similarly point to the fundamentally hierarchical and the same time intensely connected nature of relations between parents and children (Kendall 2007), and see the asymmetrical power relation between the parent and the child as a crucial prerequisite for parent-child socialization (Blum-Kulka 1997). When comparing to peer talk, relations tend to be less asymmetrical (Mcelwain and Volling 2006), and the interactants are usually constructed as (more or less) equal (Blum-Kulka and Snow 2004; Grusec and Hastings 2015).

These findings can be taken further in the field of socialization in several ways. First, it confirms the importance of calling for a less static understanding of socialization, and an understanding that focuses more on power, multiple settings, and multidirectionality (Duff and Talmy 2011). In line with this, the results also shows how complex the understanding of ‘community’ in socialization research is, and that socialization is not necessarily always about becoming more expert or better members of the own community. While the sisters form their own community in which socialization takes place, they draw on norms that are not only limited to their own community or to the nuclear family, but also to norms that we associate with school environments, and even norms of specific professional communities of which they are in no way part of. In the latter case, these norms are not directly necessary to function within the communities they are currently part of, but become important for instance as part of the pretend play. However, it is also the fact that these norms are only relevant for the pretend play context that makes the socialization effort around them easily contestable.

Finally, this paper calls for further research. The specific nature of the participants’ age, gender, language and culture, the number of participants in interaction and synchronic nature of the study entail that further research is needed to gain a fuller understanding of the dynamic nature of power in sibling socialization and the negotiation of deontic authority, and how the abovementioned factors influence interactional dynamics.

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