

Children's well-being, parenting practices and social institutions.

An exploration through
the case of sleep (in Italy)

Barbara Da Roit, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

barbara.daroit@unive.it

Rennes, 29-30 November 2018

Parenting turn and state of the debate

- The «parenting turn»
 - Rising policies and interventions targeting parents
 - Assumption that instructing parents will make «better children»
 - Behavioural psychology
- Critical perspectives on the «parenting turn»
 - Parental determinism
 - Neglect of social determinants
 - Blaming the victims

OK, parenting determinism is inaccurate and unfair, but...

- Is «spontaneity» (as opposed to behavioural programming) satisfactory?
 - spontaneity is likely to subsume the social forces at work in shaping parenting
 - What is “spontaneous” actually
- Are children with lower family resources not disadvantaged in any case?

Esping-Andersen's alternative

Esping-Andersen's (2002) version of the social investment strategy:

- (good quality) early care and education intervention
 - reducing inequalities
 - preparing for the future
 - *Diminishing parental influence and increasing societal /public/state influence*
- But....
 - Difficult policy implementation
 - Parental and social environment influence remains high

An institutional perspective on parenting practices as an alternative

- Parenting practices are constrained (by cultures, institutions...)
- Parenting practices interact with other practices (school, friends, neighbourhood, organizations around children and youth)
- Parenting practices do matter (all this taken in to consideration)
- Parenting practices can change....as well as institutions
 - But only taking the above into account the above

Sleep (and related practices) as an analyzer of the institutional dimension of parenting and children's wellbeing

Why sleep?

- Relatively simple dimensions of children's and family life
- In the literature, sleeping patterns are associated with children's wellbeing, health and functioning (Scher 2005; Touchette et al 2007; Curcio et al 2006; Koulouglioti 2008; Gregory and O'Connor 2002; Gregory et al 2009; Friedman et al 2009)
- Sleeping patterns are clearly associated with parenting practices (Sadeh et al 2010; Philbrook and Teti 2016, Mindell et al 2010, Jian and Teti 2016)
 - Parenting practices *can* influence the quantity and quality of children's sleep by enforcing rules on bedtime and bedtime routines (Galland et al., 2012)

Changes in sleep changes and institutions

- Technology and media play a role in the postponement of bedtime (Van den Bulck 2004, 2003; Carskadon 1990).
- However, decreasing sleeping time does not affect to the same extent all (western) societies (Matricciani et al. 2012): some societies are more able than others to guarantee children's sleep, in front of challenges posed by social change.
- **What is the role of social institutions and how does that interact with parenting practices?**

Parenting cultures

- Traditional/cultural practices are relevant
 - Sleeping alone vs co-sleeping
 - Soothing vs self-soothing
- The «traditional way» (or the norm) is not necessarily:
 - «spontaneous»
 - satisfactory
 - ...
- A certain degree of agency is there
- Some «cultures» and institutions support sleep-related parenting practices entailing more wellbeing (in a given context). Others less.

An exploration of the Italian case

The context

The «problem» of sleep

A qualitative (preliminary)
exploration through social media

The policy context (family policy, childcare and protection...) and parenting support

- Traditionally weak child and family provision
 - Limited income support
 - Limited conciliation policies
 - Low development of childcare services (0-2)
 - Weak «Preventive» services and support
- Weak infrastructure of sociale care services
 - Municipalities
- High medicalization of pregnancy and childcare
 - Role of pediatricians
- Weak parenting support

Signs of a rising «parenting support» policy

- National guidelines for «Interventions with children in vulnerable situations»: «**promoting positive parenting**» (Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs, 2017)
- Preceded by experiments, namely **P.I.P.P.I....** (a good example of the weak penetration of parenting support)

P.I.P.P.I

- **Programma di Intervento Per Prevenire l'Instituzionalizzazione** (*intervention program to prevent institutionalization*)
- Funded by the Ministry of Employment and Social Policies
- Designed and monitored by the University of Padua
- Programme inspired by «foreign» experiences:
 - Grandir ensemble, PAPFC and Aides (**Québec**), Looking after children (England/UK), Amoròs (Spain)
- Five «waves» (2011/12 to 2016/17)



4. Soggetti nelle implementazioni di P.I.P.P.I.

	Anni	Famiglie	Bambini	Città/ Ambiti Territoriali	Operatori	Coach	Referenti Regionali	Referenti Territoriali
P.I.P.P.I.1	2011-12	89	122	10	160	20	/	10
P.I.P.P.I.2	2013-14	144	198	9	630	32	/	9
P.I.P.P.I.3	2014-15	453	600	47	1490	104	17	47
P.I.P.P.I.4	2015-16	434	473	46	1169	116	18	62
P.I.P.P.I.5	2016-17	508	541	50	1387	126	18	56
Totale		1628	1934					

Source: PIPPI evaluation report 2016/17

OPINIONI

“Dicono che noi non sappiamo fare gli insegnanti, guai se dicessimo che non sanno fare i genitori”

Di Martina Gaudino 12 min di lettura

[They say we are not able to teach (to be teachers), but what would happen if we said they are not able to parent (to be parents)]

Schools (teachers) and parents

- Schools pointing to parents as *the* source of problem (not specifically about sleep):
 - Attention/listening
 - Recognition of «authority»
 - Complying with rules
- And parents pointing to schools
 - Not able to keep attention
 - Not able to understand and deal with individual children...

Italian children sleep less

- Children in Southern and Eastern Europe sleep less than in Central and Northern Europe (Hense 2011)
- The claim is that Italian children are (culturally/traditionally) highly involved in the social activities of their parents.
 - Looser to no bed time rules
 - No routines
 -
- The questions:
 - Why? How?
 - Is this “traditional”/cultural?
 - Which social institutions are involved?
 - How do Italian parents experience parenting practices in relation to sleep?
 - Which tensions are there (if any)?

20 years of «external regulation» of sleeping time (1950s-1970s)

- Reconstruction and economic boom
- TV pedagogical role
- Commercialization

- TV show, public channel
- From 3-2-1957 to 1-1-1977
- 10 minutes: comedy, gags and advertisement
- 1957-1973 at 20:50
- 1973-1977 at 20:30 (austerity policies)



«*E dopo Carosello tutti a nanna!*»
[and after Carosello everybody to bed!]

- Setting a day/night boundary
 - Children's day-time was not the same as adults' day-time
- Standard supporting rule enforcement
- A national bed ritual

Rising questions

- How do parents perceive the sleep issue?
- Where do parents get their ideas about sleep?
- What do parental practices around sleep look like?
- How do parents experience them?

Exploring online information, advice and discussions I

- Websites directed to (and involving) parents with two foci:
 - Content of information and advice to parents
 - Parents' discussion forums
- Selection and search:
 - Generalist but clear orientation to parents (excluded too specific topics)
 - Multi-reference
 - Keywords: Sleep (*sonno; dormire*)

Exploring online information, advice and discussions II

- Many problems and limitations:
 - Selection of websites/forums
 - Self-selection of parents in discussions
 - No background variables of parents
- Objectives:
 - Preliminary (ongoing) exploration of themes in order to develop concepts
 - Further development of qualitative research

Sources of information and advice

- Reported (international) research results
- Individual experts (pediatricians; psychologists)

Picture emerging from information and advice websites

- Quantitative «golden standards»:
 - «right» number of hours of sleep
 - «right» bedtime
- «Normal» and «abnormal» sleeping patterns
 - E-g. number of wake ups
- Techniques on how to put children to sleep:
 - Pros and cons of different approaches
- Independent vs co-sleeping
 - Most controversial issue
- Reporting on Italian children's sleeping patterns:
 - Too few hours, with low quality of sleep

The (impossible and yet good) rule



GUIDE E CONSIGLI VITA DI COPPIA

E dopo carosello...tutti a nanna. Ma oggi chi ci riesce? Eppure mandare a letto presto i bambini farebbe bene a loro, a mamma e a papà

12 maggio 2017 ★★★★★ 0 (0 votes)

Salute e benessere (267)
Alimentazione (143)

ARTICOLI PIÙ LETTI

-  "Sì, lo facciamo spesso...". Alessandro Gassman sempre attento alla privacy, adesso però vuota il sacco
-  Ricevere una telefonata da Babbo Natale
-  Bentelan 1 mg compresse, a cosa serve e come utilizzarlo

E dopo Carosello... tutti a nanna! una frase sentita tante volte che conferma la bontà di alcune pratiche basate sul buon senso e sull'esperienza familiare.

"Growing Up in Australia" è uno studio longitudinale che ha seguito lo sviluppo di oltre 10.000 bambini e famiglie australiane. Lo studio è iniziato nel 2004 con due coorti: famiglie con bambini di 4-5 anni e famiglie con

«And after Carosello... everybody to bed. But who manages nowadays? Yet, putting children to sleep early would do good to them, to mom and dad»

Themes from discussion forums

The screenshot shows a web browser displaying the website 'alfemminile.com'. The address bar shows the URL 'https://www.alfemminile.com/mamma-sc7.html'. The website header features the 'alfemminile' logo in a pink, cursive font. Navigation links include 'Forum', 'Album', 'cerca', and 'Account'. A main menu lists categories: HOME, BELLEZZA, MODA, MAMMA (highlighted), AMORE E PSICOLOGIA, SANA E IN FORMA, OROSCOPO, MATRIMONIO, NEWS & GOSSIP, CUCINA, and PROVATO DA VOI. A secondary menu below lists sub-topics: Mamma, Concepimento, Essere genitori, Gravidanza, Parto, Neonati, Bambini, Forum gravidanza, Forum bebè, NaturCare Humana, and Shopping. The main content area is titled 'MAMMA' in large, bold, black letters. Below the title are three images: a person in a blue and white striped shirt working behind a counter at 'BRILLIANT BURGERS & CRAFT BEER BAR', and a woman in a beige jacket and sunglasses looking to the side.

What is (really) right?

- Experts say that children need to sleep
- But what is the «right» time to go to bed?
- Doubting, asking others for their experiences, comparing
- Looking at (and sometimes distancing oneself from) other «cultures»
- Juggling «rights» and «wrongs»

- Moni5290

Today I went to baby-swim and the teacher said that they should be in bed at 20:30 max.! But Alice does not want to hear anything about going before 21:30-22! I don't know, maybe it is a thing here. I am in Germany and here I have the impression that children go to sleep MUCH earlier...

[many post on how impossible it is to sleep through from 20:00 till morning and on strategies to prolongue morning sleep]

- Seabirdsilvi

It is a matter of habits... I am living in Ireland. Here dinner is at 17:00-17:30 and my friends' children are in bed at 19:30 (even 19:00)! And they sleep till morning! Mine go to sleep at 20:30 at the moment; a few months ago it was 21:00, but I tried to gradually anticipate.

- Isabel:

My boyfriend's child...he is 9 and he goes to bed (or better, he is put to bed) at 19-19.30... And if I dare to protest, I am told that I am crazy! That a child has to sleep a lot...

But honestly, at seven... when it is still light outside... it seems a bit early to me!!!

His mother is German and she told me that there they go to sleep early and that children need to sleep.

Sleep as a problem

- A lot of distress
 - Children who do not want to sleep
 - Who do not want to sleep alone
 - Who set their own sleeping time
- How to manage?

Ernesto1969:

- What time do you put «the beasts» to bed? How old are they?
Because here it seems to be dealing with two teenagers... (they are 3 and 5).

Fata:

At 21.00

Hi, when «the beast» (5 years) goes to kindergarten, at 21:00 (also because, poor thing, at 7:00 the alarm clock goes off!!). In the summer and before kindergarten starts there is no set time..... But never after 23:00 unless there is something extraordinary.

It is not always easy because he would never go to bed, even when he's completely destroyed. But once convinced he falls asleep quickly. Bye.

Alrilosa:

- Hi, all three at max 20:30. They are 9y, 6y and 17 months

Ernesto1969:

- Sorry if I insist with my questions, but I have to understand in order to learn.
At 20:30. What time do you come back from work? If I do the math here I do not understand how you manage (to do the right thing, I admit).
I get home 19:30, if all is fine. We eat as soon as I get home. We finish supper around 20:15/20:30.
Wash their hands, brush their teeth....and then should I not play with them an hour or so? Or watch some tv together... Otherwise it would be as if I did not exist.
Well...if I put them to bed at 21 (or even worse at 20:30) it would be like never playing with them and putting them to bed right after dinner... which is not good.
How do you do it? HEEELP?

Constraints

- Time
 - Working times
 - Leisure
- «Their» (the children's) preferences and behaviour
- Who is in charge?

- Luca17269897 (F):

I am desperate,
My child, almost 4y, does not want to go to sleep alone and herefore falls asleep on the sofa always arund 22:30 and in the morning he wakes up at 7:15. Sometimes I tried to send him to bed earlier, but it is always the same, crying, screaming, wining until out of compassion I also go to bed or he comes back to the sofa. Many times I had to sacrifice myself and go to bed early as well. And lately he also forces daddy. So, it is either nobody or everybody. I don't know how to make him understand that children have to go to bed early. And without mom and dad. By the way he does not want to sleep in his room and still slpees with us. If you have any advice I am ready to listen to you.

Some (non) concluding remarks

- There is variability in parenting practices within the given context
 - Different «positions»
 - Different practices
- Setting and enforcing rules is costly
- ...also because social institutions do not help guiding behaviour
 - Institutionalized time patterns
 - Expectations of parents regarding free time, sociability etc.
 - «professional» prescriptions are perceived as external, abstract, not suitable
- But also not setting and enforcing rules is costly it is costly

To go back to the beginning...

- Behaviourist/one-for-all approaches do not seem suitable
- «Spontaneity» entails a lot of distress
 - Some «manage», others don't
 - Possibly, those who manage are the ones with more resources
- What to do and how
 - Are new norms (guidelines) possible and desirable?
 - Would a new «Carosello» help?
 - Or how to facilitate the construction of shared norms?
 - (re)considering, discussing institutional constraints
 - (re)considering parents' expectations (can they have it all?)

...and to parenting support

Italy as an interesting case of

- Weak parenting support
- Fragmented penetration of parenting determinism
- Individualization of well-being without its previous (diffuse) collectivisation
 - And not purposely done by public policies (yet)
- Comparison needed!

Thank you!

References

- Bornstein M.H. (...) Cultural approaches to parenting
- Carskadon M. (1990) Patterns of sleepiness in adolescents. *Paediatrician*;17(1):5e12.
- Chaput et al 2016
- Curcio G, Ferrara M, De Gennaro L. Sleep loss, learning capacity and academic performance. *Sleep Med Rev* 2006;10:323e37.
- Dollman J, Ridley K, Olds T, Lowe E. (2007) Trends in the duration of school-day sleep among 10- to 15-year-old South Australians between 1985 and 2004. *Acta Paediatrica*, 96(7):1011e4.
- Friedman NP, Corley RP, Hewitt JK, Wright KP. (2009) Individual differences in childhood sleep problems predict later cognitive executive control. *Sleep*, 32:323e33.
- Gregory AM, O'Connor TG. (2002) Sleep problems in childhood: a longitudinal study of developmental change and association with behavioral problems. *J Am Acad Child Adolesc Psychiatry* 2002;41:964e71.
- Gregory AM, Caspi A, Moffitt TE, Poulton R. (2009) Sleep problems in childhood predict neuropsychological functioning in adolescence. *Pediatrics*, 123:1171e6.
- Hense, S., Barba, G., Pohlabein, H., De Henauw, S., Marild, S., Molnar, D., Moreno, L.A., Hadjigeorgiou, C., Veidebaum, T., Ahrens, W. (2011), Factors that Influence Weekday Sleep Duration in European Children, *Sleep*, Volume 34, Issue 5, 1, Pages 633–639, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sleep/34.5.633>
- Iglowstein I, Jenni O, Molinari L, Largo R. (2003) Sleep duration from infancy to adolescence: reference values and generational trends. *Pediatrics*, 111(2):302e7.
- Jian N., Teti, D.M. (2016) Emotional availability at bedtime, infant temperament, and infant sleep development from one to six months 23, *Sleep Medicine*, 49-58.
- Jones H., Cornsweet Barber C., Nikora L.W., Middlemiss W. (2017) Māori child rearing and infant sleep practices, *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, 46, 3, 30-37.

Hendrick.H. (2016) *Narcissistic Parenting in an Insecure World. A History of Parenting Culture 1920s to Present*, Bristol, Policy Press.

Koulouglioti C, Cole R, Kitzman H. Inadequate sleep and unintentional injuries in young children. *Public Health Nurs* 2008;25:106e14.

Kohyama J. (2005) Sleep duration. *Shounika*;46(1. Suppl.):88e9.

Jones H., Cornsweet Barber C., Nikora L.W., Middlemiss W. (2017) Māori child rearing and infant sleep practices, *New Zealand Journal of Psychology*, 46, 3, 30-37.

LeVine, R. A., Dixon, S., LeVine, S. E., Richman, A., Keefer, C., Liederman, P. H., & Brazelton, T. B. (2008). The comparative study of parenting. In R. A. LeVine & R. S. New (Eds.), *Anthropology and child development: A cross-cultural reader* (pp. 55-65). Malden, : Blackwell Publishing.

LeVine, R. A. (2003). *CERC studies in comparative education 12. Childhood socialization: Comparative studies of parenting, learning and educational change*. Hong Kong, China: University of Hong Kong.

Matricciani L., Olds Timothy, Petkov J. (2011) In search of lost sleep: Secular trends in the sleep time of school-aged children and adolescents, *Sleep Medicine Reviews*, 16 (2012) 203-211.

Matricciani, L., Yu Sun Bin, Lallukka, T., Kronholm, E., Dumuid, D., Paquet, C., Olds, T. (2017) Past, present, and future: trends in sleep duration and implications for public health, *Sleep Health*, 3, 317-323.

McDowall, P.S., Galland B.C., Campbell, A.J., Elder, D.E. (2017) Parent knowledge of children's sleep: A systematic review. *Sleep Medicine Reviews* 31 (2017) 39-47.

Mindell J.A., Sadeh A., Kohyama J., How T.H. (2010) Parental behaviors and sleep outcomes in infants and toddlers: A cross-cultural comparison, *Sleep Medicine* 11, 393–399.

Philbrook, L. E., & Teti, D. M. (2016). Bidirectional associations between bedtime parenting and infant sleep: Parenting quality, parenting practices, and their interaction. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 30(4), 431-441. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/fam0000198>

Pyper E., Harrington D., Manson H. (2017) Do parents' support behaviours predict whether or not their children get sufficient sleep? A cross-sectional study, *BMC Public Health*, 17, 432, 1-10.

Ramos, K.D., Youngclarke, D.M. (2006) Parenting Advice Books About Child Sleep: Cosleeping and Crying It Out, *Sleep*, 29(12), 1616-1623.

Sadeh, A., Tikotzky, L., [Scher, A.](#) (2010) Parenting and infant sleep, [Sleep Medicine Reviews](#), 14(2), 89-96

Scher A. Infant sleep at 10 months of age as a window to cognitive development. *Early Hum Dev* 2005;81:289e92.

Touchette E, Petit D, Seguin JR, Boivin M, Tremblay RE, Montplaisir JY. Associations between sleep duration patterns and behavioral/cognitive functioning at school entry. *Sleep* 2007;30:1213e9.

Thorleifsdottir B, Björnsson J, Benediktsdottir B, Gislason T, Kristbjarnarson H. (2002) Sleep and sleep habits from childhood to young adulthood over a 10-year period. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*; 53(1):529e37.

Van den Bulck J. (2004) Television viewing, computer game playing, and Internet use and self-reported time to bed and time out of bed in secondary-school children. *Sleep*;27(1):101e4.

Van den Bulck J. (2003) Text messaging as a cause of sleep interruption in adolescents, evidence from a cross-sectional study. *Journal of Sleep Research*;12(3):263.

Wolfson A.R., Montgomery-Downs H. (eds) (2011) *The Oxford handbook of infant, child, and adolescent sleep and behavior*, New York : Oxford University Press.

Information and advice to parents

- Selected websites

- <https://www.pianetamamma.it/>
- <https://www.mammeacrobate.com/>
- <https://www.ioeilmiobambino.it/>
- <https://www.mamme.it/>
- <https://www.nostrofiglio.it/>
- <https://www.passionemamma.it/>
- <https://www.bravibimbi.it/>
- <https://www.alfemminile.com/>
- <https://www.mammapretaporter.it/>
- <https://www.mammeoggi.it/>

Consulted blogs

- <http://www.cosedamamme.it/>
- <http://www.unamammainpiu.it/>
- www.50sfumaturedimamma.com
- machedavvero.it
- www.babygreen.it
- <http://genitorincorso.blogspot.com/>
- <http://genitori4punto0.blogspot.com/>
- <http://papaimperfetto.it/>
- <http://www.motelospiegoapapa.it/>
- <https://www.vitadapapa.it/>
- <http://www.superpapa.it/>
- <http://www.quantestoriepapa.it/>
- <http://www.papoluca.it/>
- <http://stratobabbo.blogspot.com/>
- <http://diventaregenitori.blogspot.com/>
- <https://www.professionepapa.it/>
- <https://www.sharingdaddy.it/>