Mutual Apprentices: The Making of Parenthood and Childhood in Family Dinner Conversations

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Key Words
Accountability · Apprenticeship · Conversation analysis · Family interaction · Language socialization · Normative talk · Tutoring

Abstract
Starting from a view of socialization as a bidirectional process, the paper contributes to the field of language socialization in detailing how conversational interaction provides tools for parents and children to collaboratively construe a sense of moral meaning and social order. The paper illustrates both the agentic participation of Italian children in dialogue on normative behavior and ways that their discursive contributions shape the structure and thematic content of parental talk that ensues. Parental responses to children’s normative transgressions socialize them also into the language of transgression. The children we studied supply and elicit accounts from others that attempt to justify or explain transgression.

Perspectives on Socialization

In this paper, we examine the idea that parents and children are mutually involved in socialization of each other. We expand on this notion with a study of mutual apprenticeship of Italian parents and children in conversations building understanding of norms and transgressions.

When broadly conceived, the notion of socialization seems indubitable and unanimously acknowledged as the process through which children are made part of a social group [Danziger, 1971; Wentworth, 1980]. However, the term has been endowed with substantially different meanings within the different approaches that have been concerned with this issue over time.
Without providing an exhaustive overview on theories of socialization, we shall begin by sketching the different overarching assumptions regarding ideas of socialization that have informed several theoretical contributions across disciplines.

**Unidirectional Views of Socialization**

Socialization has long been conceived in a rather deterministic way. Behavioristic and social learning theories [Bandura, 1977; Miller & Dollard, 1941; Skinner, 1957; Watson, 1924, 1928] described socialization in terms of an adult’s shaping the child’s behavior through selective reinforcement, modeling, and soliciting imitation [Gewirtz, 1969]. The functionalist approach [Dahrendorf, 1966; Parsons, 1951; Parson & Bales, 1955] emphasized the intergenerational reproduction of social organization and the maintenance of social order. In these frameworks socialization came to mean the internalization of values, beliefs, norms and role-expectations of society. The Freudian psychodynamic model, in contrast, suggested a more conflictual interpretation according to which there are initially contrasts and polarity between the child’s natural tendencies (drives) and society’s demands. Adults, initially parents, curb their children’s behavioral dispositions that are incompatible with those of the community and, at the same time, press for the acquisition of socially appropriate roles, value systems and habits.

Such different perspectives have in common that they depict socialization as a unidirectional action in which children are mainly passive and have little impact in the processes they are engaged in. Based on these models, psychologists have focused their attention on parenting, conceiving it as the primary force in determining socialization outcomes. Behavioristically oriented studies have analyzed parents’ disciplinary styles, that is, how parents teach children to regulate their behavior and comply with societal rules [Bandura & McDonald, 1963; Hoffman & Saltzstein, 1967]. Cognitive social psychologists have examined how adults’ cognitive representations of themselves and their children affect and predict parenting behavior [Higgins, Ruble, & Hartup, 1985; Siegel, 1985]. Clinical psychologists have grappled with relationships between parents’ attachment styles and children’s development [Bowlby, 1969; Bretherton & Waters, 1985; Marris, Stevenson-Hinde, & Parkes, 1991], finding correlations among parental psychological characteristics, parenting behavior and children’s temperament and behavior [Daddis, Sanders, Behrens, & James, 1987; Lancaster, Prior, & Adler, 1989].

**Bidirectional Views of Socialization**

Beginning from the 1970s, there has been a reorientation and reformulation of socialization theory [Lewis & Rosenblum, 1974; Richards, 1974]. Previous perspectives have been challenged by the idea that individuals are not ‘automatons, driven by the springs of deeply (and passively) internalized and anonymous value-norm complexes’ [Wentworth, 1980, p. 44]. The child’s active role in selecting and organizing sociocultural information has been emphasized [Bower, 1977], and, accordingly, parental input is depicted as a resource for children’s active learning rather than as an unavoidably deterministic factor. Certainly, Piagetian constructivism [Piaget, 1923, 1926, 1932] played an important role in prompting the theoretical move toward a bidirectional perspective. However, the constructivist approach acknowledges the child’s constructive activity
mainly within the boundaries of interaction with the physical world, neglecting a similar attitude towards the social and ethical domains. Thus, it did not fully recognize the child's fundamental role in socialization.

Studies done by developmental psychologists on early adult-child interaction [Cross, 1977; Dunn, 1988; Kaye, 1982; Parke, 1977; Schaffer, 1977] began to highlight how caretakers adjust their behavior to meet the needs of the child (at least as much, if not more, than the reverse). An indirect contribution to weakening the grip of unidirectional models came from Chomsky's theory [1959]. Its emphasis on the independence of children's language acquisition from adults' input and reinforcement demoted the primacy of parental guidance from being considered the determining force in the learning process.

Also within social learning theories, children's role in the socialization process became more significant: Even though adults' modeling and training remained crucial in determining socialization outcomes, it was acknowledged that children actively choose whom and what to imitate [Perry & Bussey, 1979]. Similarly within attachment theory, the emphasis has shifted from personality characteristics of parents to features of the parent-child relationship model that the child assumes and that are regarded as determining the quality of later emotional life [Sroufe & Waters, 1977].

The bidirectionality of the socializing process has been suggested by sociologists such as Geulen [1973] and Giddens [1979], and in general by those who have been influenced by phenomenology [Schutz, 1967] and sociology of knowledge [Berger & Luckmann, 1966]. For example, the sociologist Waksler [1986], whose position is close to the phenomenological approach, argues:

To recognize that 'child' is a role is to suspend the assumption that childhood has some absolute, real, transcendent existence beyond the social, an assumption that embodies the very topic it could endeavor to study [...] If we see children as actors in the social world, we can ask how their actions constrain, facilitate, encourage, and in myriad ways have implications for others, adults in particular. Adults are known to 'make' children eat their vegetables, but less noticeable is that children 'make' adults eat their vegetables if those adults are to claim they are being good 'models'. [p. 80]

Waksler's intuition is very promising, in that he sees how parents and adults in general are not 'natural models' for the new generations. It is when confronted by children that adults shape their action and talk in coherent and accountable ways. Such ideas, although not much developed in sociology, pave the way for our own direction, acknowledging children's participation in the process of their own socialization.

Hewitt [1997] states this explicitly: 'Children – like people of all ages – play an active role in their own socialization. They not only react to parental initiatives and directives, but also themselves initiate socialization experiences. [...] Children, by definition, have incomplete knowledge, and much of the initiative for completing it comes from them. Thus, they ask questions in order both to learn their culture and to learn about themselves ' [p. 85]. Though not substantially different from the Piagetian image of the child as an active investigator of reality, here we have a statement about children engaging in discourse-based (symbolic) social interaction in order to extend their knowledge of the world; the children's recognition of other humans as the most profitable sources and instruments of knowledge is thus eventually taken into account.

A domain where sociologists also find children playing a role in the construction of social reality is that of deviance (or departure from rules, since we are speaking of small infractions here). Rule breaks are seen by constructivist sociologists as ways 'to test the
limits of parental rules' [Hewitt, 1997] or as a way of separating from parents and their normative environment [Goffman, 1961]. This argument stems from the old sociological (and historical) intuition about deviance building and reinforcing the walls of society by the very act of trespassing them.

We will explore the issue at length with respect to the family world: here we want to assert that, although there have been sociological approaches providing theoretical space for the concept of children's direct influence on adults' activity, sociologists have not to our knowledge extended their research efforts in this area. Sociological studies concerned with childhood and education — since the well-known sociolinguistic analysis of Basil Bernstein [1975] on — have primarily relied, to different extents, on abstract notions such as social class and social reproduction.

**Mutual Views of Socialization**

Thus the premises for acknowledging and exploring the interplay between children's social world and that of adults have been laid down. The empirical studies of Sigurd Berentzen [1984], William Corsaro [1985, 1986, 1997] and Majorie Goodwin [1994], which have focused on children interacting with other children, have provided outstanding illustrations of how actively and creatively kids co-construct their peer culture [see also Corsaro & Eder, 1990; Corsaro & Rizzo, 1990].

In recent years, a growing body of research — to which not only psychologists but also sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists are contributing — has been focusing on social and socializing activities in the natural contexts in which they occur. Soviet psychology [Leont'ev, 1961/1981; Luria, 1976; Vygotsky, 1934/1978; Wertsch, 1985] has served as a main source of inspiration. In particular, Vygotsky's construct of the zone of proximal development and Leont'ev's concept of activity represent fundamental theoretical guidelines, insofar as they suggest that higher psychological functions develop within and as a product of social practices and interactions in culturally situated activities.

The observation of everyday socializing practices has led researchers to reject the metaphor of learning as internalization and to suggest theorizations that stress the situated character of learning experiences and the mutual efforts of all those who participate in such cultural practices.

**Apprenticeship, Co-Construction, Guided Participation**

The conception of learning as increasing participation in communities of practice [Lave & Wenger, 1991] has challenged the individualistic and intra-psychological perspectives by emphasizing the interactional, negotiated, and dynamic character of any learning.

The apprenticeship model, articulated and empirically sustained by Rogoff [1990, 1991], has further highlighted the active involvement of children in structuring and accomplishing learning activities. Rogoff's notion of guided participation [1990] offers an interpretation of Vygotsky's notion of ZPD that emphasizes the collaborative nature of learning processes and mutual attunement of participation and guidance in apprenticeship activities. In other words, the scaffolding [Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976] provided by adults matches with children's active efforts in entering in communication
with others, in exploring the world, and in practicing new skills. Such mutual involvement of children and caregivers [Rogoff, 1991] suggests that neither parental action nor children’s participation can be conceived any longer as separable elements in the process of socialization:

Adults and children collaborate in children's socialization as they negotiate the nature of children's activities and their responsibilities in participation [...] The mutual roles played by adults and children in children's development rely both on the adults' interest in fostering mature skills and on children's own eagerness to participate in adult activities and push their own development. [Rogoff, 1991, p. 276]

However, in analyzing this process, the attention is still mostly focused on the developing skills of the new generation. Ethnographic research on socialization across contexts [Jacoby & Gonzales, 1991; Resnick, Säljo, Pontecorvo, & Burge, 1997; Rogoff & Lave, 1984] and across cultures [Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986] have revealed the complexity and dynamic fluidity of the expert-novice relation. The distribution of expertise is not a static condition but a jointly constructed achievement of participants in interaction [Goodwin, 1994; Schegloff, 1991] which always involves multiple asymmetries.

In this paper, we will try to widen the perspective on mutual socialization by exploring also parents' apprenticeship and the help that adults get from their children to practice and gain expertise on parenthood. In other words, we will illustrate how the roles of parents and children, experts and novices, build integrally on each other. Parents learn to be parents with their children and children learn to be sons or daughters of their specific parents. In other words, while children are engaged in the process of becoming competent members of a social group as children, parents are engaged in the process of becoming competent members of a social group as parents.

**Language Socialization**

Our contribution may be considered a language socialization study fitting the basic assumptions of the language socialization approach [Ochs, 1988; Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984, 1995; Schieffelin, 1990; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986a and b]. This approach emphasizes that socialization is a lifelong experience and that novices and competent members of any social group jointly construct and transform their structure of knowledge and their competence:

Members' understandings of family roles are modified through joint activities with infants and children. Despite the asymmetry of their relationship and their competence, children and caregivers may jointly construct these domains of knowledge with each other. In this sense, caregivers may be socialized by the children they are socializing. [Ochs, 1988, pp. 224]

Moreover, the language socialization approach considers conversation the major medium for the development of sociocultural knowledge and the most powerful tool of socialization. Therefore, this perspective advocates examining closely everyday verbal interaction and taking into account not only the semantic content of discourse but also

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1 Language socialization, the revolutionary perspective initiated by Elinor Ochs and Bambi Schieffelin in the early 80s, has rapidly gained consensus and followers (not only among linguistic anthropologists but also among sociologists, linguists, and psychologists) and is now an acknowledged and productive interdisciplinary field of research.
all its other formal and functional dimensions (e.g., morphosyntactic constructions, phonological features, sequential organization, interruptions, overlaps, genres). For carrying out language socialization research, the Conversation Analysis approach provides very useful methods of examining mutual construction of understanding by children and adults.

A Conversation Analysis Approach

The theory and practice of Conversation Analysis [hereafter abbreviated as CA; Sacks, 1992; Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974] aims at analyzing social phenomena in the real context of everyday life when they occur spontaneously in human interaction.

The CA approach has been developed in contrast to traditional methods of analysis in social sciences. Though arising within sociology, CA rejected the dominant Parsonian approach and its traditional macrosocial analyses. Moreover, since its inception, CA has also criticized linguists' methods. CA critiques both the Chomskian approach, which focuses on idealized sentences constructed by linguists to avoid the 'confusion' and 'degeneration' of actual linguistic performances, and the Speech-act approach whose target of investigation is the isolated sentence stripped of its (sequential and social) context of occurrence. Instead, CA starts from the assumption that there are no meaningless interactions, and elects the everyday spontaneous stream of talk-in-interaction as the topic of its study² [Psathas, 1979; Sacks, 1984; Sacks et al., 1974].

A primary aim of CA research is to identify and describe the sequential patterns that structure speech exchanges [Atkinson & Heritage, 1984; Button & Lee, 1987; Schenkein, 1978]. It must be pointed out, however, that to maintain, that conversation is sequentially organized does not mean that speakers follow pre-fixed scripts that determine their contributions. Conversational structure is endogenously produced by the participants' actions. Contributions to conversation are also contextually oriented:

A speaker's action is context-shaped in that its contribution to an on-going sequence of actions cannot adequately be understood except by reference to the context -- including, especially, the immediately preceding configuration of actions -- in which it participates. The contextualization of utterances is a major, and unavoidable, procedure which hearers use and rely on in interpreting conversational contributions and it is also something which speakers pervasively attend to in the design of what they say. [Heritage, 1984, p. 242]

Indeed, as Heritage [1984] remarks, any contribution of talk is doubly contextual, thus while it is context-shaped it is also context-renewing:

The context-renewing character of conversational actions is directly related to the fact that they are context-shaped. Since every 'current' action will itself form the immediate context for some 'next' action in a sequence, it will inevitably contribute to the framework in terms of which the next action will be understood. In this sense, the context of a next action is repeatedly renewed with every current action. Moreover, each action will, by the same token, function to renew (i.e. maintain, alter or adjust) any more generally prevailing sense of context which is the object of the participants' orientations (Ibid.).

² In focusing on naturally occurring episodes of everyday interaction, CA also refused a range of research methodologies popular within psychology such as interviews (which have been analyzed as data but not used as legitimate means for obtaining data), questionnaires, and experimental procedures involving manipulation of behavior.
Given the sequential organization and the indexical and reflexive characteristics of talk, Conversation Analysts conceive individual action as an interactional accomplishment rather than the product of the isolated speaker’s psychological intent [Duranti & Brenneis, 1986; Goodwin, 1979]. The meanings of participants’ actions are intertwined with the structural properties of the particular type of exchange they are engaged in and are co-constructing. Speakers rely upon these properties to perform their actions and interpret co-participants’ moves.

The notions of sequential organization and conditional relevance – i.e., the structural conditioning of a turn at talk over what follows – are key concepts for an anti-mentalistic account of individual action [Sacks, 1992]. Furthermore, CA opens up an alternative characterization of intersubjectivity: Rather than a necessary pre-condition for communication [cf., Grice, 1975; Habermas, 1970] it is a dynamic product of speech exchange [Schegloff, 1992]. Mutual understanding between participants in interaction does not depend upon individuals’ capacity to read others’ minds, nor even upon some sort of presumed interpersonal reciprocity of perspectives or psychological empathy. Intelligibility and intersubjectivity between speakers is dynamically grounded and achieved in ordinary conversational sequences:

Organizational features of ordinary conversation and other talk-in-interaction provide for a routine display of participants’ understandings of one another’s conduct and of the field of action, thereby building in a routine grounding for intersubjectivity. This same organization provides interactants the resources for recognizing breakdowns of intersubjectivity and for repairing them. [Schegloff, 1992, p. 1295]

In sum, construction of meaning, mutual understanding, and other social and cognitive phenomena are jointly achieved by participants in and through talk-in-interaction.

The actual conduct of speakers and the way in which they orient others’ conduct is assumed as the empirical resource out of which the analysis should be developed. Conversation Analysts do not approach data with preformulated code systems. It is the participants’ perspective that leads researchers’ examination. Having identified the phenomenon one wants to focus on, the corpus of data is examined in order to make a collection of similar instances.

It must be pointed out that occurrences of a phenomenon are collected not to establish the weight of the phenomenon, or whether it is incidental or significant in the statistical sense. As Schegloff remarks, ’statistical significance is but one form of significance’ [Schegloff, 1993, p. 101]. When dealing with talk-in-interaction, another way of establishing relevance of a phenomenon is participants’ orientation:

The best evidence that some practice of talk-in-interaction does, or can do, some claimed action, for example, is that some recipient on some occasion shows himself or herself to have so understood it, most commonly by so treating it in the ensuing moments of the interaction, and most commonly of all, next. Even if no quantitative evidence can be mustered for a linkage between that practice of talking and that resultant ‘effect’, the treatment of the linkage as relevant – by the parties on that occasion, on which it was manifested – remains. [Schegloff, 1993, p. 101]

From this view, recurrence is not of primary concern: even a single occurrence of a particular phenomenon, if it is shown to be intelligible and ratified by participants, is evidence that the mechanism for its production is available to participants (and is consequently possibly re-usable). In making data collections, Conversation Analysts are not
seeking statistical proof of their analysis but are building aggregates of single instances [Schegloff, 1993]. For this reason, Conversation Analysts pay special attention to so called deviant cases - occurrences which do not appear to fit the prototypical pattern of the phenomenon [Wootton, 1989].

Given that CA arose as a method of analysis for handling 'the details of actual events [...] and be informative about them in the direct ways in which primitive sciences tend to be informative, that is, that anyone else can go and see whether what was said is so' [Sacks, 1984, p. 26], one of the hallmarks of CA research is that conference presentations and printed contributions always include a large amount of data extracts to illustrate the phenomenon under inquiry. The availability of data on which researchers have based their claims allows the reader to critically assess the analysis and even to put forward a possible alternative interpretation.

A Study of Parent-Child Mutual Apprenticeship in Conversation

We addressed the process of mutual apprenticeship with a focus on the normative sphere of activity in the family. Hypothesizing that the normative area is one of the most influenced by the presence of children, and that becoming a 'norm dealer' is part of becoming a parent, we looked at the conversational features of sequences concerning rule setting and negotiation, episodes of violations, requests and provisions of accounts.

The overall study of which this research is part, is based on 72 dinner conversations of 20 families, each including two parents and at least one child between 3 and 6 years of age and an older sibling. They are all middle class families living in metropolitan areas in the cities of Rome, Naples and Florence. Conversations were videotaped and fully transcribed: each family was recorded from 3 to 6 times. Transcriptions were revised by two judges, both for verbal and nonverbal activity.

We selected the examples of conversation about rules and violations after each of us had read and re-read many times the whole transcribed corpus with this topic in mind. We chose the excerpts to be analyzed that all three of us agreed were the best and most diversified examples of the socializing normative sequences that took place in these families' dinner talk. Exploring the organization of exchanges dealing with a rupture in the 'order of things' gave us access to the mechanisms by which parents are drawn into 'parental talk' and let us see whether and how children, directly and indirectly, contribute to such development.

We are aware that we are dealing here with conversational and socializing practices that are far from being cross-culturally consistent: The habit of discussione, of arguing activity, in which past problematic episodes are represented and children's accounts are solicited, is rather common among Italian families (and it is frequent also with different features in other educational contexts, such as in Italian kindergarten, that were studied by Corsaro & Rizzo [1990] as concern peer cultures and by Orsolini & Pontecorvo [1992] as concern teacher and student discussion). It seems that in Italian culture, both in pre-school and in family settings, children are socialized to discuss and argue, and

For further observations on quantification in the study of talk-in-interaction see Benson & Hughes, 1991; Heritage, 1995; Schegloff, 1993; Wootton, 1989.
engage willingly in such activities, with and without adults. This is fairly rare, if not absent, in other cultures [c.f. Ochs 1982; Peters & Boggs. 1986; Schieffelin. 1990].

**Parental Efforts to Draw Children into the Normative World**

It is common sense that parents have a main educational role in bringing up their children. Indeed in the first study we carried out, we focused on the 'strategies of tutoring' used by parents within family conversation [Pontecorvo, Basulo, & Sterponi, 1998]. By looking at the ways tutoring sequences began [Sterponi & Pontecorvo, 1997], we observed that children regularly had some part in triggering them. They could ask questions, present social dilemmas, and display – by discourse or by actions – lack of practical and theoretical knowledge. Tutoring sequences (informings, directives, collaboration in play and narratives) turned out to be a kind of parental activity that is predictable and ordered in relation to its antecedents in children's behavior. Visual and auditory access to each other's actions generated and also actively induced responsive actions from a tutoring party.

**The Construction of Behavior as Norm Deviation**

A simple observation is that children's behavior, or the consequences of such behavior, can elicit parental acts of reproach and statements of norms. If we take an ethnometodological view, the issue looks less trivial than at first sight: infraction is a label attached to a behavior through a post hoc procedure, and not something to be assessed objectively. It is constructed as such by the parental choice of sorting out the occasion for giving instructions and explicating constraints [Wootton, 1986].

An example is the little 'sermon' that Mom directs towards Stefania who has just spilled some Coke on the dinner table:

**Excerpt 1**

Participants: Dad; Mom; Sergio, 7 years; Stefania, 5 years.

((Stefania inadvertently put her glass down on the edge of the plate and the Coke spilled on the table))

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stef:</th>
<th>Hi:: (in a worried tone)</th>
<th>Hi::</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>((lifting her hands to her lips))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dad:</td>
<td>CHEER UP! CHEER UP!</td>
<td>ALLEGRIA! ALLEGRIA!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.0 pause)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dad:</td>
<td>Eh () eh ((moving his glass away from the spilled Coke on the table))</td>
<td>Eh () eh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.0 pause)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>((Mom puts Stefania's glass back close to the girl and brings the bottle of Coke back to the table))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mom:</td>
<td>That's ok we'll get you some more.</td>
<td>Va be' rimettiamo l'altro su.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.0 pause)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>((Mom pours some more Coke into Stefania's glass))</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dad: Last time too, we had some Coke and it spilled.
Dad: Didn't it? Se' ? ([Ita Sergio: Se' is an abbreviation])

Serg.: NO
(Stefania put her napkin on the Coke that spilled on the table)

Mom: No ([Mom moves her hand toward the napkin but dad is already taking it])

Dad: Stefania why do you behave in this way?
(giving the napkin back to Stefania)

Stef: Well I was cleaning it!

Dad: [It's ok now. Mom has said that it's ok.

since below we have a thing here a plastic thing,
a plastic tablecloth just for saving the wood of the table
(4.0 pause)
(Mom puts the bottle of Coke back behind the table)

Dad: Sergio if you're done with the Coke
[leave this glass

Mom: [Anyway Stefania may I give you some advice?

when eating one should not play ()
here's why I always tell you this there is a reason.
because one can't think of something and of something else at the same time
(2.0 pause)

Sergio se hai finito con sta Coca-Cola
[lascia questo bicchiere

[Però Stefania ti posso dare un consiglio?

Quando si mangia no si gioca ()

eh?

eh?

eh?

Stef: Look where it's going ((the spilled Coke))

Mom: Look where it's going ((repeating Stefania's words)).

Now this is done.

Mom: Any way you please put away this toy and go on eating
((putting away a little toy from Stefania))

Anche l'altra volta c'avevamo la Coca Cola ed è cascata.

Vero. Se'?

No

Stefania ma perché fai così?

Eh lo stavo pulendo!
[va be' ormai.

Mamma ha detto che va bene così.
tanto sotto c'abbiamo un: una cosa qui in plastica
Una tovaglia di plastica proprio per salvare il legno del tavolo

Sergio se hai finito con sta Coca-Cola
[lascia questo bicchiere

Però Stefania ti posso dare un consiglio?

Quando si mangia no si gioca ()

eh?

eh?

eh?

Guarda dove sta andando

Ma

Guarda dove sta andando.

adesso ormai è fatto.
comunque mi fai la cortesia di togliere questo gioco e continuare a mangiare

In this exchange (of which we analyse only the main interaction between Stefania and her mother), the mother operates at two distinct levels: initially she addresses her daughter's sorrowful whine by reassuring her verbally and nonverbally (pouring some more Coke in Stefania's glass), acting in her capacity as the authority over food and drink supplies.

After showing that the accident had no severe consequences and also displaying no intention to punish, the mother produces an utterance beginning with an adversative connective (però, 'anyway'), to halt the possible interpretation that she deems the event entirely accidental. She announces words of advice and utters a rule in the impersonal form: 'when eating one should not play'. In what follows, the Coke accident is indexically treated as a basis for the recurrence of the advice in the mother's talk: 'here's why...'.

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2001:44-340-361
Finally, an even more general rule is stated, again in the impersonal form, regarding the troubles with undertaking two independent courses of action simultaneously.

A last note concerns the shift from visible action to cognitive involvement. In her last formulation, Mom interprets the trouble as originating in two conflicting thoughts, implicating a cognitive is a trouble that was originated by physical actions. In the mother's escalation of normativity. Stefania's accidental misdeed is constructed as a small scale instance in the larger class of consequences likely to come about when one is engaged in two different lines of actions/thoughts.

Summarizing, this mother has, in the space of her last turn, produced a piece of social knowledge in which actions and cognition are valued and understood through the abstract categorization of normative talk. Moral, cognitive and practical realities merge through the built-in consequentiality of events in diverse domains of activity. Making the world comprehensible and normal displays a 'belief in the just world' (accidents happen because of identifiable mistakes).

These are not operations done for the exclusive benefit of children; troubles caused by one's offspring are potentially unbalancing events for parents themselves. The trouble needs to be fixed but also avoided in the future; the child must be consoled but also instructed for improvement.

The double concern for the present and for the future induces the parents we studied to seal away troublesome episodes with the atemporal comment of a norm predicament, and the sequential implication of children's compliance. On the one hand, these parents make wide use of impersonal forms of directives, which set prescriptions or proscriptions for children as derived from an external source of knowledge and authority. These depict and appeal to an out-there, pre-fixed normative system which regulates human conduct and whose rules everybody has to follow. On the other hand, rules are connected to the occasion and the participants via causal talk and tag requests for explicit agreement (as occurred in Excerpt 1), thus yielding more and more space for children's ordinary actions to be put under normative control.

Our findings are consistent with Wootton's fundamental work on rules in action [Wootton, 1986]. Wootton singled out two types of rule statements and described their distinctive features in terms of syntactic structure, sequential organization and moral implications. Specifically, he characterized type A rule statements as constructed in the form of announcements/informings, namely simple instructions which aim at making the recipient aware of the percept they articulate, without opening a 'forensic enquiry' into what took place, and why, with no requirement for an account:

through being constructed as instructions/informings they represent a move away from the particulars of the prior untoward incident, and permit the whole matter to be dropped there and then [...] The only action they require from their recipients is some evidence of them 'taking in' that which they have just told. [Wootton, 1986, p. 157]

While agreeing with Wootton's analysis, we would emphasize the latter aspect by claiming that though just a 'minimal confirmation' is solicited by the rule stater and 'then the discussion can perfectly well terminate' (Ibid.), this minimal uptake bears a remarkable moral meaning due to the recipient's public acknowledgement. As a matter of fact, we observed in our data that most of the type A rule statements have a coda: some sort of tag question which explicitly creates the sequential slot for the recipient's uptake of the precept being stated. For example, in Excerpt 1, the mother concludes her
contribution with a tag question requiring at least a minimum assent, and characterizes her rule appeal as an offer for advice, formally asking for her daughter’s agreement before making her point. Similar built-in, routine features of normative reminders signal the inherent necessity of the normative system to be at least acknowledged by the targets of its influence.

**Accountability**

In Excerpt 1 we showed that rules, while being portrayed as already established and belonging to an abstract horizon of moral reference, are, in fact, contingently produced. As Garfinkel claimed, no rule can ‘itself step forward to claim its own instances’ but always awaits contingent application ‘for another first time’ [Garfinkel, 1967, p. 9]. According to this view, rules are not abstract templates but rather symbolic resources used to perform specific actions. Therefore, it is in the contingency of everyday social transaction that the normative horizon is instantiated and rhetorically formulated.

The same view is held by symbolic interactionists [Hewitt, 1997], who argue that ‘people ordinarily focus their attention on social objects rather than social norms’ when in the midst of action, and that – mostly under problematic or unusual circumstances – norms can be attached to the behavior by means of discursive conventions.

These assumptions imply that socialization is not a process of internalization of already established rule systems, but a progressive participation in a body of normatively organized social practices, a growing awareness of the accountability of individuals’ actions and concurrently the acquisition of the argumentative and rhetorical skills to discursively accomplish accountability. As a matter of fact, children are not only instructed to comply with rules but often they are requested to account for their actions, as shown in the following excerpt:

**Excerpt 2**

Participants: Dad; Mom; Adriana, 4 years; Samuele, 11 years.

 sóc: Sóci le deh lò còi lu dìmìne.

Dad: Samuele I told you three things.

Mom: Now go and finish your homework at once

Sam: But it took me a long time to tidy up

Mom: Yeah ((in low tone))

Non ho capito perché è così tardi e tu devi ancora finire i compiti

Samuele io ti avevo detto tre cose. Anzitutto metti a posto la stanza, poi fai compiti e poi puoi giocare. (

Ma a mettere a posto c’ho messo tanto

Adesso vai subito a finire I compiti

Si

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The mother’s request for an account does not have the grammatical shape of a question but of a statement in which the first subject is herself: ‘I don’t understand...’ Although it is easy for us to recognize in this formula one of the culturally available rhetorical possibilities for scolding and questioning, it is indeed a peculiar expression once unpacked: it is as if the boy’s disrespect for his daily schedule generated a disorder in the mother’s perception of the situation, and she noticed something out of place in the ordered sequence of family life.

This turn is followed by the father’s reminder of the sequence of activities which Samuel was supposed to follow. In this position, the father’s move is as much a participation in the parental tutoring activity as an account (sequentially projected by the mother’s turn) for Samuel’s potential responsibility in the problem at hand. By recalling his own prior instruction, the father both comments on the lack of compliance to an explicit set of instructions and reinstates the hierarchy of duties and activities that the child has to respect.

Such a way of shaping the child’s account also provides the discursive frame, rich with clues, for the construction of the account itself. The child can complete the father’s list, showing his awareness and memory of it, and also use it to justify himself: the first item of the list of duties took such a long time that the homework, number two in the list, had to be delayed.

This example supports our thesis that a great deal of the socializing activity on the parents’ side is directed not to the mere enforcing of behaviors on children, but also to fostering abilities in the construction of accounts. The re-aligning capacity of accounts [Stokes & Hewitt, 1976] is grounded precisely in their displaying knowledge of norms and in showing compliance to them even in occasions of deviance. Single instances of norm departures are by no means as threatening for social order as willful neglect of normative standards. Deviant actions are thus occasions to test and train children in normative competence.

In asking for an account, these parents have launched a multi-layered socializing activity. First, the request embodies a description/evaluation of the child’s conduct as the breaking of rules: This move reflexively instantiates a normative frame which the child is admonished to consider. On the other hand, by asking the child to account for the untoward behavior rather than immediately condemning it, these parents offer their child the chance to bring the apparent deviation into the perimeter of ‘legal’ behavior, training him in the skill of justificatory descriptions

Parents’ requests for accounting prompt and scaffold children’s practice in the very same activity of accounting. Here, time order is subversively deployed to account for the delay of the second activity. The discursive construction of accounts mirrors the discursive structure of norms: this is one important way in which socialization works, namely through use of pieces of social talk which reflexively contain and orient their conversational counterparts.

But ethical hierarchies are built in also in the sequential organization of exchanges. The accounting procedure is preliminary to the direct instruction aimed to solve the

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4 As Garfinkel has pointed out, the rules of agreements and common understandings are used by people ‘to normalize whatever their actual activities turn out to be’ [Garfinkel, 1967, p. 74], rather than as actuarial devices for predicting each other’s future actions. In this sense, the acceptability of a person’s act is often retrospectively ratified by the appeal to an et cetera clause [Garfinkel, 1967], which positions the challenging behavior under the umbrella of the normative framework.
immediate problem, namely finishing homework. Such a sequential organization is very transparent in terms of socialization processes: the general norm is more important than the trouble at hand: the respect for parental instructions is primary to the simple solution of a problem of ‘misting’. In the next excerpt, the ability to provide adequate explanations for a questionable behavior is the explicit conversational topic. The episode illustrates the social relevance of accounting practices and the negative judgement that its absence produces, even across different contexts of socialization. A school episode is recalled and becomes object of a narrative, the telling of which is repeatedly prompted by the elder son, while the younger protagonist enacts again in the present the same resistance to giving an account that he apparently performed in the narrated episode.

**Excerpt 3**

Participants: Dad; Mom; Gabriele, 3 years; Silverio, 8 years.

*((Gabriele, the younger child, is being held in his father’s arms))*

| Dad       | Gabriele, anyway this morning you made Floriana angry. *(F. is Gabriele’s teacher)* | comunque stamattina Floriana l’hai fatta arrabbiare. *
|-----------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------*
| Dad       | What?                                                                                | eh?                                              *
| Dad       | You made Floriana angry this morning.                                                 | Floriana l’hai fatta arrabbiare stamattina.      *
| Silverio | I didn’t get what Floriana said to you, will you tell me or not? *(to Gabriele)*     | N’ho capito quello che t’ha detto Floriana,    *
| Dad       | What did Floriana say to you?                                                        | me lo dici sì o no?                             *
| Gabriele  | No. *(to his brother)*                                                                | Che t’ha detto Floriana?                         *
| Dad       | No tell him, come on *(to Gabriele)*                                                 | No.                                             *
| Silverio | Daddy, you tell us, come on                                                          | No diglielo va                                 *
| Dad       | She asked him why, the reason why he threw the dirt at that child.                   | Papi racconta te dai.                           *
| Silverio | And what did he answer?                                                              | Giù ha detto perché per quale motivo ha tirato a terra addosso a quel bambino. *
| Dad       | He has made like a mummy.                                                            | E lui che gli ha risposto?                       *
| Silverio | u.....                                                                               | Ha fatto a mamma.                               *
| Dad       | What do you expect him to say?                                                       | Che voi che dice?                               *
| Silverio | And then what did he do?                                                             | E poi che ha fatto?                             *
| Dad       | He isn’t able to answer.                                                              | Né capace a rispondere’.                         *
| Silverio | But did she yell at him?                                                             | Ma gli ha strillato?                            *
| Dad       | Huh?                                                                                 | Eh?                                             *
| Silverio | Did she yell at him?                                                                 | Gli ha strillato?                               *
| Dad       | She scolded him.                                                                     | L’ha rimproverato.                              *
| Silverio | A real scolding                                                                      | Un pezzo di rimprovero                          *(2.8 pause)* *(Gabriele on his father’s lap, starts playing with Dad’s face, touching it gently)*

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In the sequence, which is not a tense situation but has a mocking tone (note also that Gabriele is on his father’s lap), there are repeated attempts to elicit the narrative from the young child. The narrative elicitation turns are not questions but assertions: the father produces an ‘abstract’ of the story to be unpackaged (Labov, 1982), the elder brother remarks on the lack of information (note the similarity with mother’s
request of account in Excerpt 2 'I didn't understand ...'). Only at this point, given the lack of response, do both the brother and the father switch to a question format, thus narrowing the child's requested contribution to a simple recall of the teacher's words. But to the direct questions, the answer of the child is a simple 'no'. From now on, the sequence is carried on between Dad and the older brother, who is interested to know what happened between Gabriele and the teacher. As is often the case, the parent turns out to be an informed participant. Questioning Gabriele, the protagonist of the episode, thus clearly represented an attempt to obtain from him the account which he had failed to offer to the teacher, rather than a request for new information.

It is noteworthy that the object of talk is not the rude behavior of Gabriele, who threw dirt at a mate, but specifically the dialogue between the teacher and Gabriele about that behavior. All questions by Silverio concern 'sayings': what the teacher said, what the child answered, if the teacher yelled at him. The 'tellability' of the story [Sacks, 1992], the breach in the ordinary, does not lie in the 'assault' of the child but in a discursive event – in Gabriele's failure to provide a reason for what he had done.

With his series of questions, the elder child is scaffolding for his father a story structure in which punishment is expected in reaction to the insubordination act of failing to provide an account. He does not let go until the episode is recalled and a moral sanction is applied to the small child. The latter, with his double silence, is guilty. On his behalf, the father had not just reported on Gabriele's silence but had made it relevant for the child's identity: he acted like a 'mummy' and also 'he is not able to answer'.

The last two excerpts, and most notably Excerpt 3, further confirm that involvement of children in their own socialization is a basic aim of these families' educational activity: Indifference to one's sin and to the societal reaction to it is possibly worse than the sin itself.

**Parents' Apprenticeship**

In the previous paragraph we examined sequences taking place in the wake of what Wootton [1986] has called 'untoward events'. However, it is not only when the violation of a rule occurs or is foreseen that the tutoring activity is performed. Our analysis reveals that often children elicit adults' instruction and guidance by overtly invoking it.

**Projecting and Scaffolding Parents' Expertise**

By asking for information/explanation, children activate the so-called novice-expert relationship and assign such roles to themselves and to their interlocutor respectively. Generally speaking, any request for information/explanation is a speaker's display of a gap of knowledge/understanding and an attribution of this same knowledge/understanding to the recipient. Within parent-child relationship, this epistemic asymmetry often has moral implications: on the one hand, when the parents we studied request information/explanations from their children, the enquiry is likely to be embedded in an argumentative sequence and projects sequential relevance for the next turn to be an account (c.f. Excerpt 2 above). On the other hand, when their children ask for information/explanations, the parents are bound to provide an answer.
Excerpt 4

Participants: Dad: Mom: Luca. 10 years: Luisa. 3 years

Luca: Listen dad. 
Dad: What? 
Luca: But wh- daddy I used the green disinfectant 
and the injury is getting darker and darker.

Dad: Uhm.
Luca: Why? (2.4 pause) (Dad has his mouth full)

Dad: The injury?
Luca: = When I fell down yesterday, =
Mom: = Because injuries are like that Lu. you never had them so you don’t know. 
they get darker and make a scab then the scab falls off, 
and the skin becomes a little whiter.

Luca: (But then 
Mom: (And then it becomes normal. 
((Dad brings away from the table some dishes and Luca drinks his Coke))

La ferita? 
Quando ieri sono caduto. = 
= E perché è così che fanno le ferite Lu. 
tu non le hai mai avute perciò non lo sai. 
diventano più scure, fanno la crosta 
poi ti cade la crosta, 
e div- diventa un po’ più bianca la pelle, 
[Mai poi] 
[E poi diventa normale]

After summoning his father’s attention Luca reports an event and asks for an explanation. The father shows minimal reactions and even scarce understanding of the topic. Luca then provides some context to help his father’s memory (apparently he had imagined his injury to be more prominent in the parents’ concerns), with a narrative line which is cut off by his mother’s intervention. When it is clear that the father is not going to help Luca understand the strange behavior of his injury, the mother replaces her husband in this function and offers an explanation based on the ordinary stages of injuries’ healing, accounting also for the child’s surprise since he has not enough experience to know that.

First of all we want to underline that the kind of question asked by the child assigns the father the position of expert in worldly matters. The child’s insistence in getting his answer reveals something more. At the beginning Luca just offers a fact, self-repairing a turn which had started off with a ‘why’. The father provides a minimal assent but nothing more. Having failed to obtain a more substantial uptake, Luca poses a direct question, interpreting the lack of adequate response as a pragmatic misunderstanding (as if the father had not understood that the turn was a request for explanation). To this he gets a request for repair in the form of an understanding check. The child’s next move, in a sort of troubleshooting procedure, is to help the father locate the topic. When this is done and again the expected reaction is missing, the other parent takes over to deliver the ‘service’ that had been asked for.

The child’s repeated efforts to get an answer show that the child holds an interpretation of the unfolding sequence in which lack of answer is possibly caused only by local misunderstanding, and not by other reasons such as lack of knowledge or interest. Such interpretation, that we detect in the attention he puts in self-repairing the first turn, trying to fix a conversational misfunctioning, can be seen as a scaffolding of the father’s role of expert. The construct of scaffolding, applied initially to parental action, need not be only voluntary help. It can be generated also, as seems to be the case here, by a line of
interpretation of role-based capabilities and duties which is in fact the very origin of the role’s performance.

In other words, children’s expectations about parents come out in the form of initiating moves of conversational sequences, the completion of which are occasions for tutorial or normative responses. Any utterance which is a first pair part (of an adjacency pair of turns) expects its second part to be conversationally due, but first and second pair parts are also constitutive of social positions and identities. Social worlds are created by the same machinery that keeps conversations going.

Despite obvious differences in the excerpts presented up to now, a regular pattern seems to emerge: One member of the family offers another a piece of fact which is problematic in some respect, expecting the recipient to sort it out. The first offering is done in the form of an assertion, to which direct questions follow when a response is lacking. If the recipient does not collaborate (as with the younger child in Excerpt 3 and the father in Excerpt 4) another member can take on the task to restore normality, or ordinariness, of reality by locating the problematic event within an expectable sequence (in Excerpt 3, the teacher’s expectation of an account; in Expert 4, the healing process of the injury).

We want to point out some elements of similarity between the parental activity of requesting accounts/justifications about children’s behavior and children’s requests of accounts/explanations about unexpected everyday phenomena. The accounting practice is central in both directions of socialization that we are illustrating. Sons and daughters are constructed as subjects of normative constraints, but, when directed to parents, requests for accounts position parents as the ones who are expected and to some extent obliged to show how the world can be repaired or explained in order to be coherent or understandable in its functioning.

Mutual Training in Normative Discourse and Action

Negotiation of rules is a recurrent kind of speech activity in the family, since the growing and changing variety of children’s desires has to come to terms with their limited allowance of freedom and autonomy. New requests are continuously brought forth, and the parents we studied face the task of widening and detailing ‘legislation’ to include those. A further issue is that of timing: norms have lower and upper thresholds relative to children’s age, and need to be updated constantly as children grow; negotiation often centres on establishing or moving permission lines. This has to do with children’s age (we observed it having at least one younger and one older child in the families we studied), but also with the experience of the parents, as the next example shows.

The next excerpt concerns the delicate issue of children going out by themselves. It shows that the child’s efforts to conquer a new space of autonomy provided the mother a phase of apprenticeship in which she needed to try and test both her child and herself in the new arrangement.

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5 We note, however, that different cultures grant children different amounts of conversational power. Whereas in our Italian data, even young children are allowed to initiate conversational sequences – and consequently their interlocutors have to provide a second pair part – in other cultures children are not acknowledged as conversational peers partners with adults or they are limited to a recipient position (Demuth, 1986; Schieffelin, 1990).
Excerpt 5

Participants: Dad; Mom; Leonardo, 3 years; Marco, 10 years.
(('Marco is asking Mom for permission to go to the beach in the afternoon))

Marco: Mommy today may I ( )
Mom: not yet honey
we'll make some tries (.) we'll see
but to the beach by yourself, not yet
mamma oggi posso ( )
adesso ancora no a mamma.
faremo dei tentativi (.) vediamo un po'
ma ancora al mare da solo no

Here we see very clearly how the mother positions herself, together with the child, on a learning path where permissions and norms will be suggested moment by moment, negotiated and tested. The plural form of the pronoun ('we') here means that not only the child has to become responsible for going alone to the beach, but also the mother has to 'make some tries' in the education of her child. In other words, she acknowledges herself to be an apprentice.

The Italian middle class urban families we observed exhibit socialization practices that are profoundly dependent on verbal interaction and extended explanations of parental decisions and general policy. Children are accustomed to be imparted directives together with explanations of their underlying logical rationale and coherence. We have already seen, in Excerpt 3, how an elder sibling showed interest and competence in the normative world and was an active promoter of a discursive exchange on the matter.

With the next, final interaction, we want to argue that participation in normative talk – apprenticeship in the discursive connection between action and ethics – provides children with instruments for assessing moral implications and underlying values of norms. This can also be used to corner parents into accountable positions.

Excerpt 6

Participants: Dad; Mom; Carla, 10 years; Federica, 4 years.
(('Both parents have repeatedly admonished Carla to stop quarrelling with her sister, and Carla has responded by attributing responsibility to Federica as well'))

Carla: Fascism
I'll - I'll put a big banner in front of the house.
come e join the Fascists
Dad: You don't really know the fascists Carla
Carla: But democracy is better, look,
the law is the same for everyone.
Mom established her new law,
whoever is naughty, whoever hits,
whoever is mad at the other
The other is mad too
Mom: ((Smiles))
Carla: This is what you said
don't deny it because it's true.
Mom: Well what did I say?
Carla: That is to say in practice if Federica hit me
if Federica- if Federica screamed
you hit her and me too
even though I hadn't done anything
Fascismo
metto- metto una bella striscia davanti alla casa.
venite il fascismo.
Tu i fascisti non li conosci proprio Carla.
Però è meglio la democrazia, guarda,
la legge è uguale per tutti.
mamma ha istituito la sua nuova legge,
chi fa il cattivo, chi da le botte,
chi è arrabbiata con lei
Anche l'altra è arrabbiata.
((Sorride))
Carla: Così tu hai detto
non lo negare perché è vero.
Mom: Che hai detto?
Carla: Ciò praticamente se Federica faceva male
a me,
se Federica- se Federica gridava
tu le davi le botte e le davi anche a me
quando io non avevo fatto niente.
Mom: Oh yes this is true. I mean since you're always.
Carla: And this isn't fair isn't fair isn't fair.
Mom: Since you're always partners in crime.
Carla: This isn't true we never are partners in crime.

Ah si questo è vero. Cioè siccome siete sempre.
E questo non è giusto non è giusto non è giusto.
Siccome siete sempre complici.
Non è vero non siamo mai complici.

Carla, ten-year-old daughter, had been reproached for provoking her little sister's misbehavior. Her reaction does not deal with the detail of the problematic event, but with the very rule by which she is accused. Carla fancies a public setting, miming the procedures of protest demonstrations (complete with an accusation banner outside the house). Despite the father's attempt to silence her by saying that she does not know what she is talking about, she goes on and mocks her mother's 'legal policy'. Carla articulates the rule given by the mother in the impersonal and generic present tense typical of normative discourse, and then challenges her mother to deny it. The mother, imperiously called into question, does not seem to recognize herself in those words, therefore Carla repeats the rule that she is complaining about, using a more narrow and practical example ('in practice ...'). Here the mother understands and confirms what Carla said, along with an account of the rule's rationale.

Carla draws an analogy between the fascists' methods and the depersonalised punishment (if one sister does something bad, the other is punished too without distinction) endorsed by the mother. (Underlying this connection there could be some knowledge about a very dramatic and well known episode of the second World War in Italy, when in retaliation of a partisan attack to a Nazi convoy in Rome, the German Army applied the rule of killing ten civilians for each dead soldier, despite the fact that the civilians were utterly extraneous to the attack.)

The register chosen is taken on by the mother who talks about being 'always partners in crime', thus showing that she in fact adopts the same kind of blackmail-based control of the 'enemy'. The ten-year-old girl shows here an understanding of the procedure of generalization from factual instances to abstract norms, and also of the ideological substratum of normative policy. She shows the process in its reverse form, starting from the ideological assessment, passing through the abstract rule and eventually exemplifying it with a sequence of concrete behaviors.

The twofold nature of socialization comes out clearly here: since norms come together with explanations and display of rationality and equity, the very same materials are available to the new generation not only at the verbal level, as in Excerpt 2, but also at a theoretical level, as the last example illustrates.

We discussed in the comments to Excerpt 1 the behavior of parents who not only state rules but pursue signs of agreement, thereby portraying rule observance as ultimately an individual option. The outcome of years of such practice is children's use of this sequential slot/moral right to impose limits to the application of norms. In other words, while explicit understanding and acceptance is requested by authorities to nail down subordinates to norm compliance in the future, this act embedded in the rule statement paves the way for questioning and rejecting norms. This is what Carla emphatically does in Excerpt 6, when she dissents with her mother about a rule, because 'it's not fair, it's not fair, it's not fair'.
Conclusions

We have proposed a view of socialization in which both parties are not only independent sources of influence for the other but also dependant on each other for enacting their roles. These Italian parents, in their responsibility for drawing their children into society, have to find persuasive ways and engaging techniques. These are, to a certain extent, provided by the conversational system, but the very unpredictability and context-renewing nature of conversation makes any socialization exchange a novel and challenging enterprise. Children can react differently when their behavior is assessed for its adequacy and acceptability. They can react with a quiet assent, as in Excerpt 1, or with nothing at all, as in Excerpt 3. They can struggle for justification, as in Excerpt 2, or put forward untamed counteraccusations, as in Excerpt 6.

The primary need in order for a social system to survive is to ensure itself room in the psychological reality of new members. Therefore socializing agents have to stay open and flexible and adapt to the changing profiles of the newcomers, which transform with changes in the sociocultural environment and peer culture.

With regard to children, their observed conduct reveals readiness to pick up and use the practical and moral need that the caregivers have for their participation and legitimation of the status quo. By learning the functioning of the conversational machinery, children acquire competence in pursuing a topic of interest or committing their conversational partners to answers and accounts. With the problems they raise no less than with the violations they enact, the children we studied shape the parental role and provide adults with occasions for learning.

References


