

*Children's roles and responsibilities  
in household work: hammer or rolling pin?*

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The Italian research is part of a collaborative project headed by prof . Ochs at the Sloan Center on Everyday Lives of Families, based in UCLA. It is a comparative research project involving an Italian as well as a Swedish unit, and it is based on extensive ethnographic fieldwork in family households. The families are all composed by two parents and at least two siblings, one of which between 8 and 12 years of age; both parents work outdoors.

The general aim of the project is to understand how the family organizes to carry out manifold activities. The research implies observing (and videorecording) the family members at home during their working and weekend days, and interviewing the parents about the family history, habits and network of relationships, as well as for their views on the matters of health care and children's education.

Extensive observation is dedicated to the organization of the home space, creating house maps and getting a large number of photographs of the home space, objects and storage resources; the point of view of each of the family member as for significant places and objects is obtained by asking individual videorecorded home tours in which they show and explain the different part of the house from their own perspective.

Interviews and field observations are integrally transcribed; an "activity log" is also produced by both ethnographic fieldnotes and recordings, synthetizing the main activities carried out in the settings.

The main part analysis is performed on the transcripts; when relevant passages are identified, they are further examined by going back to the audio and/or video data.

## **Introduction: The theoretical implications of household work**

The study of children's home responsibilities involves a way of exploring a variety of issues: the development of pro-social or cooperative behaviour (Rheingold, 1982), the responsibility (Elder, 1974), the nature of parental control or adult-guided learning (Wertsch, Ninick, Arns, 1984), the acquisition of gender role and the changes in concepts of childhood or child labour in a sociological sense. Participation in "family rituals" (Sameroff, Fiese, 1992) or everyday routines provides a major base for the development of social action and social understanding, especially when participation is linked to a sense of identity (Goodnow, Miller, Kessel, 1995).

The studies underline that the negotiation of domestic tasks involves both parents and children and constructs understandings of the family social organization in relation to individual and collective responsibilities (Goodnow, 1988, 1989; Blair, 1992). Household work can be considered as an arena where children can try to negotiate their degree of participation and develop an understanding of the family's social organization. The study of household work interactions provides opportunities for examining the structure of apprenticeship activities at home as well as the social organization in families. Through collaborative stances members accommodate, challenge, and socialize one another's perspectives on household obligations.

Many studies show that mothers' participation in paid work slightly increases children's participation in household duties (especially in the area of baby-sitting) yet without altering their general involvement in activities with friends or outside home. As in the analysis of socio-economic status, the interesting question is not whether today children do more, but rather what they do and whom their tasks mostly affect. The effect of mother's participation in the paid work varies by gender: while boys take up on a wider range of activities, girls simply carry on more actively with their usual tasks (White, Brinkerhoff, 1981a).

## **Responsibility in a specific context: a view of family work**

Recently, there has been a great interest in children's development of responsibility. An early researcher in this field Piaget (1965) emphasized the cognitive aspects of responsibility but neglected the role analysis. A shift to responsibility in research approaches among social psychologists has faded social, interactive and contextual qualities associated with responsibility into the background (Hamilton, Hagiwara, 1992). As to the impact on cognitive development, we know that most psychological studies on the consequences of children's household work deal with such social qualities as responsibility. An effect type is on social cognition: household duties are regarded as simply a constituent part of children's understanding of their place in the social system (Blount, 1972). Cross-cultural studies of children's domestic activity focus primarily on the socialization of moral obligation, pro-social attitudes and skill acquisitions. It is important to underline that cultural background may influence the amount of household work that parents assign to children.

The notion of the zone of proximal development (Vygotskij, 1934/1962) is of primary importance in the understanding of the socialization's character of this context: helped by adults or peer experts, children participate in tasks that are just beyond their current level of ability. As Pontecorvo, Fasulo & Sterponi (2001) show "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*" (p. 344). The family is a system in which change in the activities of one member should bring a change in the activities of others (Baszormenyi-Nagy, Spark, 1973). As Wittner argued, families operate in a particular principle of exchange (children's work in exchange for support), with some special features to the justification offered, namely "kin acting in the name of family obligations and sentimental ties" (Wittner, 1980, p. 235).

Household and family task have proved to be distributed differently among different family members (Goodnow, 1988); while some gender differences were observed in the distribution of particular tasks, much of the distribution was based on the age, the status of those involved and the perceived ownership of the task.

While work is an activity paid for with money, household activities do not emerge as a form of work but as an “orientation to work” (Engel, Marsden, Woodman, 1968). Extending the term “work” to adults’ household activities has led to several changes in research and theory; such vision can make it difficult to regard children’s household activities as work. Yet, there is an ample evidence that in many cultures boys and girls do different kinds of household work (Barry, Bacon, Child, 1957; Goodnow, Bowes, Warton, Dawes, Taylor, 1991). It is true that in families parents often adopt the procedures conveying the suggestion that work contributions to the family should not be for money: jobs and money have to be separate from household work (Warton, Goodnow, 1995).

In household settings, children pay close attention to the difference between the work of which they are the direct cause and the work which stems from the action of others or is a part of others’ space. A relevant distinction between tasks that are self-care and tasks that are family-care (Goodnow, 1988; Goodnow, Delaney, 1989) is to be drawn: **self-care tasks** focus on what is one’s “own”, on looking after one’s “own space” or taking care of what one has directly caused; **family-care tasks** are beyond what is one’s own, eventually focusing on the effect this work whether done or not has on the others.

White & Brinkerhoff (1981b) divided the reasons to work into 5 categories:

- developmental (responsibility and character building);
- mutual obligations;
- extrinsic (parents need help);
- task learning (children need to develop the skills);
- residual (e.g. to earn allowance).

### **The analysis of household interactions**

The analysis of conversation practices reveals that socialization is a process in which both caregivers and children acquire an increased level of competence and knowledge through their interactions with one another. The interactions concerning parents-children activities show how family members discursively construct family roles as such and in relation to the notion of responsibility. The social construction of reciprocity and

shared responsibility in the interactions reveals the expert-novice relationship in the organization of participation.

Ochs & Taylor (1995) demonstrate how emerging participant roles are constructed through the sequence of talk including the situations of conflict when parental authority (such as the father's figure) is asserted and contested. Schegloff's studies underline that in some case the particular use of talk, such as insert sequences where a question is responded to with another question thus initiating a new sequence, is a harbinger of disagreement. Insert questions are a powerful tool for redirecting the focus of the interaction and deviating from the proposed task. Goodwin & Goodwin (2000) show the power of intonation and non-lexical components in interaction to convey assessment and challenge other participants.

Household chores are an activity that will prepare children for their future lives and help them develop an understanding of the values of work. Through family disputes about household tasks, children get socialized into ideologies of work, family roles, and notion of responsibility. As Grimshaw (1990) notes: "all conflict talk involves some negotiating of identities and of the appropriate nature of interpersonal arrangements". Interest in children's household work is an area of everyday socialization. In Vygotskian terms, each situation is marked by a leading activity, which defines goals and methods by artifacts and by the forms of participation expected by the more expert and the less expert parties (Leontiev, 1981; Wertsch, 1981).

The following excerpts are derived from the video data corpus of family interactions concerning household tasks in order to analyse how family members discursively construct family roles in relation to the notion of responsibility.

Excerpts:

1) CALI Family - Saturday - Father

Participants: father (Flavio), mother (Renata), Carla (7 years), Elisa (3 years)

Ex. 1a

62. Flavio: allora che fate state qui con mamma o mi date una mano?	So what are you up to? Are you staying here with Mom or are you helping me?
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63. Carla: stiamo qui [con mamma	We stay here with Mom
64. Elisa: [io io voglio aiutarti	I- I want to help you
65. Flavio: vieni a darmi una mano? Allora vieni, andiamo a prendere gli attrezzi e mettiamo a posto la tua panca ((dirigendosi verso la camera delle bambine))	Are you coming to help me? Then come, let's go get the tools and let's fix your chest ((making his way to the girls' room))
66. Elisa: ( )	
67. Flavio: eccoci questi sono gli attrezzi ((entrando nella stanza delle bambine con la cassetta degli attrezzi))	Here we are. These are the tools ((entering the girls' room with the tool-box))
68. Flavio: allora qui ( ) cassapanca che adesso fissiamo.	So here ( ) the chest that we are going to fix now
69. (7.0)	
70. Flavio: allora se io ti chiedo di passarmi un cacciavite lo sai qual è? te lo mostro? ((rivolto a elisa che annuisce))	So if I ask you to pass me a screwdriver, will you know which one it is? Shall I show it to you? ((to Elisa who nods))
71. Flavio: oh questi sono i cacciaviti ((mostrando l'attrezzo a Elisa)), questa è la pinza ((mostra la pinza)) e questo è un ((mostra un martello))?	Oh these are the screwdrivers ((showing the tool to Elisa)) and these are pliers ((showing them)) and this is a ((showing a hammer))
72. Elisa: boh	I don't know
73. Flavio: ma::	a ..
74. Elisa: >ttarello<.	rolling pin' (see note below)
75. Flavio: un mattarello sì è un martello questo.	Rolling pin, right... no, it's a hammer isn't it?
76. Flavio: e questo è invece il ((prendendo il coperchio della cassapanca))	And this, what is it then((handling the cover of the chest))
77. Elisa: [questo è rotto	This is broken
78. Flavio: [coperchio che dobbiamo sistemare	It's the cover that we have to fix
79. Flavio: come è rotto? dov'è rotto?	How is it broken? Where is it broken?
80. Elisa: sì questo ((indicando il coperchio tenuto dal padre)) di mio, questo qua	Yes this one ((pointing at the cover))is from my-, this one here
81. Flavio: che si è rotto qua sopra vuoi dire. va bene questo si incolla. non è rotto. è soltanto che lo devo finire di montare	You mean it's got broken up here . Ok, this can be glued. It's not broken, it's only that I have to complete assembling it
82. Elisa: questo non funziona	This doesn't work

\* In Italian, there is a pun: the father suggests the first syllable "ma" of the word >Martello<, which means hammer, but the girl mistakenly continues >ttarello<, making it a rolling pin

In the excerpt 1a we can observe the activity between the father and the younger daughter: in the beginning, Flavio (turn 62) proposes a “recruitment” to both daughters. Elisa’s (turn 64) adhesion is opposed to Carla's refusal. Flavio accepts their choices and continues with instructions on the proposed activity (turn 65). The father-child interaction is based on an educational collaboration: Flavio directs the activity, explains the procedures and shows the instruments; Elisa tries to help her father in a playful way (turn 74). From the turn 77 on, Elisa gets involved in their activity and is valuing it as much as her father does.

Ex. 1b

108. Flavio: questa la metteremo qui. mhm che ne dici Elisa? (( <i>la bambina annuisce</i> ))	We're going to put this here. What do you think Elisa? (( <i>Elisa nods</i> ))
109. Flavio: mhm? (( <i>Elisa annuisce</i> ))	Mhm? (( <i>Elisa nods</i> ))
110. Flavio: eh?	Eh?
111. Flavio: senti mi passi una matita per piacere? dovrebbe stare da queste parti. una matita blu con un tappino giallo. come questa, me la passi per favore?	Listen, can you please pass me a pencil? It should be around here. A blue pencil with a yellow cap. Like this one, can you pass it to me please?
112. Elisa: questa? (( <i>passando una matita al padre</i> ))	This one? (( <i>handing the pencil to the father</i> ))
113. Flavio: si grazie.	Yes thanks
114. Flavio: ma tu poi metti a posto qui, le tue cose?	But will you put your things straight later on?

The excerpt 1b is based on the same activity: Flavio attempts to induce Elisa’s participation (turn 108 and turn 110), who is not very motivated to help with a purely mechanical work (e.g. passing the tools) she was asked to do. We can also observe the father’s appeal to the daughter’s need to be responsible (turn 114).

Ex. 1c

127. Flavio: sto cercando il trapanino. che per caso l'hai visto? eccolo	I'm looking for a little drill. Did you see it by chance? Here it is
128. Flavio: ( ) allora	( ) so

129. (5.0)	(5.0)
130. Flavio: facciamo così. quando te lo chiedo tu mi passi gli arnesi. va bene? (( <i>Elisa annuisce</i> )) avrei bisogno di un chiodino e i chiodini li puoi prendere qui. ecco. mi prendi questo chiodo qua per favore? ecco me lo prendi che io prendo invece di nuovo (le misure col metro)	Let's do it this way. When I ask you, you pass me the tools. Ok? (( <i>Elisa nods</i> )) I would need a little nail and you can get little nails here. Here we go. Can you get this one here please? So, you get it while I am measuring again
131. (4.0)	(4.0)
132. Flavio: allora mi passi il martello? (( <i>da 17:11 a 17:37 Flavio lavora aiutato da Elisa</i> ))	So, can you pass me the hammer? (( <i>from 17:11 to 17:37 Elisa is helping Flavio with his work</i> ))
133. Flavio: c'è un altro chiodo qui come mai? lo metti a posto per favore?	How come that there is another nail here? Can you please put it back?
134. (19.0)	(19.0)
135. Flavio: ma poi torni a darmi una mano? (( <i>rivolto a Elisa che si sta allontanando dalla stanza</i> )) sennò come faccio da solo?	But will you come back to help me afterwards? (( <i>addressed to Elisa who is leaving the room</i> )) Otherwise how can I work all alone?

The excerpt 1c presents the last part of the described father-child interaction. Flavio is explaining the details of the activity to the daughter (turn 130). Elisa's silence reveals her lack of interest in the activity. In the father's view (turn 135), his insistence is a sign of the "relevance" of the activity. The interaction gets interrupted by Elisa: she no longer accepts the role assigned to her by her father and she leaves the room. Flavio tries to appeal to the necessity of Elisa's participation (turn 135), but he fails in his attempt and the joint activity is interrupted.

At the same time, the mother of the girls Renata is engaged in the kitchen in making "pizza" for lunch, as she usually does on Saturdays.

## 2) CALI Family - Saturday - Mother

Participants: father (Flavio), mother (Renata), Carla (7 years), Elisa (3 years)

### Ex. 2a

69. Renata: no amore se ti schizzi (( <i>cucinando</i> ))	No honey if you squirt out (( <i>while cooking</i> ))
70. Carla: chi sono delle mi	What are these? they look like

sembrano delle salsicce,	sausages to me
71. Renata: e invece sono dei pelati (.) pomodori pelati	Actually these are peeled, peeled tomatoes
72. Carla: testa pelata?	Peeled head ((Bold head)) ( <i>the beginning of a nursery rhyme</i> )
73. Renata: più o meno	More or less
74. Carla: chi è scusa?	Sorry, what's that?
75. Renata: il sugo il succo del pomodoro. allora visto che mi hai detto che sei tanto interessata a cucinare	The sauce, the tomato juice. So, since you told me you were so interested in cooking
76. Carla: girogirotondo casca il mondo casca la terra e >tutti giù per terra< (( <i>cantilenando</i> ))	Ring around the rosies, A pocket full of posies, Ashes! Ashes! We all fall down! ( <i>singing</i> )
77. Renata: il sugo si fa così	The sauce should be made like this

In the excerpt 2a the mother's cooking activity determines Carla's curiosity (turn 70). Renata uses this opportunity to instruct Carla (turn 75): the daughter finds cooking very interesting and the interaction is developed by a continuous exchange of remarks.

#### Ex. 2b

117. Carla: buona	delicious
118. Renata: un po' d'olio	A little bit of oil
119. Carla: mhm mhm	Mhm mhm
120. Renata: perché qua faccio il sugo quello col basilico	As here I am making the sauce, the one with basil
121. Carla: buono	yummy
122. Flavio: allora bimbe un attimo di attenzione bimbe. io finisco la vostra cassapanca in camera vostra	So girls, attention please. I am finishing the chest in your room
(...)	
129. Carla: ti va? (( <i>mescolando con il cucchiaino nella pentola</i> ))	You want some? (( <i>stirring with a spoon in the pan</i> ))
130. Renata: sì senza buttarlo tutto di fuori come hai fatto prima però	Yes, but without spilling it all over as you did before
131. Carla: no:	no
132. Renata: °togliti°	Step aside
133. (21.0)	
134. Renata: basta basta ba basta	Enough enough en- enough
135. Carla: okay	ok
136. Renata: okay adesso si mette sul fuoco e ogni tanto si gira per evitare che si attacchi e	Ok, now you put it on fire and stir it every now and then to avoid sticking and this is a

questo è il sughetto	yummy sauce
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Excerpt 2b: the mother-child interaction is characterized by a process of learning, where the mother shows her skills to Carla, who assumes the role of a learner. Renata concludes the process with a final summary and the activity interrupts. In turn 122, Flavio unsuccessfully tries to turn daughters' attention to his repairing work.

The described family interaction is worthy of notice. On Saturday morning, both parents are doing some household work: the mother is making "pizza" for lunch, while the father is repairing the chest in children's bedroom. Both parents try to get daughters' participation in domestic tasks. The mother is more successful since every child loves "kneading pizza dough" as well as due to the primitive psychological motivation in this type of "anal" work. Despite the strong and possibly oedipal link between 3 year old Elisa and her father, his proposal appears less appealing and he does not manage to induce Elisa into doing a rather boring mechanical work. This is demonstrated by the play on words in the excerpt 1a (turns 73-75) between Elisa and her father (see note). By turning a "hammer" into a "rolling pin" needed for making any type of pasta or pizza and used in the kitchen by her mother at exactly the same time, the girl reveals a kind of a subconscious choice towards her mother's activity.

### 3) GITI Family - Wednesday morning - Father

Participants: father (Paolo), mother (Emma), Elena (7 years and 5 months), Alice (1 year and 5 months), researcher (Francesco)

#### Ex. 3a

71. Paolo: MHM::: papino deve fare il lattuccio (( <i>andando verso il tavolo</i> )) prepariamo il lattuccio. (1.0) giro giro tondo (( <i>cantando e guardando Alice mentre gira con il cucchiaino il latte nella tazza di Elena</i> )) Questo di chi è? (( <i>rivolto ad Alice</i> ))	Mhm: daddy has to prepare milk (( <i>moving towards the table</i> )) let's prepare the milk for you (1.0) Ring around the rosies (( <i>singing and looking at Alice while stirring the milk with the spoon in Elena's cup</i> )). Whose milk is it? (( <i>addressed to Alice</i> ))
72. Alice: Elena.	Elena's
73. Paolo: Ele:na.	Elena's
74. Emma: vuoi aiutare papino?	Do you want to help daddy
75. (1.0)	
76. Alice: (( <i>non risponde</i> ))	(( <i>doesn't reply</i> ))
77. Emma: aiuti mhm=papino?	Will you help mhm=daddy ( <i>putting</i>

<i>((mentre appoggia Alice a terra))</i>	<i>Alice on the floor)</i>
78. Alice: mhm=no i- eh eh eh: <i>((piange per 4 secondi per essere stata messa a terra))</i>	<i>((crying for 4 seconds for being put on the floor))</i>
79. Emma: mhm=no. <i>((riprende in braccio Alice))</i>	<i>Mhm=no ((lifts Alice in her arms))</i>
80. Paolo: aiuti papino?	<i>Will you help daddy?</i>
81. (5.0) <i>((la madre armeggia con le stoviglie nel lavandino. Il padre prepara la colazione sul tavolo))</i>	<i>((the mother moves the dishes in the sink. The father makes breakfast))</i>

In the excerpt 3a the mother is trying to cause her daughter's participation (turn 74). Alice ignores Paolo's first invitation to collaborate (turn 71) (use of the pronoun "we" suggests the joint nature of the proposed activity) and the following attempts of both fail as well.

Ex. 3b

365. Paolo: [siamo in quella bella generazione di mezzo] in cui, i nostri padri, ancora non facevano le cose,=	<i>We belong to that wonderful generation in between, where our fathers still weren't doing things in households</i>
366. Ric: =eh! esatto! = <i>((ridendo))</i>	<i>exactly</i>
367. Paolo: =e [i nostri figli senz'altro non le faranno.=]	<i>And surely our children won't do them</i>
368. Ric: [=sì. infatti!]	<i>True!</i>
369. Alice: <i>((ride gioiosa in sottofondo))</i> eh: eh (cacca). EH:: <i>((gettandosi sul letto dei genitori mentre il padre lo sta sistemando))</i>	<i>((she laughs in the background)) eh eh (number two) EH: ((throwing herself down on the bed that dad is putting in order))</i>
370. Paolo: <i>((avvicinandosi ad Alice))</i> <e poi, per fortuna che c'è Ali che mi aiuta a fare il letto!>	<i>((getting closer to Alice)) and then thanks goodness there's Ali who helps with making the bed!</i>
371. Alice: <i>((ride ed effettivamente afferra un capo del lenzuolo per aiutare il padre))</i> aiuto!	<i>((laughs and grasps a corner of the sheet to help dad)) help!</i>
372. Paolo: aiuto. BRAVA! <i>((mentre insieme tendono il lenzuolo e lo lasciano ricadere sul letto))</i>	<i>Help. Good job! (together they spread out the sheet and let it cover the bed)</i>
373. Alice: <i>((ride))</i>	<i>((laughs))</i>
374. (20.)	
375. Alice: BRUA': <i>((buttandosi</i>	<i>(she mumbles while throwing</i>

<i>sul letto))</i>	<i>herself on the bed)</i>
376. Paolo: no. non salire però.	No. Don't climb up though
377. ((per 10 secondi Alice fa dei vocalizzi mentre il padre finisce il letto))	((10 seconds: Alice vocalizes while the father finishes making the bed))
378. Emma: settete::! ((con tono entusiasta ad Alice da fuori campo))	Boo (as in pickaboo) (An off-screen enthusiastic exclamation)
379. Paolo: tieni! ((con voce in falsetto avvicinando il ciuccio alla bocca di Alice)) (.) e non te lo do! ((per tre volte glielo porta via ogni volta che sta per afferrarlo))	Here! (talking in a falsetto voice and bringing a pacifier to Alice's mouth)). I won't give it to you! ((teasingly taking it away each time Alice attempts to get it))
380. Alice: ((prende il succhiotto guardando fissa la telecamera))	(She takes the pacifier while staring at the camera)
381. Emma: Ele:na, (.) è così che devi fa:re davanti a- mhm: a: degli (estra:nei?) (,) dai, (.) [mai= vi:a. ((da fuori campo))	Elena, is this the way to behave in front of strangers? Come on, go away (off-screen)
382. (31.0) ((il tempo prosegue con Paolo che fa il letto ed Alice che gli sta dietro e vocalizzando ne imita le mosse))	((Paolo continues making the bed while Alice is behind him vocalizing and mimicking his moves))
383. Alice: perché non XXX aiu:ti? ((in tono lamentoso))	Why don't you help me? (plaintive voice)
384. Paolo: ((la guarda ma non le dice nulla))	((looks at Alice in silence))
(...)	
391. Alice: ECCO! (.) ECCO!	Here! Here
392. Paolo: ecco! ecco! ((coprendo il lato sinistro del letto))	Here! Here! (covering the left side of the bed))
393. Alice: ECCO QUI!	Here you are
394. Paolo: ECCO QUI! ((coprendo il lato inferiore del letto))	Here you are ((covering the bottom))
395. Alice: e QUI! E QUI!	And here and here
396. Paolo: QUI. QUI. ((coprendo il lato destro del letto aiutato da Alice))	Here. Here. ((covering the right side with Alice's help))
397. Alice: e:cco qui! ((per segnalare che il lavoro è terminato))	Here we are (announcing that the work is finished)
398. Paolo: mhm=e:cco! ((prendendo i cuscini))	Done ((taking pillows))
399. (4.0) ((Paolo mette i cuscini))	((Paolo puts the pillows on the bed))

In this excerpt the discussion between Paolo and the researcher about the role change in domestic work distribution among family members is a preliminary invitation to a collaborative action and is addressed to the younger child in an ironic way (turn 370). Alice accepts the proposed activity (to make her parents' bed) and we observe the father-daughter collaboration, even though Alice's help is quite symbolic and is perceived as a game.

4) GITI Family – Father (Saturday) - Tape 1: “We are fixing it”

Participants: father (Paolo), mother (Emma), Elena (7 years and 5 months), Alice (1 year and 5 months), researcher (Francesco)

Ex. 4a

33. Ric.: papà è al lavoro?	Researcher: Is your Dad working?
34. Elena: voglio vedere mia sorella come fa!	I want to see how is my sister doing
35. Ric.: e adesso la riprendiamo.	Now we are going to shoot her on tape
36. Elena: è al lavoro °(fa un pasticcio° ((ironica))	She's at work (she's messing around) ((ironic))
37. Ric.: eh! ((sorridente))	Eh ((smiles))
38. (3.0)	
39. Paolo: viti spanate! (.) siccome Elena è venuta ad abitare questo letto da poco, ((sorriso ironico))	Stripped screws! (.) as Elena came to dwell in this bed only recently ((ironic smile))
40. Ric.: ha cambiato?	Has she changed?
41. Paolo: esatto.	yes
42. Elena: oggi non viene (Luana)?	Is Luana coming today?
43. Ric. 2: no viene (un'altra volta)	No she'll come another time
44. Elena: (sta male)?	Is she sick?
45. Ric. 2: no è solo che c'ha ( )	No she's just busy ( )
46. Elena: ho capito	I see
47. (22.0)	(22.0)
48. Elena: papà che stai facendo?	Dad, what are you doing
49. Paolo: sto cercando di aggiustare questa cosa qui (.) che adesso con te che dormi qua.	I am trying to fix this thing here (.) just that now, with you sleeping here
50. Elena: ti racc- dico una cosa. ((a Ric.))	I'll tell you something ((to the researcher))
51. Ric.: mhm=mhm.	

52. Ric. 2: eh:::	
53. Elena: una volta, lì sopra, il padre di Leonardo stava facendo=stava facendo- stava inv- stava rifacendo la stanza. e:::	Once upon the time, up there, Leonardo's father was doing, was doing, was renewing the room and
54. Ric. 2: eh:::	
55. Elena: e:::	
56. Ric. 2: eh:::	
57. Elena: è caduto un pezzo di- di::= mhm: (.) pavimento sopra questo e così allora lo stiamo cercando di aggiustare, perché se cade, io= io siccome dormo qui, se cade questo [cado anch'io.	And a piece of floor from the top of this fell down and so we are now trying to fix it because if it falls, I- as I sleep here if it falls I fall too
58. Ric.: [cadi anche tu.	You fall too
59. Elena: mhm= mhm.	Mhm mhm

The excerpt shows an example of the child's virtual self-inclusion in the father's activity. Elena's first claim (turn 36) is ironic. By asking Paolo about what he is doing (turn 48) to just specify the activity, she gets the possibility to explain the reason behind it (turn 57): there is an attempt of self-inclusion by commenting on "why trying to fix it" (even though she's not a real actor but a less considered participant). In this excerpt, the "father who fixes the furniture" is better accepted than in the excerpt 1.

#### 5) CALI Family - Mother Sunday

Participants: father (Flavio), mother (Renata), Carla (7 years), Elisa (3 years)

#### Ex. 5a

<i>((Elisa versa un po' d'acqua sull'impasto della pizza))</i>	Elisa pours a little bit of water into pizza dough
234. Carla: NO!	No!
235. Renata: ( ) NON TUTTA!	Not all of it!
236. Carla: >ce lo dice mamma quando va bene va!<	Mom's telling us when it's enough
237. (1.0)	
238. Elisa: ora? <i>((intende il momento per versare l'acqua sull'impasto))</i>	Now? <i>(meaning if it's time to pour water into the dough)</i>
239. Renata: <i>((accenna di sì ed Elisa versa l'acqua))</i> dai.	<i>((nods and Elisa pours water))</i> go ahead
240. Elisa: un po' d'acqua?	A bit of water

241. Renata: dai.	
242. (2.0) ((Elisa versa l'acqua))	(2.0) ((Elisa pours water))
243. Renata: basta!	enough
244. Carla: tutta d'acqua sta pizza.	This pizza is all watered
245. Elisa: ora?	Now?
246. Renata: sì.	yes
247. Renata: BA:STA! ((a Elisa che versa l'acqua))	Enough! (to Elisa who pours water)
(...)	
289. Carla: mi dai un pezzetto?	Can you give me a piece
290. Renata: non ancora! se vuoi mangiare, (.) □a pizza stasera devi aspettare.	Not yet! If you want to eat pizza tonight, you have to wait
291. Elisa: mamma? la metto (:l'acqua)	Mom, shall I pour ((the water))
292. Renata: ( )	
293. Elisa: mamma? la metto (:l'acqua)	Mom? shall I pour ((the water))
294. (2.0)	
295. Renata: mannaggia!	gosh
296. Carla: mamma? ( )	Mom?
297. Elisa: mamma=metto=ma che metto?	Mom? shall I put=but what shall I put
298. Renata: QUANDO HO FINITO! non ho finito d'impastare. fammi finire!	When I'm done. I'm not done with the dough yet. Let me finish!
299. Elisa: mamma? ma che metto?	Mom? But what can I add?
300. Renata: >NIENTE< adesso amore! perché dopo mi aiuti a mettere il sugo sopra. va bene?	Nothing yet, sweetie! Later you'll help me with spreading the sauce over. Ok?
301. Carla: PURE io.	Me too
302. Renata: °si°	sure

Carla's attempt to participate is not accepted by the mother, whose concern is to cook without Carla's interference. Also Elisa is eager to participate.

We can observe the children's insistence to cooperate with the mother, who is forced to accept their help. Eventually, they find a way to work jointly.

## Conclusion

In this paper we have argued that families construct, reproduce, and socialize perspectives on family roles and participation in domestic work through the mutual

negotiation. This analysis refers to three dimensions of children's roles and responsibilities in the household setting:

- the construction of family roles is possible through the activities that family members recognize as relevant and educational. Household chores will prepare children to their future lives and teach the value of work. The data we analysed show that the younger family members may as well construct their roles by the lack of collaboration in particular situations, since the relevance of the situation is ratified by the meaning the participants assign to each activity (as in excerpt 1).
- Parents aim at producing responsibility in their children towards specific activities related to their own competence and skills (e.g. father's manual repairing, mother's cooking).
- The opportunities that parents offer to their children have a relevant possibility to produce a sense of a better role's identity in the family: the activities of one member should bring a change in the activities of other family members. Children tend to be highly engaged in such developmental situations.

This investigation reveals that studying household work interactions provides opportunities for examining the structure of apprenticeship activities at home as well as the social organization of families.

As a provisional comment, it may be that young children find mother's household activities more appealing, as they are often more comprehensible and more adequate to children's skills. As in the excerpt 3b, the father is more successful with the task of arranging the bed, which is a usual mother's task. However, having examined the families with female children only, a further examination of the families with male children should be conducted for the future evaluation.

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