UNIVERSITA' DEGLI STUDI DI PARMA

Dottorato di ricerca in Psicologia Sociale

Ciclo XXII

**Families under the microscope.
Observing interactional processes in
*family microtransitions***

Coordinatore:
Chiar.ma Prof.ssa Laura Fruggeri

Tutor:
Chiar.ma Prof.ssa Luisa Molinari

Dottoranda: Marina Everri

Nella mia casa paterna, quand'ero ragazzina, a tavola, se io o i miei fratelli rovesciavamo il bicchiere sulla tovaglia, o lasciavamo cadere un coltello, la voce di mio padre tuonava: - Non fate malagrazie!

Se inzuppavamo il pane nella salsa gidava: - Non leccate i piatti! Non fate sbrodeghezzi! Non fate potacci!

Sbrodeghezzi e potacci erano, per mio padre, anche i quadri moderni, che non poteva soffrire.

Preface

This project started as a challenge on different "fronts".

A challenge because I accepted to work on a complicated, but intriguing, subject such as the *process of change*.

Since the famous fragment of the Greek philosopher Heraclitus, later interpreted by Plato as: "Everything changes and nothing remains still", change has been a core issue in people's lives. I leave archetypal speculations to philosophers, as my interest in this work is to observe *how people change,* and more precisely how their relationships change in intimate contexts such as families.

This required to devise methos wich allowed the observation of the ongoing process of change, and this was particularly challenging. It maily implied to "strart from scratch" as in the field of psychology it has been difficult to find satisfying suggestions. That is the reason why this work is the result of contaminations from diverse disciplines such as linguistic anthropology, sociology, family therapy. I also believe also the necessity to overcome boundaries both theorical and methodological should be considered especially when studying the complexity of interpersonal relations.

Thus three years of work meant also to "swim upstream", at the beginning it was frustrating but gradually I have realized it became stimulating and intellectually intriguing.

A second challenge concerns the language: I decided to write in English. This, again, required me many efforts. I am preatty sure the syntax is still a bit (or maybe a lot?) "Italianized", however I hope to have been quite clear in expressing my thoughts.

The third challenge is my academic career. I cannot advance any predictions about that... I still have many curiosities I wish to discover.

Finally, United States was also a challenge. US had a special place in these three years: I started thinking of a PhD in the cold New Hampshire and I finished writing my PhD dissertation in the hot California. Let's see *where* the new beginning will be!

★★★

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface

CHAPTER IV – **At the core of oscillation:** *Stancetaking process* **in families' interactions**
Study 3

CHAPTER
I

The framework

> Non si può osservare un'onda senza tenere conto degli aspetti complessi che concorrono a formarla e di quelli altrettanto complessi a cui essa dà luogo. Questi aspetti variano continuamente, per cui un'onda è sempre diversa da un'altra onda; ma è anche vero che ogni onda è uguale a un'altra onda, anche se non immediatamente contigua o successiva; insomma ci sono delle forme e delle sequenze che si ripetono, sia pur distribuite irregolarmente nello spazio e nel tempo.
>
> Italo Calvino. Lettura di un'onda. *Palomar*.

1. Introduction: An overview of the research project

Families change throughout their life course according to both internal changes and transformations that occur in relation to the broader context they are connected with. In particular, changes of any one family member, dyad, or triad may trigger disequilibration and re-organization of the whole family system (Cowan, 1991).

Thus, how do such *processes* of *change* occur?

Starting from this broad question I have devised a research project that put great effort in attempting to reply to this issue.

Family change is then at the core of my research interests. This notion has to be intended here in the specific declination of developmental transitions and, more precisely, as *micro-transitions* which occur in the everyday interactions among family members.

I decided to situate the study of microtransitions in a particular moment of family development: adolescence. This choice was only functional to a better understanding of the processes of change, as in this period several microtransitions are clustered at a given time.

Interdisciplinarity is another fundamental characteristic of this research project, and all the disciplines considered share as common background a *systemic-constructionist*

orientation. In line with this, the main effort of my work was to devise *methods* that could be consistent with this epistemological background.

The structure of the entire research project itself is constructionist, in the sense that each of the three studies is built and emerges from the previous one as "Chinese boxes". More precisely, the results of one study are the starting point for new research questions, which were explored in the subsequent ones.

Let us start from the "biggest box": *Study 1*. This study provides the methodological framework of the entire research project. Innovative observational procedures are devised to collect and analyze data; furthermore the two constructs of *oscillation* and *coordination* are operationalized. Six families with at least an adolescent child (13-16 years) participated in this study.

The *Study 2* involved other six families and it is focused on the observation of emerging *patterns of family interaction* from the interlocking between oscillation and coordination. Four specific patterns, which account for different ways in which continuity and change develop during microtransitions, are presented.

The last study, *Study 3*, is an attempt to narrow the lens on the specific *forms of sequential interactions* family members display when talking about ongoing changes. The introduction of a new analytical procedure allows for the study of the relational aspects of oscillation as a *stancetaking* process, which account for power dynamics displayed in the interaction among family members.

2. Lenses: studying the processes of family *microtransitions*

The notion of family as a complex object of analysis has been claimed for a very long time as well as the necessity to devise methods that could grasp this complexity has been discussed. When the interests of researchers become even more complex as they are interested in getting at the core of the processes through which family changes, their interests become a real *challenge*.

The kind of lenses one shall adopt in order to get that complexity is a critical point.

One of the necessary steps I identified with my project is the importance to consider suggestions coming from a multi-disciplinary literature. Considering that the key words of

my work are *families* and *transitions*, at least three traditions of study need to be considered: developmental psychology, social psychology, and family therapy. These three lines of research will be briefly illustrated through the graphic representations they provided in the definition of their models, as more details will be presented in the introduction of the single studies.

Using a metaphor, we can think of these theoretical approaches as binoculars chosen to observe the same object (the family) but with different lenses. If we watch from one side we can see details but the elements on the background will blur, whereas if we turn it we will see smaller objects but also the connections among them as the background will be included in the frame. This is to say that, in order to observe a process in which both individual and relational aspects are included, methods consistent with this theoretical goal are needed.

At the end of the seventies Lerner and Spanier (1978: 15) pointed out that "there is an emerging synthesis in social science of sociologists, psychologists, and physicians. The family is the central social institution in society and has been the focus of much research and scholarship among, in particular, family sociologists. Additionally, perhaps no topic in the social sciences has received as much attention, particularly from developmental psychologists, as has the behavioural development of the individual. Yet, these two closely related and obviously interdependent topics have not adequately been studied jointly". In this line, developmental psychologists put greater efforts in devising models of individual development in which the attention to the relational contexts was fundamental. *Developmental contextualism* (Bronfenbrenner, 1995; Sameroff & Seifer, 1983) is an attempt to provide a complex and articulated models contaminated by system theory in which it is claimed that individual developmental transitions are strictly affected by the ones that happen in the multiple contexts to which individuals participate (see Figure 1.1).
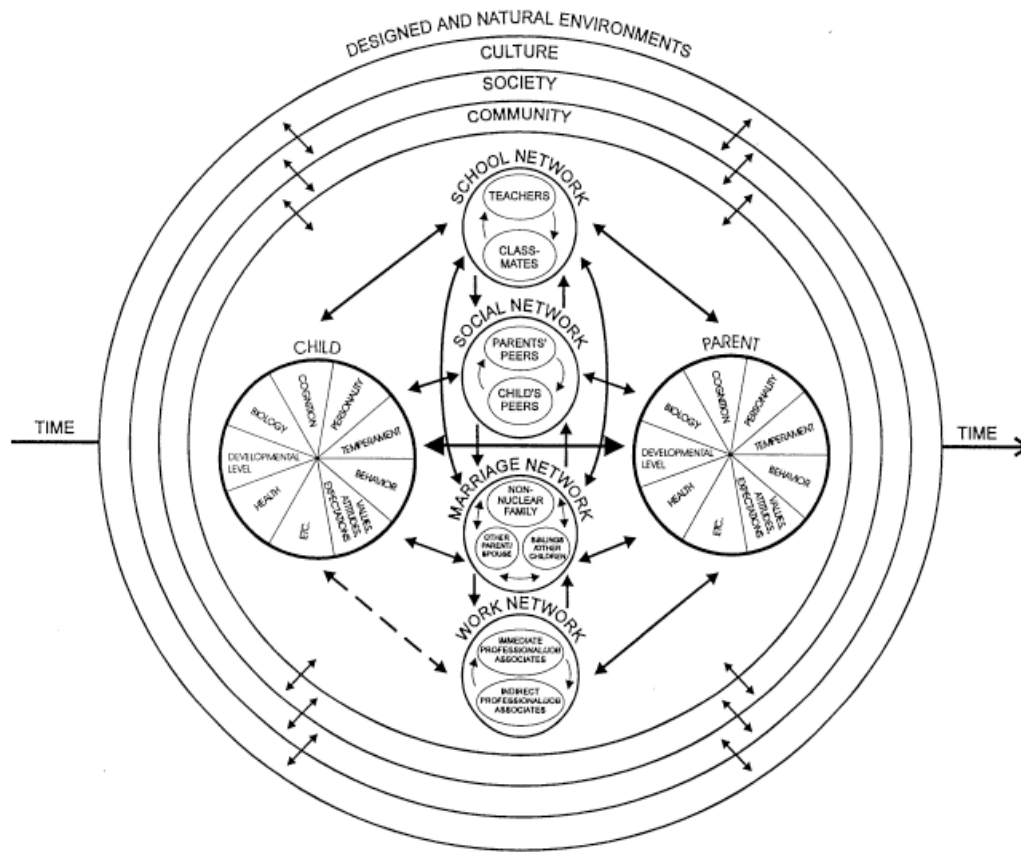
Figure 1.1. The *develepmental contextualism* applied to human development: parents and children relationships, interpersonal and institutional network are interlocked and influenced by a particular community, designed and natural socio-cultural environments which change in time and history, (Ford & Lerner, 1992).

This complex model refers to organized configurations of person-context that reciprocally influence and that drive to different evolutionary paths. These configurations are also affected by the nature of the variables and by the interactive dynamics among them (Ford & Lerner, 1992). Families, according to this approach, are one of the essential contexts of development and they continuously influence and are influenced by maturational processes of its members. However, how it is clearly noticeable in the figure, families are intended as subunits: children and parents are "separate universes".

Kreppner (1989) notices that in such model families have been considered as an "ecological variable" or as a dyad of mother and children. Furthermore, most of the studies carried out in this theoretical perspective have mainly focused on the individual

4

development, while the more process-oriented ideas stemming from systems theory were left behind.

As second tradition of studies stems form the study of family relations in social psychology: the *Family life-cycle model* (Figure 1.2).
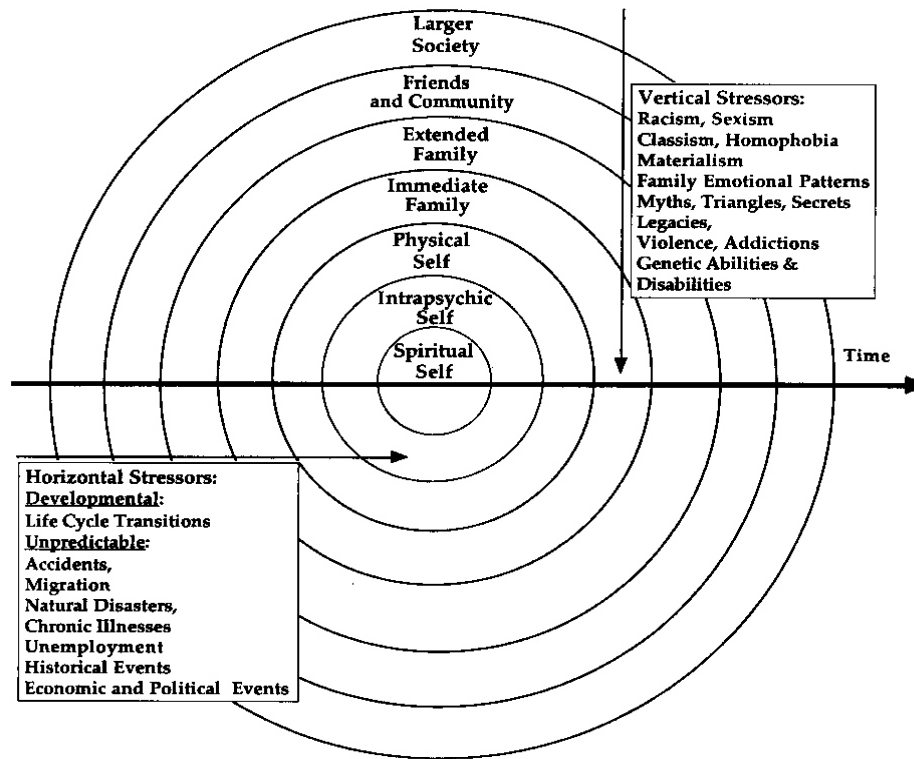
Figure 1.2. The Family life-cycle model. Carter & McGoldrick, (2003).

This approach considers families as dynamic units which change during the life cycle: from "the womb to the tomb". Individual and relational levels emerge as "embricating" contexts one from the other as clearly shown in the figure.

The Family life-cycle model has encountered many critics, integrations and revisions which introduced several changes, sometimes confusing, from the original sociological formulation. However it has the merit to stress the relevance of considering the *whole family as the unit of analysis.*

Briefly, the transitions between different developmental stages are triggered by *events of crisis* (e.g. adolescence) in which all family members must achieve some developmental task in order to move to the next stage. The notion of critical event shows many limitations as maturational processes are conceived as discontinuous and abrupt events that break ongoing interactions. On the contrary, as some theories developed within a systemic approach have pointed out, giving also intriguing suggestions for the study of "normal family processes" (Walsh, 2003), it is in the *everyday interactions* among family members that new competences are acquired and incorporated in the repertoire of family interactions. Among them, Breunlin's works (1988) carried out in the context of family therapy give interesting suggestions for the study of family transitions (Figure 1.3).
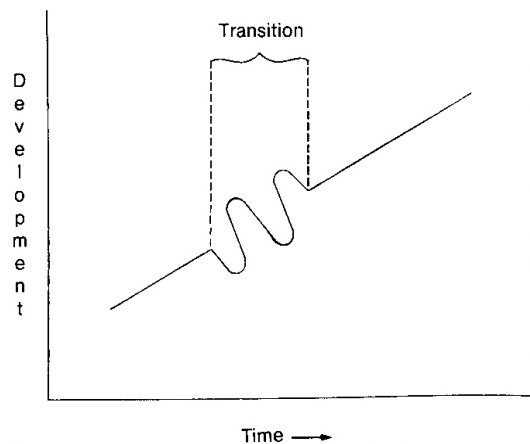
Figure 1.3. The *process of transitions*, Breunlin (1988)

In Breunlin's *oscillation theory*, development changes occur through continuous oscillatory processes in which old competences are alternated with new ones until the latter prevail. Family interactions then need to be regulated as new competences are incorporated. Moreover, he introduces the effective notion of *micro-transition* to stress that these oscillatory processes occur through everyday interactions.

The notion of *microtransition* is then a crucial starting point of my entire research project. How can these processes be studied?

3. Observation as "political" choice

Recently Kreppner (2002) highlights that the application of systemic principles to the methodological choices would open new perspectives for the understanding of families as adapting and developing contexts in which children grow up. He states that the necessary premises for designing systems research are:

a) to consider the centrality of relationships for understanding families;

b) to conceptualize families as evolving over time, through developmental stages and transitional periods;

c) to focus on communication and interaction during different periods of the life course.

In line with this, in my view *observational methods* are the best choice.

Observation has a long methodological tradition in different scientific disciplines, however few studies in the field of family research use *direct observation* as the main method for data collection. As some scholars (Kerig & Lindhal, 2001) have recently noticed this method is useful for improving our understanding of family dynamics; furthermore by watching how family members actually communicate with one another, researchers can draw conclusions about fundamental dimensions of family interactive processes (Margolin, *et al.* 1998).

Among the research tools to conduct observations, the use of *video recordings* is becoming widely accepted only recently (Neale *et al*, 2007; Rose, 2000). In the field of anthropology, especially ethnography, there is a longstanding tradition of film and video (e.g. Bateson & Mead, 1942); however in social sciences the prevalence of narrative methods has kept this technique in a peripheral position (Grabb, 2008).

The potentialities of video recording was clearly outlined by Gesell at the beginning of the Twentieth century (1928: 56):

"The camera is, in a sense, mightier than the psychological eye. The living eye can see but it cannot record. Not even in the visual arcana of the most eidetic cortex can permanent immutable images be stored for retrospective reference. This is just what the camera can do for us. It can supply seriated optical records - records which do not fade with time nor warp with prejudice, but which perpetuate with impartial fidelity the configuration of the original event."

Interestingly, the advantages of studying interactions in intimate relational contexts using video material have recently been recognized (Goldman, *et al*. 2007; Ochs *et al*., 2006). The persistence of the record allows the researcher to develop categorization *after* the detailed and careful analysis of the examples. The post-production and the delayed categorization permit to grasp the complexity of interactions (Kreppner, 2009). Indeed, video recordings offer the possibility to speed up, slow or stop subtle aspects of interaction that normally occur and that they go unnoticed by eye observation. Both verbal and nonverbal aspects of interaction (tone, eye gaze, posture, gesture) can be studied together or as separate streams. Furthermore, video records can be revisited over time to refine our hypothesis or to develop new research questions.

For these reasons I found that the use of video is a choice particularly attuned to the study of the processes emerging in the interpersonal relations.

I also took in consideration some relevant warnings by Goodwin (1996) who stresses how the methodological choices are "political" in the sense that any camera position, as even any transcription constitute a theory about what is relevant within a scene. This will have enormous consequences for what can be seen in it later, and which forms of subsequent analyses are possible.

4. Methodological notations

Before going into the details of my work, some specifications about the methodological procedures I adopted in the entire project are needed. This allows me to avoid redundant definitions in the presentation of the single chapters.

First, this work was made possible only through a constant confrontation in a research team comprising besides me my advisors and three graduate students. The collaboration was fundamental in different parts of the project, but particularly for data collection and

analysis. The calculation of inter-rater's agreement was the main procedure we adopted in order to guarantee reliability in each step of the analyses. During the presentation of the three studies, therefore, I will, when appropriate, switch from the use of the first person ("I") with the plural one ("we") to underline that I worked in collaboration with the research team.

Second, data collection abided by the ethical principles defined by the National Psychological Association. The fact that this study involved 32 families with diverse compositions and children of different age who were videotaped in a laboratory setting or in their homes, implied being extremely cautious in the respect of the privacy norms. For this reason, parents and children over 18 were informed that they could stop the researchers in any moment during data collection, and that the data were to be used only for didactic and research purposes. Before collecting the data, all family members read a form of consent to the procedure, that they were asked to sign it only at the end of the video recording. This choice was consistent with the possibility that some families might not allow the treatment of the data for critical or sensitive aspects emerged in the interview. However, all families agreed to the use of the videotaped material.

All the families that participated in the three studies have Italian origins and belong to middle and middle-upper class: both mother and father had a job at the time of the interview. Most of them worked either as employees in private companies or as teachers in schools; the others were managers and physicians. Specifications about age and family composition are provided in each study; moreover, pseudonyms for both the family name and the first names of participants are used.

Third, some notations are need for the interview extracts I report in the result sections. As the research project was carried out with Italian families as participants, the original language of the interviews is Italian. Thus, for each study I translated the excerpts into English, trying to provide the closest meaning to some Italian colloquial expressions.

In the English version of the extracts, I did not translate the capital letters that refer to family members and interviewer, namely: father is "padre" in Italian, the P is kept, mother is "madre" in Italian, the M is retained, and interviewer is "intervistatrice" in Italian, the I is left as is. The other capital letters observable in the extracts stand for the

first name of adolescents and the sibling and they will be specified in the header of each extracts.

As for the transcription of all interviews, I used conventions that partially follow the indications of Conversation Analysis. For the purposes of my work I only considered the ones that are summarized in the next page.

TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

((mother laughs))	Double parentheses enclose non verbal aspects of communication, in italics
(0.2)	Pauses
NO	Capitals indicate emphatic stress
Yes [I think [but I	Square brackets econlose simultaneous talk (overlap)
-	A hyphen indicates a truncated word or interruption
(home)	When words are in parentheses it indicates uncertainty on the transcriber's part
( )	Empty parentheses indicate that something is being said, but the transcriber could not hear it
=	An equal sign indicates no break or delay between the words connected
<u>mom</u>	Underlining indicates some form of stress or emphasis on the underlined item

In the interviews' excerpts I reported additional signs were included:

(…)	Colons in round parentheses indicate that part of the talk has been cut when too long
[…]	Colons in squared parentheses indicate that some turns have been cut when too long
[Chiara]	Words in squared parentheses indicate that the researcher added some word especially in the English translation to make the sense of utterances

Defining *methods* for the observation of families' interactions

⋆ Study 1 ⋆

> Deciding on the epistemology prior to selecting the theoretical perspective prior to choosing the methodology and then the specific methods puts methodology and methods firmly in their place.
>
> (Chamberlain, 1999)

1. Introduction

When carrying out research on family relations in the field of social psychology, and particurarly when the specific research interests concern the study of *developmental* processes, *methodological* issues emerge as critical.

Scholars working in a socio-psychological framework have often faced the difficulty of maintaining coherence between the explicit theoretical premises and the most suitable methos (Lanz & Rosati, 2002). This difficulty becomes sharper when attention is focused, beyond the consideration of a relational level, on the observation of the *processes* through which parents and children relate one to the others in the course of evolutionary changes.

There is a common agreement in the literature on the need to develop research in which families are investigated within a systemic theoretical approach, as it is the only one that can account for the complexity that characterizes these relational systems (Fruggeri, 1998; Wagner & Reiss, 1995). As Kreppner (2005) has pointed out, over fifty

years of studies on families within the systemic perspective have led to the consolidation of crucial considerations that currently form a shared theoretical background.

Let me consider the most relevant ones: a) families are characterized by a specific structure representing the framework within which the relations among the members are defined; b) the interactions among members of a family are regulated by a dynamic organization which is manifested in recurrent regulation patterns; c) any change in a relationship affects all the relationships within the family system; d) families tend to reach a state of balance, called homeostasis; e) regulation is activated by feedback or retroactions which may limit deviations from the state of balance achieved *(negative feedback)* or amplify them by introducing new elements into the system *(positive feedback)*.

In a systemic approach, therefore, the process of change is activated by a positive feedback that triggers a *transition*, since the system is required to re-organize consolidated interactive patterns. *Circularity,* rather than linearity, indeed, becomes the focal point allowing the regulation of interactions among the members of a family (Kreppner, 1996).

In line with this orientation, stimulating assumptions derive also from the field of family therapy and, more precisely, from the work of Breunlin (1988). This author introduces the effective notion of *micro-transition* to highlight the *constant negotiations* required during maturational changes (biological, psychological, social) undergone by the members of a family in the course of its history. I consider this as an excellent starting point for promoting the theoretical and methodological reflections on how to study the *processes* of change in the families. In particular, an effort shall be made in order to identify standard methodological procedures, which are coherent with a similar theoretical background.

White and Kline (2008) have recently pointed out that empirical studies tend to re-utilize instruments that identify *static dimensions* rather than processes. Starting from the assumptions of these authors, I will discuss now deeply two points, which I consider particularly critical: the level of analysis and the procedure for data collection in the field of family studies.

1.1 The controversy of the levels of analysis in the study of family relations

The level of analysis that should be considered for the study of family relations is still a controversial topic debated among different scholars. Some of them consider families as the result of the sum of individual points of view, others as interacting dyads and, a minority, as a unit of anlysis.

In an overview by Lanz and Rosnati (2002) it appears that most of the research carried out with families lie within the field that Feetham (1991) rightly identified as *family related studies*. In other words, family relationships are investigated starting from the perception that the single individual has as regards interactive situations, using both quantitative instruments (questionnaires or scales) (Cicognani, 2002), and qualitative ones (interviews) (Gilgun, Daly & Handel, 1992).

Yet, as Fischer (Fischer *et al.*, 1985) and Olson (1990) have pointed out, these data should not be considered *family data* since they involve perceptions or actions related to a single individual without any reference to the family system in its general meaning. In order to solve this critical point, some authors[1] have recently conducted research that used increasingly sophisticated psychometric models.

In this case, however, the models were validated by using questionnaires as the main instruments for data collection, and directed at identifying stable features, thus not easily applicable to the transformative processes families encounter during their development. Moreover, the level of analysis remains individual or at the most dyadic when considering the effects of bi-directionality introduced by the statistical model.

The consolidated tradition of studies conducted in the field of developmental psychology referring to ecological and contextual models has also ultimately defined the study of the family principally in terms of the sum of dyads. As Bertalanffy (1968: 98) claimed, "the meaning of that vaguely mystic expression 'the whole is more than the sum of the parts' is that the characteristics constituting a whole are not directly identified by the characteristics of its single parts". It follows that the study of dyads cannot substitute the study of the *family as a unit* (P. Minuchin, 1985). Furthermore, it shall be considered that the interpersonal dynamics between mother and son, or father and son, are often

---

[1] See Kenny & La Voie (1984) for an overview and Cook (2005)'s recent additions.

modified when a third member intervenes, as shown by several studies on the development of inter-subjectivity in the early months of life (Brody & Flor, 1996; Fivaz-Depeursinge & Corboz-Warnery, 1999).

In the introduction to their manual, Kerig & Lindhal (2001) draw attention to the fact that the literature appears to show a limited agreement concerning the definition of the family as a unit and the methods that are suitable for measuring it. In this regard, McHale (2001) provides an effective definition of the notion of "family level", indicating the processes which occur when the family interacts as a group, and which are specific, can be operationalized, and are accessible to observation. Nevertheless, one shall note that in spite of the fact that "the functioning of the whole is qualitatively different from the sum of its parts, the properties of the family as a whole derive from the characteristics of the relationships between the individuals who are a part of it" (Rutter, 1990: 333).

Gjerde (1986) points out that when one speaks of interdependence of the parts, one should refer more correctly to the *interdependence of the relationships*, since the quality of a relationship affects the other relationships and is affected by them. In fact, in the course of its history each family is the outcome of processes occurring at different levels: individual, interpersonal, group and social (Fruggeri, 1998a). Adopting a level that is for all intents and purposes a family level thus means defining methodological procedures, which permit the identification of their embrication.

The need to devise research tools that are coherent with the subject being investigated, in this case the family as a unit, is present in various approaches (Caprara *et al*., 2004; Lanz & Rosnati, 2002). Many scholars have acknowledged that, as families "relational" research subjects by their own nature, *qualitative methodologies* should be privileged (Dely, 2007; Kidd, 2002; Madill & Gough, 2008). Although qualitative methods have not been widely used yet, when applied to the study of family relations they reveal their potentialities as they favour in-depth investigations on the processual aspects of relations (Dely, 2007; Puing, Koro-Ljungberg & Echevarria-Doan, 2008). Futhermore, qualitative methodologies permit to keep coherence with a systemic framework and its last contamination with constructionism, which poses more emphasis on the analysis of interactive processes (Schwandt, 2001). In this line, when family members interact one with the other they do not only exchange information and

messages, they negotiate the meanings to be attributed to events and behavior, construct individual and collective identities, define roles and relationships, develop a specific manner of organizing reality (Pearce, 1994; Pearce & Cronen, 1980; Von Foerster, 1974).

Despite the last prolific consideration much more work need to be done. As O'Brien (2005) has recently pointed out, a lot of the research that is published in scientific journals still investigates the direct effects that individual or contextual characteristics that have on certain variables as if they were static or unchanging. Furthermore, the author continues, "the reciprocity which lies at the heart of living systems has not yet been incorporated into our methods of analysis" (p. 888). According to P. Minuchin (2002) it is in fact possible to report the persisting constant absence in the literature of studies analysing the processes of change that have included the entire family system as the focus of the analysis.

1.2 Procedures for data collection: self-report or observation?

As for the level of analysis, the selection of suitable instruments to collect data with families is controversial.

There is no doubt that self-reports are the most widely used instruments in the studies of families. Most of them are *quantitative* instruments, such as scales or questionnaires, which allow the identification of relevant characteristics for several aspects of family functioning[2] (Kosco & Warren, 2000). Other scholars closer to the sociological tradition of family studies have pointed out that *qualitative* self-reports, such as family interviews or focus group with family members, permit to identify a cross-section of family processes and patterns (Dely, 1992; Houck & Kodadeck, 2001), as well as to promote an emerging self-awareness of the multiple voices found in a family, which may be autonomous or connected to one another (Hartrick & Lindsey, 1995). Empirical studies witch use these methos are a minority and some of them still lack of coherence between the theoretical framework and the choice of the methods.

For instance, a study recently published (Harold, Colarossi & Mercier, 2007) involved 60 families with adolescents, interviewed at home. Interviews were carried out

---

[2] See Lanz & Rosnati (2002) for an overview of scales that have been validated in Italy.

individually and in association with eco-maps (Hartman, 1978) to explore the nature of the relationships each family member had with the other members as well as with the wider relational contexts. In spite of the interesting data collected by the authors on different aspects, which characterize the period of transition between childhood and adolescence, analysis were conducted considering families as a sum of individual points of view. Interestingly, the authors explicitely have declared they conducted this research in the framework of the family-life cycle model (Carter & McGoldrick, 1988) in which the consideration of the whole family as unit of analysis is one of the basic assumptions. However the methodology selected, based on what is reported by the *single* members of the family concerning various contexts, appear not to be coherent with the theoretical framework.

Some suggestions to overcome these ctitical points come from De Bruyn (2005) who claims that researcher interested in the study of developmental processes should privilege observational methods for data collection. *Observation* appears to be consistent with a systemic approach as it favours access to the "rich, variegated and specific complex of interpersonal dynamics characterizing the interactions within a family group" (McHale, Kuersten & Lauretti, 1996: 5).

Indeed, observation allows one to identify manifested behaviour leaving out of consideration the self-awareness of the subjects, thereby providing unique information different from those by any family member (Kerig & Lindhal, 2001; Taylor & Barnett, 2005). In other words, it is possible to have indications on the *processes* since what lies at the centre of our attention is the interaction *between* people, which is articulated on different levels: between the members of the family but also between the latter and the researcher (Lanz & Rosati, 2002). Several research projects proceed in this direction and have become familiar with this approach since the late Nineties. Many efforts have been made to develop complex scales for the study of family interactions on the basis of observational codes (Fivaz-Depeursinge & Corboz-Warnery, 1999; Kerig & Lindhal, 2001; Mazzoni & Tafà, 2007)

Observation allows one to identify the different relational networks that are set up as well as to focus attention on behaviors from a perspective that lies "outside" the family. On the contrary, instruments such as self-reports allow one to identify an internal

perspective, i.e. the perception the individuals have of their family relationships (Olson, 1977).

These two approaches shall not be seen as incompatible. Recent research projects involving families have made increasing use of multi-method procedures (Plano Clark *et. al.,* 2008). Interesting examples can be found in longitudinal studies on communication patterns between parents and children, as shown by Kreppner and colleagues (Kreppner, 1996; Kreppner & Ullrich, 1998). The authors have observed families during discussions on a single topic, occurring in the family home, and have also used questionnaires and daily diaries written by each member of the family. Such studies are, however, rare in the literature.

1.3 An observation based approach stemming from the systemic approach

In the consideration of the *whole family* as the unit of analysis and *observation* as a privileged method for the study for processes, a systemic-constructionist approach is the most suitable framework wich permits to keep coherence between methodological choices and theroretical framework. More precisely, we could develop an observation-based approach in which the processes through wich families change can be studied observing the interactions among members.

Scholars (Mazzoni & Tafà, 2007; White, 2004) have recently acknowledged that although originated and applied only in clinical contexts, Breunlin's *oscillation theory* (1988) is a productive starting point for the study of the processes of family changes. This author used observational methods within a systemic theoretical framework to develop the oscillation theory to explain family development.

Oscillation is defined as a series of deviations with smaller or larger amplitudes from an established equilibrium in family functioning. According to the oscillation theory, transitions occur not as step functions in which discontinuous leaps are made from one level of functioning to another, but through an oscillation between levels of functioning. "Such oscillations are an inevitable feature of all transitions. In normal families, the oscillations dampen when the higher level of functioning predominates and replaces a previous level of functioning" (Breunlin, 1988: 140).

Although *oscillation* can be considered a permanent phenomenon in families, the family life-course is marked by alternating periods of stability and change (Minuchin, 2002). New needs and demands must be integrated into the family's regular lifestyle and canon of interactions. The search for a sense of continuity and belonging through interactive practices has been defined by Reiss (1981; 1989) as *coordination.* According to Reiss (1971), "coordination in families refers to a fundamental experience of sharing the same universe of experience. Each person perceives the structure of his environment the way his family does because each has a strong sense that the environment is the same for all" (p. 17). If coordinated, families establish patterns for relating and coping that are repeated and predictable, allowing them to maintain relationships and to regulate and perpetuate many aspects of family life. In particular, the construct of *coordination* can be considered as a dimension of the family continuity along the life cycle.

The constructs of oscillation and coordination have been elaborated and used in separate research contexts. But to observe and describe the *dialectic of family change and family continuity*, both coordination and oscillation should be considered.

Thus, it is arguable that developmental changes become possible in a family system when *oscillation*, which activates a transformative process, is associated to *coordination*, that guarantees continuity and allows the family to recognize – identify itself also in its changes.

On the basis of these theoretical premises, which are the methodological implications of studing the process of change? In other words, can oscillation and coordination be useful indicators for the study of family processes of change?

2. Aims

Study 1 is aimed at devising original, innovative methods allowing for the investigation of the *processes of family change* and respecting the *whole family* as unit of analysis. On the basis of the critical issues identified in the literature, and of the lack of studies providing suitable methodological indications, I intend to define a series of techniques for collecting and analysing data, which are coherent with the theoretical systemic approach formulated.

In particular, I focus on:

a. the *setting* and the technique for data collection;

b. the way to *transcribe and prepare* the *material* for the analysis;

c. the definition and operationalization of the the constructs of *oscillation* and *coordination*.

Attention is drawn to the fact that this study has required considerable efforts since it has been necessary to integrate methodological approaches from multiple disciplines (development and social psychology, family therapy, sociology, linguistics).

3. Participants

This study involved a small group of families (N=6) with adolescent children (Table 2.1). As for parents all of them were cohabiting and/or married; as for adolescent three were female and three males (mean age=13.8).

The number of participants was intentionally low since my aim was to provide an in-depth assessment of the possible application of a model for the analysis of family interactions.

To be eligible for the study, participating families had to have at least one child in the age range of 13 to 16 and not be engaged in family therapy. Families were recruited through the high schools of a city of Emilia Romagna, in the North of Italy. Adolescents were given a letter to be delivered to their parents, which described the objectives and methods of the research project. Families that were interested to participate in the research project were asked to sign and fill out a form with their phone numbers and e-mail addresses. Those who decided to take part were then contacted by phone to set up a meeting for the interview. All family members were asked to participate with the exception of children under the age of six years. We determined that children of this young age would get easily bored during the interviews and might interrupt the conversation between the interviewer and the family members.

Table 2.1
Personal data: name, age and sex of family members

Families	Mother's age	Father's age	Adolescent's age and sex (M/F)	Siblings' age and sex (M/F)
Albertini	47	48	Chiara 15 (F)	Jacopo 13 (M)
Berti	39	38	Veronica 13 (F)	Sofia 8 (F)
Marani	50	50	Alessandro 13 (M)	Sara 18 (F)
Martelli	46	50	Tommaso 14 (M)	Roberto 19 (M) Giulia 9 (F)
Pergoni	50	47	Damiano 13 (M)	-
Ponti	45	47	Serena 15 (F)	Carolina 12 (F)

Families were invited to the laboratory of observation in the Department of Psychology, University of Parma to carry out and videotape an interview.

4. Methods as results

4.1 The definition of the methodological procedure

The main goal of this study was to devise methodological procedures that were capable of identifying the process of family change. In particular, *three procedures* have been defined and they will be presented in details in the next paragraphs.

4.1.1. Setting

The families were invited to the laboratory of observation of the university department as this structure is equipped with one-way mirrors and video-cameras (Figure 2.1 and Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.1. The laboratory of observation. View of the equipment used for the video recording behind the one-way mirror, where the members of the research team monitored the interview.

Figure 2.2. The Laboratory of Observation. View of the observation room, where the families were invited to carry out the interview.

This setting allowed the interviewer to conduct the interview in the same room as the family, while two researchers from the same team observed the interaction in another room from their positions behind the mirror. The role played by the researchers behind the mirror allowed the monitoring of the interview and the video-recording equipment being used. This setting was adapted from family therapy (Minuchin, 1974) and was found to be particularly effective since it allowed the family to be placed in a comfortable setting and to familiarize with the interviewer, who informed the participants of the presence of the researchers in the other room.

As some scholars reported (Fivaz-Depeursinge & Corboz-Warnery, 1999; Reiss, 1981), the laboratory does not condition the data collection, it is the interactive context that is set up between the researcher and the family that becomes an integral part of the research project. A total of 6 hours 30 minutes of video recording was completed.

4.1.2. Data collection

A specific instrument was identified to record the plurality of points of view and interactive patterns expressed by the family members, the *family interview*.

This technique is borrowed in part from family psychotherapy with systemic orientation (Selvini Palazzoli *et al*., 1980; Tomm, 1985). Although most of the studies that use this technique have been limited to family psychotherapy (Beitin, 2008), I believe that it presents interesting potential as far as non-clinical data collection regarding families is concerned.

As Eggenberg and Nelms (2007) have pointed out, research based on interviews to families is rare in the literature even though it presents certain advantages since it draws attention to the manner in which members interact with one another, and together, as a family, reveal problems, worries, and a shared history. Furthermore, it favors the emergence of an individual perspective while simultaneously allowing the emergence of a shared point of view, or rather, the essence of the family considered as a whole unit. Thus, recording the points of view by means of interviews with families allows one to identify the manner in which meanings are constructed and also favors their interpretation (Warren, 2002).

To sum up, the family interview in my research allows to: a) focus on the *whole family* as the object of study; b) analyze *family interactions* on content and relational levels, as family members co-construct the meaning of their interactions in the current talk (Bercelli, Leonardi & Viaro, 1999); and c) evoke a *temporal dimension*, as during interviews when all participants were asked to discuss about changes with reference to the past, the present, and the future (Penn, 1985).

Starting with these considerations, I proceeded to draw up a scheme for a family interview with a low structural level and divided into three different parts.

In the first part, called *descriptive* the interviewer looks at the adolescent and asks him or her the first question: "If you think of yourself in the last two years, do you feel you have changed, do you feel older? Can you tell us an episode that can help us to understand how you have changed?" With this question, the temporal dimension and the topic of change are activated. This part continues with the interviewer asking several questions again directed to the adolescent in order to deepen the topic of his or her change. This part lasts about ten minutes and ends with the question: "Do you think that your parents have realized that you have changed?"

This question introduces the second part of the interview, called *generative*.

This part investigates the possibility of exploring interactive aspects when other family members intervene on the opinions expressed by the adolescent in the previous phase. In fact, the interviewer asks a question which allows the mother or father to be included in the conversation: "What made you realize that your child has changed?". Then all members are invited to express and respond to the others' viewpoints. In this part of the interview, members are encouraged to interact as they usually do at home and the interviewer's role is to facilitate the mutual exchange of opinions, thereby raising a *circular* conversation among members and allowing the observation of their interactions.

As reported by the authors who were the first to identify this technique in the field of systemic therapy (Bercelli *et al.*, 1999; Selvini Palazzoli *et al.* 1980; Tomm, 1985), circularity should be seen as the ability to "trigger amongst the people involved a retro-active whirl which powerfully lights up the triadic relationships" (Selvini Palazzoli *et al.* 1980: 14). It follows that, in order to obtain information, the interviewer will "play" with the tension that has been created among the different points of view of the participants on

the basis of the family's retroactions concerning the information given, emphasizing the differences, paraphrasing the contents, and, finally, activating a reciprocal mirroring of what has been said.

The next question to be asked aims at arousing reflections on the changes experienced at a family level, through episodes or narration, and that have represented a turning point in the history of the family being interviewed. Thus, the interviewer asks each family member a question: "Has there been an event which you noticed as a change for the whole family?" In this way the participants are encouraged to explore family changes in a temporal dimension, in a comparison between the past and the present situation of the family.

The generative part requires a longer duration as compared to the previuos since each member is allowed to express his/her opinions as regards the contents that are being discussed.

The third and final part of the interview, called *projective*, concerns the projections about the future. The interviewer invites the family members to imagine themselves in a few years' time and asks: "If you think of yourself three/four years from now, how do you see yourself?"

4.1.3. Preparation of the material: the frame analysis

All the interviews were video recorded in order to allow a more precise transcription and to identify nonverbal elements implied in the interaction among participants and between the latter and the interviewer.

The interviews were transcribed on the basis of several indicators used in Conversation Analysis (Fasulo & Pontecorvo 1999; Schegloff, 1995). In particular, verbal forms as well as nonverbal ones (positions, gaze, laughing, smiling, posture) were identified[3].

As for the procedures used in analysing the interviews, we believe that the methods traditionally used in analysing textual materials in a psycho-social field (analysis of

---

[3] More details about the transcription conventions see p. 11

contents, of conversation, narrative[4]) are restrictive since we wished to identify the interwoven network of reports provided by the participants and the actions accompanying verbal communication.

The possibility of accounting for the dimensions of the interactions occurring in the process and the regulation applied by any one in dealing with the changes introduced by a family member, are more effectively identified when the interview is subdivided into *sequential frames*.

The notion of *frame* was introduced for the first time by Bateson (1955) to indicate the manner in which individuals reach a common agreement concerning the meaning of an interactive pattern. This definition was further specified by Goffman (1974) who stated that *frame* indicates the "framework of meaning" characterized by communication exchanges between the participants of an interaction, allowing one to know at any given moment what is happening and what is the most suitable conduct to apply. As several linguistic anthropologists have pointed out (Duranti, 1997), a conversation amongst family members can appear as a succession of *frames,* which alternate according to specific criteria.

Fogel and colleagues (2006) have suggested that certain indicators need to be taken into account whenever one plans to identify a *frame* that will characterize an interaction. First of all, the latter may be considered as segments of connected actions on a coherent topic, occurring in a fixed spatial - temporal context, which involves forms of co-orientation among the participants. The reference to "coherence to the topic being dealt with" is particularly important when analysing the interview data. Fogel further explains this as "sharing meanings or objectives, implicit or explicit, as regards the nature and course of the communication" (p. 49).

On the basis of these considerations, the interviews were divided into *sequential frames,* which allowed the materials to be analysed on two levels. The first level was called *intra-frame*, as each context of the answer (or reference frame) is the expression not only of *what* is being claimed but also of *how* each person reacts to the statements and actions of the others. The second level, instead, is called *inter-frame*, and refers to the passing and moving from one frame to another, adopting a sort of "meta" point of view.

---

[4] Further specifications can be found in the manual by Mantovani (2008).

This aspect allows observation of the interactive patterns that are typical in each family. Some examples will be given in order to clarify the analytical procedure.

A new frame can be initiated following an innovative contribution to what is being discussed at that moment: in this case, the indicator for change is the question formulated by the interviewer or the intervention of a family member eliciting the expression of new contents and therefore new interactive exchanges (for instance when, after analysing together with the adolescent the event of change, the interviewer turns to the sister and asks: *"and have you noticed that your brother has changed?"*).

In other cases a new *frame* can start when the family interaction takes on different forms, for instance after a dialogue between a mother and the interviewer, when the former turns to her daughter and involves her in an interactive exchange; in this case, the indicator for change does not concern a content but the analog aspects of the interaction.

To illustrate the above, the procedure for sequential analysis of the frames is reported below as applied to one of the six interviews. Each frame has been given a title and a short caption, summing up the main contents dealt with.

With regard to the interview with the Martelli family, eight frames were identified:

I	Introducing the three brothers
II	Tommaso's changes
III	The point of view of the mother
IV	Acknowledging the change in Tommaso
V	The parenting
VI	Bodily changes
VII	The changes in the family
VIII	The future of the family

Frame VII (Excerpt 2.1) is given below, showing the transcription methods used. The interactional exchanges are numbered and identified according to who is speaking: the letter I refers to the interviewer's question, the letter M refers to the mother's statements, the letter P to the father's, the letter G to the sister's and, in the other examples, the letter T refers to Tommaso and R to his brother.

251.	I	e quando vi siete accorti che la vostra famiglia è cambiata da cosa? non so partiamo da lei signora *((guardando la madre))*
252.	M	ah è cambiata! da quando (0.2) per uscire insieme ormai non è più fattibile! per esempio noi spesso andiamo a cena fuori perché ci piace perché è un momento per stare insieme poi insomma a pranzo sia io che lui ci siamo raramente poi insomma sia a me che a lui ci piace molto l'idea della famiglia del fare le cose insieme anche perché sulla base della mia esperienza ma anche della sua poi si arriva ad un punto in cui le strade si dividono e dopo quello che è fatto è fatto a me piace anche mettermi sul letto a parlare con loro (0.2) cioè io ad esempio con Roberto ho fatto un sacco di sedute con lui sul letto a parlare (0.2) perché lui ne aveva bisogno Tommaso invece è uno che ha più bisogno del contatto fisico tipo passa e mi bacia passa e mi dà un'abbracciata però (0.2) non è uno che viene lì anche se poi se ci sono delle cose viene lì e si rivolge io poi sono una che chiedo mi informo
253.	I	quindi dice che si sono ridotti i momenti per stare insieme
254.	M	sì perché alla fine la cena è un po' il momento in cui si sta tutti insieme però siamo tutti stanchi vogliamo sentire il telegiornale perché ci interessa-
255.	G	loro lo vogliono sentire
256.	M	sì perché l'alternativa sono le loro trasmissioni quelle per i giovani invece la Giulia chiede espressamente di spegnere la televisione perché a lei piace stare insieme
257.	I	quindi diceva che ci sono pochi momenti per stare insieme e come si sente?
258.	M	ma mi sento un po' persa io poi sono una che fin che può cerca di tenere tutto quando sento che qualcosa si inizia ad allentare questo è il primo momento di sbandamento poi mi so riorganizzare e quindi io insomma avrò un po' più di tempo per me e lei *((verso Giulia))* poi io ho avuto loro due stando qui a Modena da sola perché non avevo nessuno pur continuando a mantenere il mio lavoro per cui la fatica e l'investimento che ci ho messo è tanto credo d'altra parte che è stata una mia scelta questa di non avere baby-sitter o altro ma il minimo indispensabile perché insomma li ho voluti e me li sono cresciuti ecco e mi rendo conto adesso che effettivamente ognuno-
259.	I	secondo lei rispetto a questa sensazione che ha nel vedere quello che accade come si sentono i suoi figli?
260.	M	ma io credo che (0.2) poi io scherzo anche molto cioè io chiedo ma nello stesso tempo do anche molto per esempio alle riunioni di scuola sono sempre andata io per ragioni di tempo per cui quando tornavo dicevo a lui tu hai sicuramente l'impressione di esserci stato perché racconto e dico quello ha detto questo quest'altro
261.	P	confermo=
262.	M	=e lui dice con loro che chiedono come è andata tutto bene e basta e io dico racconto tutto nei dettagli e [poi lui
263.	P	[dare dei messaggi semplici chiari! *((a bassa voce e in tono scherzoso))* *((tutti ridono))*
264.	M	comunque io credo che a loro così a caldo può dare fastidio la mia intromissione o il mio essere apprensiva infatti loro mi dicono tu gufi perché io dico sono sempre lì a dire guardate che può succedere che (0.2) però credo che poi alla fine capiscano che è affetto non un volermi intromettere
265.	I	e secondo lei suo marito come vede questa situazione?
266.	M	nel senso questa situazione che sono più ridotti i momenti dello stare assieme? *((l'intervistatore annuisce))* ma lui li vive diversamente rispetto a me cioè io metto al primo posto lo stare con loro anche per lui ma se non è possibile fa lo stesso invece io se non è possibile sto male=
267.	P	=e fa in modo che sia possibile
268.	I	invece il suo punto di vista su questo? sente che la sua famiglia sia cambiata in che cosa?
269.	P	ma io non ho la capacità di vedere questi cambiamenti perché è stata una continua evoluzione cioè quello che noi facevamo quando loro erano piccoli rispetto a quello che noi facciamo adesso è una continua trasformazione e adattamento loro e nostro proprio nel contesto che stava cambiando
270.	I	e che cosa facevate adesso che non facevate prima?
271.	P	ma (0.3) i momenti in cui si stava tutti assieme erano maggiori adesso si fa più fatica a stare tutti e cinque insieme questa eventualità si verifica sempre alla sera ma con le cose che diceva lei prima il sabato e la domenica loro non ci sono mai prima c'erano sempre per cui(0.2)è vero che io avevo un lavoro diverso spesso facevo le notti il sabato e la domenica e non c'era questo stacco io nella mia organizzazione lavorativa non erano previsti festivi e prefestivi però quando capitava che il week-end era libero si faceva tutte le cose insieme si usciva si andava via ci si organizzava adesso che io il sabato e la domenica sono sempre a casa (0.2) allora Tommaso e Roberto naturalmente

```
            fanno le loro cose la Giulia qualche volta anche lei ha le sue amiche che
            vengono a casa quindi il più delle volte siamo in tre e così anche il sabato
            sera anche in queste sere d'estate a parte Roberto che adesso deve studiare ma
            di solito escono hanno le loro cose diciamo che la famiglia rispetto a prima è
            che prima eravamo in cinque adesso siamo in tre
 272.  I    e lei come si sente?
 273.  P    ma un po' mi dispiace (0.3) però le occasioni in cui si può parlare sono tante
            si inizia a parlare da quello che ha detto l'amico al conoscente alla radio
            quando ci siamo si può parlare però mi manca molto il poter parlare io sono
            assente spesso da casa per le ragioni che abbiamo detto prima e quando ci sono
            ci si riorganizza
```

Excerpt 2.1 - Frame VII: The changes in the family

```
 251.  I    and when did you realize that your family was changing? How did it happen?
            Let's start from you ((looking at the mother))
 252.  M    ah it has changed indeed! We can no longer go out together (0.2). For example,
            we often go out for dinner together because we like going out for dinner and
            because it is a way to spend time together as we are seldom at home for lunch
            time we both love our family and love to do things together, this may come from
            my personal experience but also from my husband's. Then one comes to the point
            where paths divide and what is done is done. I also like to sit on the bed and
            talk with them (0.2) with Roberto for example I had many sessions sitting on his
            bed and talking (0.2) because he needed it while Tommaso is more physical, he
            passes and kisses me or holds me but (0.2) he doesn't come to talk. Even if when
            there is something he comes to me, then it's me, I ask and want to be informed.
 253.  I    so you are saying that there are less occasions to stay together
 254.  M    yes because dinner is the moment in which we are all together but we are also
            all tired and want to listen to the news because we are interested in it.
 255.  G    they want to listen [to the news]
 256.  M    yes as an alternative there are their TV programs, for young people, but Giulia
            expressly asks to switch the television off because she likes being together
 257.  I    so you were saying you have few moments to stay together, and how do you feel?
 258.  M    I feel a little lost also because I try to keep everything, when I feel that
            something begins to loosen this is the first moment of yielding then I manage to
            reorganize and I know I will have more time for her ((towards Giulia)) I had
            them staying here in Modena alone because I had no one keeping my job with great
            effort and investment by my side anyway it was my choice not to have baby
            sitters or other facilities but the minimum. I wanted them and I grew them up,
            even if now I realise that each of us
 259.  I    how do you think you children feel towards your way of seeing things?
 260.  M    I think that (0.2) I also play a lot I mean I demand but I also give a lot for
            example I've always attended school meeting because I have more time but when I
            am back I always tell him you will think you were present because I tell you
            what this and that said
 261.  P    I confirm
 262.  M    and then if they ask how it was he says ok and that's all while I explain
            everything in details [and then he
 263.  P    [give clear and simple messages! ((speaking in a lower and funny tone))
            ((everybody laughing))
 264.  M    anyway I think at first they can be disturbed from my interference and anxiety
            that's why they tell me I bring bad luck because I often say be careful because
            it may happen that (0.2) but I think in the end they understand it's love and
            I'm not trying to interfere
 265.  I    how do you think you husband sees this situation?
 266.  M    you mean the fact that we have less time to stay together? ((the interviewer
            nods)) well he lives things in a different way I mean I put at first place being
            with them for him as well but if it is not possible he does not mind while if it
            is not possible I suffer=
 267.  P    =so made it possible
 268.  I    your point of view about that? Do you feel your family has changed? In which
            ways?
 269.  P    well I am not able to be aware of all these changes because it has always been
            an evolution I mean what we did when they were younger respect to what we do now
            is our and their transformation and evolution towards an environment which is
            changing
 270.  I    and what do you do now that you did not do before?
 271.  P    well (0.3) we had more occasions to stay together now it's more difficult to be
```

```
          all five together and this occasion always occurs  in the evening but with the
          things she was saying before on Saturdays and Sundays they are never at home
          before they were always here (0.2) so it's true that before I had another job
          and I was always absent at night and on Saturdays and Sundays and there was this
          distance but in my job there were no holidays but when it happened that I had a
          free week end we always did things together we went out, we organized now that I
          am always home on Saturdays and Sundays (0.2) then Tommaso and Roberto of course
          do their things and Giulia sometimes has her friends coming to visit her so most
          of times we are three and also on Saturday night and also during these summer
          evenings except for Roberto who now has to study but usually they go out and
          have their own thing. Let's say that while before we were five in the family now
          we are three
272.  I   and how do you feel?
273.  P   I am quite upset (0.3) but we have many occasions to talk we begin to talk
          about what a friend or a friend's friend or the radio said when we are all in we
          can talk but a miss a lot the possibility to talk I am often away from home for
          the reason I said before but when I am here we reorganize
```

The *frame* starts with the interviewer asking Tommaso's mother a question about changes observed in the family over the past few years. Her answer describes change mainly in the fact that it is difficult for all of them "to be together", especially at meal times. This used to be a regular habit when the children were younger. This aspect is also confirmed by the father a short time later.

In the subsequent passage, it is possible to observe the shift between one frame to the other (Excerpt 2.2).

In the V Frame after a long discussion between the father and the mother on their role as parents, the father concludes the conversation by going back to a topic that had previously been discussed (186). This intervention starts a new form of interaction which will gradually involve the whole family on another topic, and producing a new frame labelled "Bodily changes" (Frame VI).

The point in which the father moves to the next frame is highlighted in grey.

Excerpt 2.2 - *Inter-frames* passage from V Frame (The parenting) and VI Frame (Bodily changes)

[…]   […]

185. T   da chi ho preso?   185. T   from whom did I take it?
186. P   non lo so (0.2) questa capacità   186. P   I don't know (0.2) this way he
          di venirti a dire delle cose in   has to ask you things when it is
          cui non è il caso per chiederti   not the right moment (0.2) a
          (0.2) una firma! per delle cose   signature! For important things
          importanti ma spesso e   but more often for things more
          volentieri per delle cose più   (0.3) in that moment you have to
          (0.3) in quel momento deve   do that! And in that moment it
          essere fatta! e può in quel   can even be that the home is
          momento crollare la casa e se io   falling down and I've to hold
          fossi impegnato a tenere su lo   the door that he asks you
          stipite della porta che lui ti   something (0.3)
          chiede (0.3)

                                               186. P   but I wanted to go back for a
186. P   ma io volevo tornare un attimo   while on the changes of
          indietro sui cambiamenti   adolescence they went through
          dell'adolescenza i cambiamenti   changes in a very quiet way
          che hanno attraversato in modo   especially the bodily changes as
          tranquillo sono i cambiamenti   they didn't have any problems
          corporei su cui sono passati
          veramente lisci   […]

[…]

In the six interviews each member of the team proceeded individually to subdivide the interviews into frames, using the criteria of analysis that have been described.

At the end of the analysis, the judges justified the frame sequences they identified and discussed it together for several minutes. Inter-raters reliability was calculated assigning different scores according to the level of agreement they reached after the discussion. 4 scores were assigned when all the judges agreed about the frame division, 3 scores when three of them agreed, 2 when the agreement was only two of them agreed, and 1 when none agreed. In order to calculate the total level of agreement we added up these rates and we used a formula to obtain a value comprised between 0 and 1. The inter-rater level of agreement for the sequential frame division was very high (0.90).

4.2 Operationalization of the constructs: coordination and oscillation

One of the main aims of this study was to define how coordination and oscillation could be observed in course of families' interactions.

4.2.1. Coordination

The analysis of coordination is carried out by taking two levels into consideration: on the one hand, attention is focused on what a family members say concerning change (*contents* level), on the other, is observed how the whole family reacts toward what s/he is saying, i.e. whether the other members of the family listens or interrupt the talk without being addressed, or if a member remains on the outskirts in spite of being expicitely invited to express an opinion (*analog* level).

Families can be coordinated when they show *synchrony* both at the content and analog level or not coordinated when different *fractures* interrupt this synchrony. To more explicit,

Synchrony in coordination is observed when:

    a. none of the family members intervenes in the discourse and all the family members keep a peripheral position;

    b. one or more family members intervene following a request.

Fractures in coordination, on the contary, are observed when:

    a. family members remain in a peripheral position disregarding the adolescent's explicit requests for intervention;

    b. one or more family members intervene without the adolescent's explicit request.

In order to give a clear description of synchrony and fractures in coordination among family members I report some excerpts referred to what can be observed in the first part of the interview[5], when the setting defined by the interviewer is a sort of dialogue with the adolescent, having the other family members as "audience".

The interviewer addresses the adolescent by saying "I will start with you", thus offering two kinds of information: 1) she informs the adoslcent that s/he is asked to express thoughts about change, and 2) she informs the whole family that later in the interview everybody will be invited to speak. At a nonverbal level, the interviewer looks at the adolescent and, if distracted by other family members, she keeps her attention on the adolescent.

---

[5] Syncnrony and fractures are showed here with reference to the first part of the interview for reason of clarity, however they can be observed throughout the interview.

The families' interactions varied greatly during this part of the interview. In several families, all participants respected the setting. While the adolescent was answering the various questions, parents and siblings listened, smiled, nodded and did not interrupt. In this sense, family members acknowledged that the adolescent is considered capable of responding and therefore "mature enough" to handle his or her changes. The same can be said if one member intervenes after an explicit request from the adolescent. This interaction was considered an indicator of *synchrony* in coordination.

In the Excerpt 2.3 for instance, it is clearly observable how all the family members remained in a peripheral position while the adolescent answered the questions about her change.

Excerpt 2.3 – Albertini family. C (adolescent), I (interviewer)
     Frame I: Chiara's changes

[…]			[…]		
21.	I	se tu pensi a questi ultimi due anni (…) ti senti in qualche modo diventata più grande?	21.	I	if you think at the last two years (…) do you feel changed?
22.	C	[sì certo	22.	C	[yes of course
23.	I	[cresciuta comunque	23.	I	[grown up though
24.	C	sì perché comunque dalle medie al liceo questi cinque anni ti cambiano molto anche come mentalità non solo come aspetto	24.	C	yes because in the passage from the middle to the high school you change a lot not only in your look but also the way you think
25.	I	ecco mi puoi fare un po' di esempi (…)	25.	I	right can you give me some examples (…)
26.	C	beh comunque più indipendente (0.2) [anche	26.	C	well more independent though (0.2) [also
27.	I	[cosa significa più indipendente?	27.	I	[what do you mean by more independent?
28.	C	nel senso che prima non mi azzardavo a fare cose che invece adesso faccio normalmente	28.	C	I mean before I dind't attempt to do things that I do now
29.	I	del tipo? se si possono dire (0.2)	29.	I	like? If you can tell that (0.2)
30.	C	ero più timorosa nell'uscire fuori da sola (…)	30.	C	I was more scared of going out alone (…)
31.	I	a uscire in che senso (…) a fare un giro in centro?	31.	I	to go out in which sense (…) to hang out in the city center?
32.	C	sì=sì va beh che comunque è cambiato anche molto (0.2) l'ambiente dell'amicizia perché comunque non mi trovavo molto bene alle medie e adesso invece mi sono perfettamente integrata	32.	C	yes=yes I mean it have also changed a lot (0.2) the environment of friendship because at the middles school I was not doing very well but now I'm totally integrated
[…]			[…]		

The above is only a short excerpt of the dialogue between the adolescent Chiara and the interviewer, which lasts for a total of 51 verbal exchanges without interventions by

the family members, and in which the adolescent deals with various issues without turning to the parents or inviting a contribution form their part.

In other families we can instead observe fractures in coordination given by the fact that the parents "break" this setting, interrupting, overlapping or substituting their child in the answer. Let us consider this short extract taken from the Martelli family.

Excerpt 2.4 - Martelli family. M (mother), P (father), T (adolescent) I (Interviewer)
 Frame II: Tommaso's changes

[…]			[…]		
24.	I	se pensi all'ultimo anno o due anni fa ti sei sentito cambiato (…)	24.	I	if you think of yourself in the last year or two do you feel different do you feel changed
25.	T	(0.2) sì nella scuola dal non far niente al dovere iniziare a studiare!	25.	T	(0.2) oh yes in school now I'am able to study much more!
26.	P	e poi sei molto cambiato! non solo perché sei passato dalla scuola media alle superiori [ma anche	26.	P	and then you have changed a lot! not only because you started high school [but also-
27.	I	[ci sono dei momenti o degli episodi o dei momenti che ti hanno fatto pensare che eri cambiato? ((a Tommaso))	27.	I	[can you think of some episodes that let you realize yes I have changed ((looking at Tommaso))
28.	T	mmm (0.2) un po' di tempo fa ho incontrato una mia amica delle elementari che mi ha detto che ero molto cambiato	28.	T	(0.9) mmm some time ago I met a friend of mine and she told me that I have changed
29.	I	in che cosa cos'era successo?	29.	I	which kind of change?
30.	T	dai capelli! ((ridono tutti)) e poi (0.3)non so	30.	T	my hair ((everybody laughs))
31.	P	secondo me ti ha fatto piacere=	31.	P	I think you were happy for that
[…]			[…]		

When the interviewer asks the adolescent about change (24), Tommaso formulates his initial reply (25), which is followed at once by an unsolicited comment by his father, who substitutes to his son to assert the importance of the change (26). This brief exchange draws attention to the initial manifestation of a fracture in coordination, which is particularly interesting since it is expressed in the discrepancy between the meaning of the utterance (the father acknowledges his son's change) and the effect that occurred (the son was not allowed to describe the change). The interviewer immediately directs the exchange at Tommaso again (27), who identifies the awareness of his change with an image a classmate transmitted to him (28), and once again the father appears to encourage him (31) while acting as if his son were not an autonomous interlocutor.

The Berti family also presents various *fractures* produced by the mother, who intervenes by replacing Veronica in the interaction with the interviewer (5, 7, 11) as shown in the excerpt below (Excerpt 2.5).

Excerpt 2.5 – Berti Family. M (mother), P (father), V (adolescent), I (interviewer)
   Frame I: Veronica's changes

```
[…]                                        […]
1.   I   allora Veronica io parto da te    1.   I   well Veronica I start from you
         ((Veronica prende il braccio del            ((Veronica holds her father's
         papà lui le sussurra di prestare            harm and he whisper her to keep
         attenzione alla domanda)) volevo            the attention on the question))
         chiederti negli ultimi due anni             I'd like to ask you do you feel
         ti senti più grande ti senti                you have changed in the last
         cambiata (…)?                               two years(…)?
2.   V   beh sì un po' di più sì           2.   V   well a bit yes
3.   I   che cosa? in che cosa ti senti    3.   I   what? In what do you feel the
         cambiata?                                   changes?
4.   V   (0.3) boh? vado più d'accordo con 4.   V   (0.3) uhm? I go along better
         lei ((indica la sorella)) litigo            with her((points at her
         di meno in casa ((sorride e il              sister)) I fight less with
         papà dice qualcosa a bassa voce))           ((she laughs and his father
         poi (0.2) va beh anche con i miei           says somoething in a low
         compagni di classe comunque sono            voice)) then (0.2) and also
         cioè andiamo più d'accordo anche            with my clssmates we go along
         tra di noi e -                              better and-
5.   M   sì ti senti più donna rispetto a  5.   M   yes you feel more like a woman
         prima Veronica                              Veronica
6.   V   boh? penso di sì                  6.   V   uhm? I think so
7.   M   e le tue idee sono diverse        7.   M   and your thoghs are different
         rispetto a quelle della prima               than the ones when you were at
         media                                       the middle school
8.   V   beh comincio a capire un po' di   8.   V   well I start understanding much
         più le cose                                 more issues
9.   M   ma a parte questo anche da un     9.   M   bu more than that it is more
         punto di vista sentimentale di di           from a romantic point of view
         (0.2) diciamo che incominciano i            (0.2) let's say that boyfriends
         primi moscerini a gironzolare               start to hang around ((Veronica
         ((Veronica si avvicina sempre di            gets closer to her father ans
         più al padre e sembra un po' in             she looks embarassed)) these
         imbarazzo)) queste cose                     stuff
10.  I   senti ((guardando Veronica)) mi   10.  I   look ((Looking at Veronica))
         piacerebbe adesso che tu pensassi           I'd like to know if you can
         a proprio ad un episodio (…)                recall an episode (…)
11.  M   dai Veronica sii sincera non devi 11.  M   come on Veronica you must be
         vergognarti di nessuno                      honest you must not be ashamed
[…]                                        […]
```

In particular, at the beginning the mother interrupts the adolescent preventing her to complete the expression of her point of view (4-5). At the end of the extract the interviewer addresses directly towards Veronica, but again it is the mother who replies instead of her as to push her daughter toward an answer.

Furthermore, another way in which *fractures* can be displayed is observable when family members do not accept the explicit request to participate in the talk. For instance,

in the Pergoni family at first the father and then the mother do not to respond to the request for intervention that their son explicitly directs to them (Excerpt 2.6).

Excerpt 2.6 – Pergoni family. M (mother), P (father), D (adolescent), I (interviewer)
    Frame I: Damiano's changes

```
[…]                                  […]

3.  I volevo sapere se negli ultimi tempi   3.  I I'd like to know if you feel you are
       ci sono stati dei momenti in cui hai        changing in some moments lately (…)
       sentito che tu stavi cambiando (…)   4.  D (0.5) ((looking at his father and
4.  D (0.5) ((guardanso il padre e anche         the interviewer look at the fater
       l'intervistatrice guarda il padre))       too))
5.  P non guardare mica me ((sorride))      5.  P don't look at me ((smiles))
6.  I dopo ci arriviamo ma intanto ci       6.  I later I go to him but now I'm
       interessa il tuo parere (…)               interested in your opinion (…)
7.  D (0.5) non lo so (0.5)                  7.  D (0.5) I don't know (0.5)
8.  I più adulto? hai detto prima oh         8.  I adult? Before you said well now I do
       adesso faccio proprio cose diverse         very different things(…)
       (…)                                  9.  D in which field?
9.  D in quale ambito?                       10. I in everyone
10. I in qualsiasi ambito                    11. D (0.5) I don't know ((looks at the
11. D (0.5) non lo so ((volge gli occhi al       ceiling)) I don't know uhm?
       cielo)) non saprei boh?

[…]                                  […]

14. I e i tuoi genitori vedono il tuo        14. I and your parents how do you think
       cambiamento la tua crescita?               your parents see your growth?
15. D boh? non lo so ((guardando             15. D uhm? I don't know ((looking
       alternativamente padre e madre))           alternatively the mother and the
16. I non lo sai allora vuoi che sento da         father))
       loro poi sento cosa pensi tu di      16. I you don't know then would you like I
       quello che pensano loro                    ask your parents and then I ask what
17. D sì=sì                                        do you think?
                                             17. D yes=yes

[…]                                  […]
```

In this excerpt Damiano breaks the definition of the given situation (dialogue with the interviewer) by asking for help to his father nonverbally (4), the father does not grant his request (5) Later on, the adolescent makes a second attempt to involve his parents in the talk, but once more they denies (15). The frame ends with the interviewer asking the son's permission to ask his parents the same question, as to repair to his parents' failure to respond (16). The three family members keep this form of interacting one with the other throughout the first *frame,* which lasts for a total of 17 exchanges.

4.2.2 Oscillation

Oscillations were identified focusing on *what* family members are saying in a specific frame (*intra-frame level*) or in different frames (*inter-frame level*). Two forms of oscillations were observed: *individual* and *family*.

Individual oscillations can be observed when a single member of the family acknowledges, in a sort of internal dialogue that is then shared publicly, the alternation of new and old behavioural modalities in him/herself and in the others. The expression of this alternation remains a personal reflection: when it occurs, the family member refers to innovative aspects which concern him/herself or the family members and at the same time recalls the habits involved in old, consolidated behavioural modalities. Individual oscillations can be identified within the same *frame* and can be expressed by each member of the family.

Excerpt 2.7 shows a clear example of individual oscillations expressed by the mother of the Berti family. This extract refers to the fourth frame of the interview in which Veronica's mother intervenes regarding the change in her daughter. In the mother's opinion, Veronica has changed in different ways, she has become more responsible as far as her school life is concerned, and she also requests more privacy.

Excerpt 2.7 – Berti family. M (mother), V (adolescent)
Frame IV: The mother's point of view

[…]

70. M [allora se tu mi dici che cerchi di camminare veramente con la testa sulle spalle che cerchi di non fidarti di quello che ti dicono gli altri allora è il momento in cui effettivamente non entro nella tua privacy perché è giusto rispettare la sua privacy ma io a volte mi sento veramente un qualcosa dentro che necessito di dovermi intromettere e magari sbaglio però è una cosa che=che mi sembra che sia giusta perché io do fiducia al cento per cento ed è vero Veronica *((guardando la figlia))* perché per qualsiasi cosa ti do veramente tanto [ma ci sono dei momenti

71. V [sì però dopo fai anche mille domande

72. M [ma ci sono dei momenti in cui mi

[…]

70. M [then I you thell me that you try to be responsible and that you don't trust what the others tell you then I actually don't violate your privacy because it is right to respect her privacy but sometimes I feel something and I feel I have to intrude in her privacy and maybe I'm going wrong but it is something that=that I think it is right to do that because I trust you hundred per cent it's true Veronica *((looking at her daughter))* because I give you a lot [but in some occasions

71. V [yes but then you ask many questions

72. M [but I feel in some occasions I

sento anche in dovere di intervenire e di sapere delle cose	have to intervene and I've to know some things
[…]	[…]

In the passage at point 70, the mother, as in a monologue, clearly depicts her contrasting feelings. On the one hand she expresses acknowledgement of the need to respect Veronica's wish for privacy, on the other she keeps a check on and intervene in her daughter's life.

Also in the Martelli family the mother appears to oscillate between two polarities directed at anxiety/tranquillity (Excerpt 2.8).

Excerpt 2.8 – Martelli family. M (mother)
        Frame IV: The parenting

[…]	[…]
150. M ma io dico di no subito poi (0.2) io faccio i conti con la mia esperienza dell'essere stata giovane nonostante loro pensino che questo sia stato un po' impossibile (0.2) e ripercorro un po' le dinamiche che sono state anche con i miei genitori mi rendo conto che poi non posso condizionarli con le mie paure più di tanto ovvio che io appena posso tendo a mantenere queste costrizioni anche se poi arriva un punto in cui è giusto che facciano esperienza (0.2) anche se come mamma mi sento molto agitata perché è ovvio che come mamma la mia paura è che possa succedere qualcosa di brutto si possano fare male ecco questa sarebbe un'idea che a me devasterebbe abbastanza ecco pur sapendo che non posso che non vedo soprattutto e questa è una cosa che non posso sopportare	150. M but at the beginning I say something but later (0.2) I consider my the experiences I hade when I was younger even they think it was impossible (0.2) and I think of the dynamics with my parents and then I realize I can't limit them because of my concerns and obviously I tend to keep these constraints even though it is right they have their experiences (0.2) even though as a mother I feel very anxious because obviously as a mother I'm afraid that something bad might happen this is an idea unbearable for me even though I can't be there and overall I can't see this is something I can't stand
[…]	[…]
156. M (…) prima facevo anche delle notti e allora quando Roberto mi chiedeva di uscire io dicevo no Roberto ti prego non c'è tuo padre! Perché io pensavo che (0.3) se succede qualcosa come faccio! adesso io mi sento più tranquilla io adesso io lo so anche perché io sono una che blocco anche me stessa per le mie paure e anche perché faccio delle violenza a me stessa anche perché	156. M (…) before at night when Roberto asked me to go out I used to tell him please your father is not here! Because I thought that (0.3) if it'd happened something! Now I feel more quiet because I'm one that get stuck for my concerns and I violate my own and also because at a certain age (0.2) I mean one can do

<div style="display:flex;">
<div>

```
arrivata ad una certa età uno (0.2)
può fare quello che vuole allora
volutamente non vorrei condizionare
loro a fare delle scelte allora il
suo giudizio [del marito] la sua
decisione mi fa mantenere più o
meno sedata anche se l'ansia poi mi
rimane è poi un sapere che qualcuno
mi dice stai sbagliando anche se lo
so però sentirmelo dire è diverso
mi aiuta
```
[…]

</div>
<div>

```
whatever he wants and then I
don't want to influence them
in doing some choiches then
his judgements [of her
husband] his decisions make
me feel more or less quiet
even though the anxiety is
still there but to have
someone who tells me that I'm
doing wrong even though I
know that it helps me
```
[…]

</div>
</div>

On the one hand, the mother, who has two other children besides Tommaso, defines herself an "anxious mother", who does not accept the fact that her children go out at night with their friends because she worries they might be involved in accidents, even though she remembers her own needs when she was an adolescent. Her worries lead her to adopt restrictive measures, even though she acknowledges that the children need to have different experiences (150). Soon afterwards she states that she feels reassured by her husband who, unlike her, is less worried. However, at the end of the exchange she once again points out that her anxiety is hard to appease and that it does not help to have someone with her to calm her down.

In these two excerpts I illustrated (Excerpts 2.7 and 2.8) parents oscillate about their own feelings and opinions, while in other cases we observed oscillations expressed about the other family members.

In the Pergoni family (Excerpt 2.9), the father voices his opinion on Damiano's change.

Excerpt 2.9 – Pergoni family. P (father), I (interviewer)
        Frame V: The changes in the adolescent's relationship

<div style="display:flex;">
<div>

[…]

110. P mah il desiderio di trascorrere
        tempo con gli altri con gli
        amici è forte
111. I e lei lo vede come più forte? cioè
        ci sono dei bambini che sono
        sempre stati socievoli
112. P mah lui fin da piccolo è sempre
        stato molto socievole non ha mai
        avuto problemi a stare fuori ora
        aumenta il desiderio di stare
        con i suoi amici ma è un
        percorso naturale non vedo degli

</div>
<div>

[…]

110. P but the desire to spend tome with
        friends is important
111. I and do you see that is getting
        more relevant? I mean there are
        children who are usually very
        friendly
112. P well hes has always been very
        friendly he never had any
        problemsto go out and his desire
        to hang out with firnds has
        increased it is a natural path I
        don't see interruptions (…)

</div>
</div>

```
                strappi (…)
113.  P  sì e anche il punto secondo me      113.  P  yes and also the main issue is
         fondamentale è quello che fa                  that he is not able to be
         fatica ad essere indipendente da              independent from us and in the
         noi anche nella gestione delle                management of some issues that
         piccole che però lo aiutano a                 also don't help himalso with
         stare fuori anche con gli amici               friends
114.  I  mi può fare un esempio su          114.  I  can you give me an example?
         questo?                            115.  P  well I don't know but in two
115.  P  mah non so fra due giorni deve               days I is going to a school trip
         andare in gita si dimentica i                 and he forgets the money then he
         soldi si dimentica le chiavi per              forgets the keys to enter at
         entrare in casa e ha bisogno di               home he forgets the snack in his
         noi si dimentica la merenda                   backpack and he eats that after
         nello zaino la mangia dopo due                two days and he doesn't bring
         giorni non si porta le scarpe                 the right shoes
         adatte
[…]                                         […]
```

In the excerpt above, the father refers to his son's requests to go out more often with his friends. Damiano has given proof of his sociable nature since he was a child (112). In this sense, it would appear that the father wishes to underline his son's autonomy as regards his relationship with others. Yet, a short while afterwards (113-115), he refers an episode in which his son is described as extremely dependent on his parents and barely able to manage autonomously even when out with friends.

In the Marani family it is the mother who expresses an oscillation concerning her eldest daurgther's changes both on an organizational level and as far as her responsibility is concerned (Excerpt 2.10).

Excerpt 2.10 – Marani family. M (mother), P (father), A (adolescent), S (sister), I (interviewer)
Frame X: The parents' concerns

```
[…]                                         […]
307.  P  sono preoccupato quando lei avrà  307.  P  I'm concerned for when she will
         la patente non perché io sono                have the driving licencense not
         apprensivo ma perchè conosco                 because I'm worried but because
         lei!                                         I know her!
308.  M  no perché lei è veramente-        308.  M  no because she is really-
309.  A  maldestra!                        309.  A  distracted !
310.  M  ha tante qualità però             310.  M  she has many positive aspects
311.  I  come può essere maldestra se               but
         suona il violino! ((ridendo))     311.  I  how it comes she is distracted
312.  S  sì=sì siamo a posto! (…)                   if she palys the violin!
313.  M  lei probabilmente avendole rotto          ((laughing))
         molto le scatole sul fumo lei     312.  S  yes=yes we are all set! (…)
         che è una ragazza bravina in      313.  M  she probably the fact that I
         questo cerca di smaltire la                 insisted a lot for smoking she
         tensione dello studio con                   is a nice girl and in this she
         Brahams ma non c'è verso che lei            tries to get relaxed after she
```

		riesca e mettere il bricco nel cabaret lo mette sulla tavola dove ci sono residui zuccherosi sparsi e cose che si spalmano sul cellulare sulle fotocopie macchie viola			studies with Brahams but she is not able to put a cup on a cabaret she put it on the table where the sugar is all around and it melt on the cell phone and on her paper you see purple spots
314.	I	bisogna pur avere qualche trasgressione comunque! *((ridendo))*	*314.*	I	but you need some transgression! *((laughing))*
315.	M	no ma infatti questo va benissimo l'unica cosa che mi fa un po' tremare il traffico che conosciamo un po' (0.2) (…) se deve prendere l'aereo quando deve tornare non ci sono problemi (0.2)(…)la mia preoccupazione in questi anni era sull'influenza profonda che magari persone potevano avere su di lei	315.	M	no but this is ok the only think that makes me worried is the traffic jam we know (0.2) (…) but if she has to take the plane no problem (0.2) (…)my concerns in the last years was about the deep influence that some people might have had on her
[…]			[…]		

In this excerpt in the wake of the father's statement (307) the mother refers to the daughter, Sara, and underlines her maturity which can be measured by the absence of transgressions (314). then a short time afterwards she claims that Sara is very clumsy, almost childish, both in the management of their home and when driving the car.

The research team and I observed also oscillations that went beyond the expression of individual points of view as they involved more than one family member. We called this form of oscillation, family oscillations.

Family oscillations display through the *alternation* of different opinions and evaluations in the same frame or among them. Ler us consider some examples in which this alternation is highlithed in grey.

In the Martelli family, family oscillations displays between two frames: the one relating to Tommaso's changes and that focusing the mother's point of view.

In the excerpt below (Excerpt 2.11), it is possible to note how mother and father alternate in the expression of different points of view, therey generating a family oscillation. The children participate and intervene but without re-launching the topics.

Excerpt 2.11 – Martelli family. M (mother), P (father), T (adolescent), G (sister), I
(interviewer) Frame II: Tommaso's changes - Frame III: The mother's point of
view

Frame II

[…]

41. P   posso dire una cosa? Tommaso secondo me ha fatto un grande cambiamento positivo perché alle scuole superiori all'inizio le ha prese un po' sotto gamba [così
42. T   [e (0.2) va be' ero abituato
43. P   [sì insomma ha preso un po' sotto gamba l'attività scolastica all'inizio dell'anno poi secondo me è stato capace di rimboccarsi le maniche (0.2) di mettersi con maggiore impegno (…)
44. M   però non c'è stato solo quello

[…]

Frame III

[…]

60. M   io (0.2) devo dire la verità il cambiamento che ho notato in Tommaso è che è un pochino più tranquillo nel senso che rispetto a quello che diceva lui *((guardando il marito))* rispetto all'inizio della scuola non credo che Tommaso l'avesse preso sotto gamba (…)

[…]

83. P   però scusami *((guardando la moglie))* si sa molto bene organizzarsi cioè Tommaso è uno che ha le idee chiare quando vuole qualche cosa sa mettere bene le idee in fila per poterle realizzare
84. M   sì fin troppo! (…)

[…]

88. I   il papà non mi sembra molto d'accordo
89. M   lui non c'è mai in casa per quello! *((ridendo))*
90. P   ma (0.2) adesso!
91. M   no ma Tommaso per esempio è bravissimo per esempio è uno che prende la porta di casa (0.2) cioè adesso ha smesso ma prima anni fa era appassionato di erboristeria faceva tutti gli infusi le cose (0.2) un giorno prende esce dalla porta senza dire niente allora io gli chiedo ma scusa dove vai? allora lui dice vado al Conad perché mi serve quella spezie per fare (0.2) beh ma dico chiedi no
92. T   beh ma io l'avevo chiesto!
93. G   no tu non chiedi mai!
94. P   è uno che si sa organizzare quando

[…]

41. P   can I say something? In my opinion Tommaso has changed a lot and in a positive way as at the beginning he didn't care a lot for the high school [so
42. T   [and (0.2) ok but I used to
43. P   [I mean he didn't care a lot about school at the beginning of the year but in my opinion I was then able to work (0.2) and work harder (…)
44. M   but it wasn't only that

[…]

[…]

60. M   I (0.2) have to say that I see that Tommaso is a bit more quiet differently from what he said *((looking at her husband))* I don't think he didn't care about school at the beginning (…)

[…]

83. P   but I'm sorry *((looking at her wife))* he is very good in organizing he is one that if he wants to do something he knows how to do
84. M   yes event too much! (…)

[…]

88. I   dad doesn't agree
89. M   he is never at
      a. home! *((laughing))*
90. P   but (0.2) come on!
91. M   no but Tommaso for example he is very good (0.2) he used to be very keen on herbs stuff and he used to make different tees and one day he goes out without saying anything and then I asked him sorry were are you going? Then he told me I go to the store because I need a spice to do (0.2) well I mean ask me!
92. T   well but I asked you!
93. G   no you never ask!
94. P   he is a guy who knows how to get organized when he wants

vuole una cosa sa cosa deve fare per metterle in fila per averla	something he knows how to plan things to obtain them

From the beginning of the interview the father expresses his view concerning Tommaso's change. He thinks that Tommaso has changed a lot (41) but he had some difficulties with school activities at the beginning of the year. The mother disagrees (44) with him and, in the next frame, explicitly contradicts her husband as she thinks that Tommaso did not have any problem in managing school issues (60).

Later on, both mother and father switch their points of view. The father stesses the competences of the adolescent by emphasizing his ability to get organized and to plan different activities (83, 94), and the mother agrees with him now, as she acknowledges Tommaso's abilities (91).

Other family oscillations can be noted in the Berti family. It is possible to observe various family oscillations in this family, which characterize the entire interview in particular between the parents and the sisters. Interestingly, family oscillations are triggered the initial individual oscillation of the mother. Later, it is noticeable a significant alternation in the expression of different opinions involving the mother, the adolescent Veronica, and the younger sister, Sofia (8 years old) in the passage from frame VII to frame VIII (Excerpt 2.12).

Excerpt 2.12 – Martelli family. M (mother), V (adolescent), S (sister), I (interviewer) Frame VII: Veronica's autonomy - Frame VIII: The changes of the family

Frame VII

[…]   […]

146. M   (…) io sono una persona molto   146. M   (…) I'm very anxious and this
          ansiosa quindi questa ansia   a.   anxiety is increasing as
          aumenta con il fatto che lei   far as she [Veronica]
          [Veronica] cresce però devo   grows up but I've to say
          anche dire che devo ammettere   that maybe this is a big
          forse è un grosso errore e   mistake and Veronica
          Veronica invece non lo vuole   doesn't want to admit that
          dire forse sono una mamma magari   but maybe I'm a mother a
          un po' troppo oppressiva che non   bit too oppressive and I
          giustamente non le lascio vivere   understand I don't let her
          il suo però non lo faccio-   live her but I don't do
147. V   la privacy   that-

43

148.	I	cioè tu dici che lei *((guardando la madre))* non rispetta tanto la tua privacy?	147.	V	the privacy
149.	V	beh no non è che non la rispetti però ad esempio mi arriva un messaggio e lei vuole sapere chi è se c'è lì dimmelo=dimmelo e io non glielo voglio dire	148.	I	you mean that the mother *((rivolta alla madre))* doesn't respect your privacy?
150.	M	sì perché temo sempre che siano certe persone con le quali secondo il mio punto di vista che lei ben conosce non vale neanche la pena rispondere [è solo questo	149.	V	well it is not that she doesn't respect it but for example if someone texts me she wants to know who he is and she keeps on tell me= tell me and I don't want to tell her
151.	V	[oh mamma mia che sarà per una volta!	150.	M	yes because I'm always afraid that they are people that in my opinion you shouldn't reply at and she knows that [it is only that
152.	M	beh nessun genitore è perfetto veh	151.	V	[oh well but it would happen for one time!
			152.	M	well none parents is perfect

[…] […]

Frame VIII

163.	M	ecco questo è un'altra cosa che ad esempio e anche la responsabilità e lei la vedo che è più grande appunto magari al sabato viene in centro e io le do un po' di soldi mi dice guarda mamma a me servirebbe questo e quindi lei si gestisce giustamente con i soldi	163.	M	this is another thing for example the responsibility and I see she has grown up and maybe on Saturday she goes to the city center and I give her some money and she ask me and the it is right she manage on her own her money
164.	S	ho capito ma lei usa solamente i soldi degli altri	164.	S	ok but she use the money of the others
165.	V	e va beh i miei li risparmio! *((sorridendo))*	165.	V	well I save mine *((smiling))*

[…] […]

179.	I	la vedi ansiosa la tua mamma verso di te ansiosa? vuol dire essere preoccupata	179.	I	do you see your mother anxious towards you? it means concerned
180.	M	che ti sto sempre addosso	180.	M	that I always push you
181.	V	beh certe volte sì specialmente quando cominciavo ad uscire mi chiamava sul cellulare ogni dieci minuti	181.	V	well sometimes when I started to go out she used to call me on the cell phone every ten minutes
182.	M	però anche tu Veronica hai sempre avuto questa bella abitudine che comunque dove vai mi chiamavi e mi dici [mi metti al corrente se ritardi o meno	182.	M	but you Veronica used to call me and whenever you go you call me and [you inform me if you are late
183.	V	[sì ho capito mamma ma una volta che dico ti chiamo io poi non mi puoi chiamare ogni cinque minuti	183.	V	[yes I understand mom but once I tell you that I call you you can't call me very ten minutes
184.	M	è vero e adesso non lo faccio più però	184.	M	it is true but now I can't do that any more
185.	V	adesso te lo dico in prevenzione ogni minuto vuoi sapere quando torno dove sono cosa faccio	185.	V	now I tell you to prevent it again every minute you want to know when I'll be back and what I do
186.	M	delle volte sei in un negozio mi telefoni e mi dici mamma posso comprarmi questo?	186.	M	sometimes you are in a shop and you phone me and you ask me can I buy that?
187.	V	e poi se torno a casa e poi tu ti arrabbi?	187.	V	and then I go back home and you get angry?
188.	M	e beh è giusto che sia così	188.	M	and well it is right that it is like that

In the frame VII family members discuss about the increased independence of Veronica. Almost in the last exchanges, presented in the excerpt above, the mother expresses the difficulty to keep a balance between the control and the autonomy. The adolescent promptly intervenes to specify she is bothered by her mother's eccessive intrusion, since she wants to control her even when she receives text messages on her mobile (148). The mother replicates by underlining that this is her duty as a parent (149), and a bit later she re-asserts her role ironically, as if she is again referring to Veronica as a child (151).

However, in the in the subsequent frame (VIII) the mother changes her opinion: she describes her adolescent daughter as very responsible and competent also in the management of money (163). The younger sister intervenes to minimize the importance of Veronica's change (164), and now the adolescent, instead of reaffirming her responsibility, agrees with her sister (165). Later on, a lively exchange between the mother and daughter is displayed and, both of them switch their points of view about their earlier statements once more. Veronica challenges her mother's need to control her (181) and the mother, instead of confirming Veronica's responsibility, now stresses the need for continuity and the "nice habits" of the past (182).

5. Discussion and new research questions

The main concern of this study was to devise methodological procedures consistent with the theoretical framework in which the entire research is placed. More precisely, the research team put particular efforts in devising procedures that allowed for the observation of family interactions considering the whole family as the unit of analysis. In line with this, the first step consisted in choosing a suitable setting where the data were collected. A laboratory of observation equipped with a one-way mirror and video cameras was the setting where all family members were invited to conduct a family interview.

The family interview is an innovative instrument to collect data. I used a specific technique, partially borrowed from family therapy, in carring out the interview. At first, questions were addressed to one of the family members (the adolescent, in this case) in

order to observe the "audience" reactions, and immediately after the other family members were involved, while the interviewer stimulated the emergence of the different points of view. Also the procedure for the data anlyses had never been used before in other studies, to my knowledge. We worked on the sequential frames of interaction when describing the two dimensions at the core of family change: coordination and oscillation.

In particular, we noticed that when families are called to discuss different aspects related to the ongoing changes, they can express great *coordination* when synchronized. Some families in fact tend to share the same views and to converge on a common "plot" along the whole interview. In such cases, all family members respect reciprocal turns, they agree or elaborate their own opinions on the basis of those expressed by the others, thereby conveying the idea to participate in the talk as in a harmonious dance. This way of being mutually coordinated shows continuity with previously consolidated modalities of interaction, therefore synchrony conveys a sense of stability.

On the contrary, in other families coordination is broken by different *fractures*: family members do not look for consent but instead they tend to diverge on what it is said. Moreover, they reciprocally interrupt and overlap, or reply when the question is not addressed to them, substituting to others. We assume that this kind of interaction indicates that the continuity with usual kinds of interaction is challenged.

While family members coordinate during the talk, they express different evaluations and opinions about ongoing changes by displaying diverse *forms of oscillations*. More precisely, we noticed that a single member referred to changes about him/herself or about the others by alternating between contrasting opinions. This is a form of individual oscillation as it is observable in what we called an "internal dialogue" that is shared in the discourse but that does not have any effect on the course of interaction. The other form of oscillation we outlined, instead, involves at least two family members and we described it as *family oscillations*.

Family oscillations are extremely relevant for the purposes of the entire research project as they can be considered as indicators of ongoing changes. This form of oscillation was more difficult to observe than the individual one, as the analysis required us to outline the "moves" of all family members, thus a constant confrontation within the research team was fundamental.

To reiterate on family oscillations, let us consider the previous paraghaph where I illustrated how, given a particular topic, some family members alternate different opinions about it. To be clearer: consider the issue about the increased competences of the adolescent. Family oscillations are observable in the moment in which, for instance the mother stresses the maturity of his/her child and the father minimizes it, disagreeing with her. After some exchanges they switch their opinions and now it is the father who refers to the adolescent as very mature and the mother instead provides some examples in which the adolescent is depicted as immature. Family members then, expressing these alternations are contemporary referring to the adolescent by saying that s/he is changing and that s/he is not.

We assume that it is in this sort of fluctuating movement like "waves" which go up and down and then down and up again, that an oscillatory process is observable. Consequently, the process of family change becomes noticeable as the tension between these alternations, as Breunlin (1988) have outlined, conveys the contemporary presence of old and new modalities by which family members are defining themselves.

These results can lead to the formulation of new questions, which are the starting point for a subsequent study. In particular, I argue that it is necessary to identify the *connections* that are possible between oscillation and coordination, and that it may be considered as the expression of *microtransition processes*, implying change and continuity.

The new research questions therefore are:

- What are the connections between coordination and oscillation?
- Can the interlocking of these constructs give rise to different patterns of interactions that can account for the moment of change families are experiencing?

Study 2 will reply to these questions starting from the involvement of a larger number of participants.

The *patterns of family interaction* during microtransitions: Interlocking coordination and oscillation

★ Study 2 ★

I found peculiarly revealing a classification of families by the pattern of personal relationships between husbands and wives and parents and children. The study of patterns of personal relationships in family life led directly to the conception of the family as a unity of interacting persons. By a unity of interacting personalities is meant a living, changing, growing thing. I was about to call it a superpersonality.

(Burgess, 1926: 5)

1. Introduction

Burgess' quotation touches on some of the key points I will argue in the following paragraphs. Surprisingly, these considerations were advanced more than eighty years ago. However, as the literature examination will show, they are still critical issues that have been discussed only partially.

In particular, Burgess' assumptions about both the "conception of family as interacting unit" and the relevance of studying the "patterns of personal relationship in family life" allow me to bridge a connection between the results of the previous study and the main goals of the present one. Indeed, starting from the methodological foundation of the entire research project, this second study is intended to observe and then describe the *patterns of family interaction* that emerge from the interlocking of oscillation and coordination.

Before going into the details of this study, I will examine the different traditions of research developed by social and developmental psychology, and family therapy as well

that have drawn their attention on the study of the *developmental processes* in families' contexts.

Afterwards, I will focus on some specific issues regarding *microtransitions* in families with adolescent children. I argue that adolescence can be considered as a "window" that allows for the observation of how family members adjust to each other in their everyday interactions.

1.1 The theoretical debate about the processes of family change

In the context of family studies, different theoretical perspectives have depicted the paths of family development in the life course. The debate about theories on family development is still vigorous, as shown in the recently published handbooks in which revised versions of family development theories are discussed (Chibucos & Leite, 2005; Mazzoni & Tafà, 2007; White & Klein, 2002, 2008).

The *family life-cycle* model was the first to pave its way into the study of family changes, considering the whole family as a dynamic unit (Cigoli, 1985; Cusinato, 1990; Malagoli Togliatti & Lubrano Lavadera, 2002; McGoldrick & Carter, 1982, 2003; Scabini, 1995). In this approach, family development was displayed in fixed developmental stages, ranging from five to eight[6]. The transition from one phase to another is triggered by specific *events* defined as *critical* (Rapaport, 1963), and more recently, as *stressors* (McGoldrick & Carter, 2003). These events, either normative (expected) or non-normative (unexpected), have the characteristic to perturb family systems with the consequence of activating the family system re-organization at different relational levels. Each stage is defined by specific family-related *developmental tasks,* which members must accomplish to move to the next step. In this orientation, transitions during the family life-cycle coincide with "irreversible" and mainly socially determined steps such as wedding, first child's birth, adolescence, midlife, retirement, and old age. Adolescence, for instance, is considered one of the *normative critical events* that families go through in their life cycle.

---

[6] Scholars diverge on the number of developmental stages of family life-cycle (Duvall, 1957; McGoldrick, Carter 2003; Scabini, 1995). In general they identify: couple formation, children's birth, adolescence, empty nest, and old age. However, some propose the inclusion of a separation/divorce stage because of its increasing incidence, particularly in the United States.

Despite the different criticisms of this model, one of the most relevant contributions is the consideration of changes affecting the *whole family system*; however, development is conceived as *discontinuous* in that it is defined by a sequence of critical events that characterize different stages. In fact, the notion of critical events and the one of universal developmental stages are the most questioned issues of this approach (Aldous, 1990; Bengston & Allen, 1993; White, 2004).

In particular, if the notion of developmental task represents the effort to focus on the processes of change, the perturbation of the family system by a sudden and abrupt event – as critical events are defined – is not in line with the continuity of developmental processes (White & Klein, 2008). As theoretical approaches on individual development have illustrated, maturational processes characterize the entire life span (Baltes, 1987; Baltes, Lindenberger & Staudinger, 1998). Thus, children's birth, adolescence, and retirement can be considered events that family members expect and consequently are prepared to deal with. It is also true that despite "normative", a critical event can be as dramatic as an unexpected event such as bereavement.

Some developmental psychology orientations have abandoned the notion of developmental stages in favor of one of *continuity* of developmental processes. Among the different approaches, the most relevant ones are oriented in a contextual sense: the life-span (Baltes, 1987; Baltes, Lindenberger & Staudinger, 1998); life-course (Elder, 1977, 1994, 1998); and ecological approaches (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). These models stress the inter-connection between ontogenetic development, and structural and functional changes in different relational contexts: family, peers, school, and community, which are then connected to political, historical, and cultural contexts.

Some scholars also specified the notion of *developmental transition*. According to Seidman and French (2004), life-course transitions are periods of potential transformations of the self and of interpersonal relations, and they might have a long-term effect on psychological wellbeing. Transitions are unique opportunities for growth, maturity, and development, either positive and constructive or negative and destructive. In this sense, adolescence is one of the most emblematic transitions of the life course.

1.2 Microtransitions in families with adolescent children

Researchers in the field of family therapy (Breunlin, 1988; P. Minuchin, 1985), which share a common systemic background, have provided some interesting suggestions in depicting the connection between the processes of individual and family development. For instance, at the beginning of the Seventies Speer (1970) introduced the notions of morfogenesis and morphostasis as to describe the process of change displayed in family contexts. Morphostasis is a process that regulates the transformations occurring inside and outside the family, while morphostasis, guarantees continuity and stability in facing the constant variations of the surrounding environment. These two processes reciprocally influence and allow individuals to develop their own personal autonomy, through paths of differentiation (Fruggeri, 1998a), however keeping a sense of belonging and continuity with the family context.

The notion of *microtransitions* elaborated by Breunlin (1988) goes at the core of these interactional processes. The interesting formulations of the author lie in the fact that changes occur through *everyday and continuous interactions* and discussions among family members rather than in particular stages of family development. It is in the constant negotiations among members that competences, which regulate old patterns of interaction, are challenged and new ones are incorporated in the family repertoire of interactions. In this perspective family development is continuous; however there are periods when many microtransitions are clustered at a given time. One of these is adolescence.

Most of the research on adolescence that considers the relevance of family context has focused on very static dimension of change. For instance, in the life-cycle model adolescence is considered a sudden and abrupt event (Malagoli Togliatti & Lubrano Lavadera, 2002; Scabini & Cigoli, 2000), while few contributions put greater efforts in focusing on the "micro-analytical" processes, which occur in the everyday life. Some exceptions can be considered some of Burgess' researches (1926) that pioneered the field of family communication. He has pointed out how *patterns* of family communication change accordingly with the members' growth through processes of reciprocal adjustment. More recently, Kreppner and Ullrich (1998) noticed that parents adapt to the topics discussed in the family by changing the *modality of discussion*, i.e., the parents

acknowledge the maturational changes of their children as becoming more competent. In other cases it is the *intensity of discussions,* particularly about appropriate conduct, which increases.

In line with this, conflicts and negative emotions are usually present in the interactions between parents and children during adolescence. However, some scholars stress that these aspects should not be considered as negative in and of itself, but rather they represent the "substantial impulse to changes, adjustment and development" (Shantz & Hartup, 1992: 35). A moderate level of conflict is "normal" in families. According to Collins (1995) and Smetana (1995), conflicts may indicate that adolescent's needs and expectations have changed and, consequently, the relationship between parents and children need to be recalibrated. Cooper and colleagues found that some kinds of disagreement between family members are associated to a more advanced exploration of adolescent's identity. Moreover, several studies (Collins, 1990; Collins & Laursen, 1992; Steinberg, 2002) have shown that less than the 10% of families with adolescents must deal with relational problems: in many cases, conflicting families have problems that are continuations of dysfunctional dynamics that preceded the transition to adolescence.

An increased level of conflict in this period also conveys that the parents' control over many aspects of the adolescent's life is challenged (Broderick & Smith, 1979; Hill, 1981, 1983; Hill & Holmbeck, 1987) and, similarly, the family *power hierarchy* is pushed toward change. The relationship between parents and children moves from asymmetry to mutuality: children challenge the unilateral exercise of authority with the effect of pushing parents towards greater symmetry (Grotevant & Cooper, 1985; Hofer, 2004; Silverstein *et al*., 2006; Steinberg, 1981). This also implies the need to reciprocally *regulate distances* (Wynne, 1988), and in this process of regulation, parents have to adjust their parenting practices, decreasing care and increasing monitoring, but favoring autonomy at the same time (Hartup & Laursen, 1991; Kantor & Lehr, 1975; Scabini, 1995; Silverberg & Steinberg, 1987; Steinberg, 1981; Wynne, 1988).

It is clear from the examination of these studies that adolescence is a period of dramatic and complex changes and that it involves not only the children but also the entire family system (Lerner & Steinberg, 2004). Moreover, the two main issues of autonomy and dependence emerge from these studies. Particularly in Western society,

children are helped to reach a degree of personal autonomy in a context of dependence from their parents; after adolescence, young adults seek to maintain bonds with their parents in a context of autonomy.

In the mid-1990s Laursen and Collins (1994) stressed that despite the vast literature on the topic, the complex interaction among context, maturation, and characteristics of relationships was not yet clearly understood. Moreover, Holmbeck (1996) claimed that studies about the *transformative processes* that characterize the relationship between parents and children in adolescence were still lacking. These works, in fact rarely considered the analysis by which these changes involve also other family members and how they negotiate, revalue, reconstruct, and interpret transformations through their everyday interactions. According to Granic and colleagues (2003), this is due to the methodological limitations: most methods in psychology, particularly self-reports, are not well suited for studying processes of change in family interactions over time. Moreover, the vast majority of the studies on adolescence have focused on the *content* of these changes and how such content develops over time (Lewis, 2000).

The examination of literature on family development reveals the lack of empirical studies within a theoretical framework that allows for the understanding of the complexity of relationships. Thus, in this study I intend to fill this void starting from the consideration of a systemic theoretical framework, in which the connection between continuity and change can be observed in the families with adolescents.

2. Aims

The main aim of this study is to explore the process of *microtransitions* in families with adolescent children. More precisely, starting from the individuation of the forms of oscillations as they arise in families' interactions, and the synchrony or fractures family members display in coordination, I will focus on *how* the various combinations of forms of oscillations and synchrony or fractures allow for the observation of different *patterns of family interaction*.

As the definition of the forms of oscillations and the types of coordination have been presented elsewhere[7], in this study I will report the detailed descriptions of the patterns of family interaction.

3. Method

In the Study 1 the research team and I invested greater efforts in devising methodological procedures consistent with the theoretical principles of the entire research project. In this study, the methodology is the same as that presented in the previous study. No changes have been made in the setting, data collection, or analytical procedures.

3.1 Participants

In order to rectuit a larger number of participants families were contacted not only through high schools but also youth associations without any religious or political affiliations.

Six families with at least one adolescent child agreed to participate in this study (Table 3.1). In the table below the personal data of the new group of participants are presented.

Table 3.1
Personal data: name, age and sex of family members

Families	Mother's age	Father's age	Adolescent's age and sex (M/F)	Siblings' age and sex (M/F)
Contini	56	51	Silvia 15 (F)	Enrico 18 (M) (n.p.)
Fanti	45	-	Daniele 14 (M)	Andrea 18 (M)
Melloni	44	55	Gaia 16 (F)	Sonia 15 (F) Simone 12 (M)
Perelli	41	44	Calotta 15 (F)	Giovanni 7 (M) Nicola 2 (M) (n.p.)
Riccardi	36	-	Laura 14 (F)	-
Vinci	45	45	Camilla 15 (F)	Antonio 5 (n.p.)

---

[7] For more details check the results of the Study 1.

As for parents, four were cohabiting and/or married, one was a stepparent, and two were divorced (in these cases, only the mother participated with the children). As for adolescents, five were females and one male (mean age=14.8).

3.2 Setting and procedure for the data collection and analysis

The setting was the same used as in the previous study, the Laboratory of Observation, equipped with three cameras and a one-way mirror, located at the Department of Psychology, where the family interviews were carried out.

For the data analysis we considered both the family of the study 1 and of this study (N=12). This corpus of data consists of 11 hours and 39 minutes of videotaped material. All interviews were transcribed in detail using the most common conventions taken from CA (Schegloff, 1995). In each step of the analysis, the research team and I first worked independently, then together to discuss matters until agreement was reached. For the division of the family interviews in *sequential frames,* we obtained a high level of agreement (0.90)[8].

Afterwards, the analysis of the collected material was conducted at two different levels *(intra-frame* and *inter-frame),* and indicators of oscillation and coordination were considered. Indicators' description is shortly reported here:

1.   *Oscillations*
    a.   *Individual oscillations.* We considered individual oscillations when *a single member* expresses an alternation between contrasting points of view or opinions on topics related to change. The others listen and do not comment or act against or in favour of what this member says.
    b.   *Family oscillations.* They emerge when *two or more family members* state different opinions, expressing alternation between them (e.g., when one member expresses something "up," the other says or acts "down" and minutes later, they switch). Family oscillations are often

---

[8] Procedures for the calculation of inter-rater reliability are presented in detail in the Study 1.

detectable at an inter-frame level of analysis, but in the same frame they may also be "launched" by individual oscillations. As the alternation of points of view of two or more members is on the same topic, family oscillations are considered as indicators of tension to change. Similarly, the absence of family oscillations indicates a closure to change and evolution of the system.

As specified in the previous study, we could identify oscillation only at a *content* level of analysis.

2. *Coordination.*
    a. *Synchrony in coordination.* At the *content* level, we considered synchrony in coordination when two or more members interact, being able to *converge* and *share the meanings* attributed to the ongoing interaction. At the *analog* level, we observed 1) all parts of the frame in which given the specific interaction between two or more members, the others respect the setting and do not intervene as they are not called to participate, and 2) all parts in which one member intervenes after an explicit request from the other. Smiling, nodding, and lack of interruptions are also indicators of synchrony.
    b. *Fractures in coordination.* At a *content* level, we examined all the parts of interview in which family members *diverge* on the definition of the ongoing interaction. At the *analog* level, we considered 1) all parts of the frame in which family members intervene in the unfolding interaction when not directly requested and 2) all parts in which a member directly requests the other to participate but s/he does not do so.

The definition of indicators for oscillation and coordination are summarized in the table below (Table 3.2).

Table 3.2

Definition of the indicators for oscillations and coordination

| | Oscillation | | Coordination | |
	Individual	Family	Synchrony	Fractures
Indicators				
Analog	-	-	1. Two interact – the others respect the setting 2. A member calls the other to participate – s/he accepts	1. Two interact – the others interrupt and intervene 2. A member calls the other to participate – s/he *does not* accept
Content	A single member *alternat*es opinions, evaluations, points of view. The others listen	Two or more members *alternat*e opinions, evaluations, points of view	Convergence on the definition of a situation	Divergence on the definition of a situation

The data analysis consisted of observing how *synchrony* or *fractures* in coordination and *individual* or *family oscillations* combined in various ways for the twelve families. For each family, we then considered the pattern of interactions that emerged from the different combinations of oscillations and coordination, and families were qualified according to the prevalent pattern.

The patterns of family interactions are now presented, with reference to some excerpts taken from the twelve interviews.

4. Results

Four *patterns of family interaction* were obtained from the analysis of the interviews: we defined them as *quiet, drifting, stormy* and *critical* (Figure 3.1).
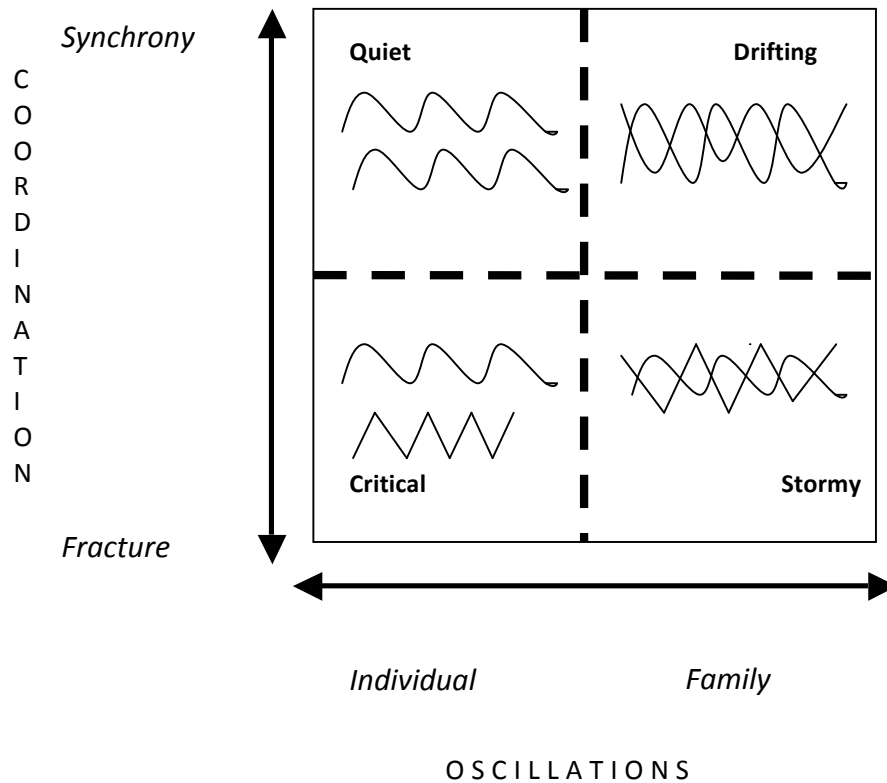
Figure 3.1: Graphic representation of the four patterns of family interaction

The figure represents the possible ways in which oscillation and coordination can be combined. To simplify these features, I used the following symbols.

a) For synchrony in coordination (indicator of continuity), same type of curves (smooth). Synchrony in coordination is represented in the upper part of the square.

b) For fractures in coordination (no continuity), different types of curves (smooth and sharp). Fractures in coordination are represented in the bottom part of the square.

c) For family oscillations (indicator of change) intersection of curves. Family oscillations are represented in the right part of the model.

d) For individual oscillations (no change), absence of intersection of curves. It is represented in the left part of the model.

The label we chose for each pattern (quiet, drifting, stormy, and critical) metaphorically recalls the "shape" of the interactional moves among family members.

4.1 The quiet pattern

This pattern was observed in two families: Albertini and Marani. These families displayed *synchrony* in coordination both at the content and analog level, and *individual oscillations* that do not eventually trigger family oscillation.

Let us consider an example taken from the interview with the *Albertini Family*. As I illustrated in the Study 1 about the first part of the interview with this family (Excerpt 2.3), the adolescent, Chiara, speaks with the interviewer while other members listen nonverbally. They approve and do not interrupt her, thus showing a degree of coordination and recognition of Chiara as able to describe her changes. The girl makes reference to several competences that she has acquired: her body has changed and to a greater degree, her mentality. She is more independent and does not play as much with her younger brother anymore. Later Chiara seems to minimize her change (individual oscillation), describing her peers as far advanced of her, too oriented toward adult behaviors, while she still likes to play and act as a "foolish" girl.

The following excerpt (Excerpt 3.1) illustrates the mother's and adolescent's individual oscillations following the same trend (Chiara is growing/not too fast) and therefore expressing synchrony in coordination.

Excerpt 3.1 – Albertini family. M (mother), C (adolescent), I (interviewer)
Frame IV: The parents' point of view

```
134.  I   e (0.2) dei momenti di perplessità      134.  I   and (0.2) some hesitation on the
          sulla crescita dei figli?                         children's growth?
135.  M   eh (0.2) li stiamo per avere            135.  M   uhm (0.2) we are going to have
          soprattutto per quanto riguarda le                some especially for what concerns
          uscite notturne serali (0.2))                     the nights out and (0.2) summer
          arriva l'estate e sicuramente per                 is coming and surely they will
          me ci saranno tante occasioni e                   have other opportunities (0.2) it
          cose nuove (0.2) sempre dire di no                won't be possible to always say
```

		non sarà possibile
136.	I	Chiara i tuoi genitori pensano di dover dire di no pensi che diranno di no?
137.	C	beh penso che comunque sia più che altro a parte gli orari a parte i problemi di rapporti così sia più paura che io(0.3)adesso non so potete correggermi *((riferito ai genitori))* però forse di capitare in mezzo a gruppi di grandi dove si può capitare con persone poco raccomandabili comunque c'è una compagnia di amiche in classe da me che escono tutti i sabati e si ubriacano
138.	I	visto che le hai definite così prima non mi sembra un gruppo molto attraente
139.	C	*((ride con un po' di imbarazzo))* sì (0.2)quel gruppo lì che è l'unico della classe che esce tipo in discoteca (…)secondo me il timore è se poter iniziare a seguire quello che fanno loro comunque trovarsi in mezzo a gruppi di ubriachi alla fine non si sa come comportarsi
140.	I	ma a te piacerebbe uscire e con loro?
141.	C	mah più che altro è una curiosità perché alla fine non è comunque che non mi interessi particolarmente preferisco magari invece di andare in discoteca preferisco uscire con le mie amiche magari andare a casa di una e far festa lì

		no
136.	I	Chiara do your parents think that they have to say no?
137.	C	I think that the problem is the time and also they fear problems in relationships (0.3) you *((she looks at mother and father))* can correct me but they fear that I can meet groups of older people who may be unreliable and also in my classroom there is a group of girls who go out every Saturday and they drink a lot
138.	I	if you define them in this way it does not seem a very attractive group
139.	C	*((laughs a bit embarrassed))* yes (0.2) this is the only group in my classroom that goes out to discos (…) and the fear is that I will start to do what they do and if you are in a group of drunk people you don't know how to behave
140.	I	but would you like to go out with them?
141.	C	I am curious but in the end I don't think they are very interesting and maybe instead of going to a disco I would prefer to go out with my friends and stay in their homes

Chiara reports an attraction to a group of girls who behave differently from what her parents recommend, but in the end, she prefers to stay in line with the family's expectations. Synchrony is clear also on the analog level, as all members do not interrupt and look at each other while talking. Oscillation is expressed only at the individual level, as family oscillation does not occur.

4.2 The stormy pattern

The stormy pattern has reversed features from the quiet one, as families that showed this pattern are characterized by multiple *fractures* in coordination and repeated *family oscillations*.

A stormy pattern was observed in five families: Berti, Contini, Martelli, Perelli, and Vinci. Excerpt 3.2 pertains to the Contini family, in which Silvia is the adolescent and her older brother is not present in the interview.

In the frame preceding this excerpt, Silvia has described her change in maturation especially in school, work, and in her evolving interest in reading and writing stories. The frame ends with the adolescent stating that in her opinion her parents have not yet realized that she has changed.

Excerpt 3.2 – Contini family. M (mother), P (father), S (adolescent), I (interviewer)
Frame II: Silvia's point of view – Frame III: Silvia's new interests

55.	I	*((alla madre))* lei la vede cambiata Silvia? Ha visto un cambiamento lei secondo lei?
56.	M	allora diciamo che ti hanno fatto uno squillo questo rimbombo (0.3) si parla delle solite cose di casa eccetera però mi sono accorta che andando avanti negli anni le sue osservazioni erano sempre più mature (…)con un forte spirito di osservazione quindi una cosa che io ho sempre notato nella Silvia è questa <u>apparente assenza</u> dal dal quotidiano poi invece ogni tanto esce con delle frasi che fanno capire <u>primo</u> che è perfettamente presente (…)non sempre perché ad esempio una cosa che ha mantenuto da quando invece era piccola il fatto di aver difficoltà a rimanere concentrata su un argomento (…)cioè non è maturata

[…]

61.	I	cosa dici tu Silvia? *((guardando Silvia))*
62.	M	sì (0.4) del tipo non so stavano discutendo in questi giorni se acquistare una macchina nuova (…) in certi momenti dà un apporto molto positivo (…) poi in altri momenti cominciava a parlare di altre cose che magari erano lontanamente connesse
63.	I	cosa ne dici tu Silvia?
64.	S	ma io non la vedo così cioè quando magari cambio argomento di quello che parlano loro perché cioè ormai io ho capito quello che intendono dire

[…]

71.	I	sentiamo il papà cosa ne pensa lei?
72.	P	anch'io sono d'accordo che Silvia ha una diciamo scarsa continuità nel seguire certi argomenti (0.2)(…)
73.	I	[vede Silvia cresciuta la vede cambiata?
74.	P	[dei cambiamenti si sì proprio dei cambiamenti da un anno all'altro sia fisicamente *((guarda Silvia))* ma anche come testa è diventata molto

55.	I	*((to the mother))* do you see that Silvia has changed? do you see any change?
56.	M	well we can say that there has been an alarm sign (0.3) we talk about the same things etcetera but I realized that in these years her comments were more and more mature (…) expressing a strong sense of observation therefore a thing that I see in Silvia is the fact that apparently she is not interested but then she talks in a way that makes you realize <u>first</u> that she is present (…) not always because for example a thing that she has kept is the difficulty to concentrate on any matters (…) this means that she is not mature

[…]

61.	I	Silvia what do you think about it? *((looking at Silvia))*
62.	M	yes (0.4) for example those days when we were discussing buying a new car (…)she was contributing some positive remarks (…) but then she started talking about things that were not relevant
63.	I	what do you think Silvia?
64.	S	but I don't see this in the same way because I may change topics because they spend hours talking and I already know what they want to say

[…]

71.	I	what does the father think about it?
72.	P	I agree that Silvia is not able to follow certain discussions (0.2) (…)
73.	I	[do you see Silvia changed?
74.	P	[yes many changes year after year in both her body *((looks at Silvia))* and her mind when she wants to do something she

		più autonoma prende sue iniziative e le porta anche avanti diciamo (…)			persists (…)
75.	I	puo' fare un esempio?	75.	I	can you give an example?
76.	P	per esempio quando lei ha incominciato a provare sul computer come utilizzare certi programmi eccetera fa fatica e non ha chiesto tanto ma ha incominciato e-	76.	P	for example when she started to use the computer she had difficulties with some programs but she didn't ask and tried over and over again and-
77.	M	sono successi un po' di casini	77.	M	she created a lot of troubles
78.	P	sì però vedo quando voleva fare una cosa si è messa lì e l'ha portata avanti e adesso anche a scuola ha preso in mano un po' di più la situazione (0.2) anche con la letteratura *((guarda Silvia))* sembrava di non essere molto interessata e poi un giorno-	78.	P	yes but I see that when she wants to do something she keeps at it and also in school she started to work autonomously (0.2) even with literature *((looks at Silvia))* she didn't seem very interested and then one day-
79.	M	e adesso legge un libro al giorno	79.	M	now she reads one book a day

This excerpt is a fine illustration of oscillation involving all family members. At point 56, the mother expresses a first alternation between aspects of her daughter's maturity and immaturity (individual oscillation). Later (62), the mother answers when Silvia is explicitly asked to respond (fracture in coordination) and reports a specific episode again, stressing the oscillation between competence and incompetence. Silvia disagrees and states her reasons, and the mother emphasizes her daughter's unpredictable behavior. The father (point 72) first supports his wife's opinion, but then claims that Silvia has changed a lot and describes his daughter as now more able and mature as compared to previous years. At point 78, the mother interrupts her husband and diminishes the transforming value of her daughter's actions. The frame ends with the father referring to Silvia's growing interest in literature (the starting point at which Silvia mentioned in frame I, as the event of change), and the mother agrees by completing her husband's phrase.

Many family oscillations are observed also in the Perelli family with reference to several aspects of change. The first frame starts with the adolescent Carlotta defining herself as more mature at school and in the competitive sport she practices. She also has a larger group of girlfriends with whom she likes to hang out, especially on Saturday nights. The mother and father acknowledge these changes at the beginning of the interview, and they also stresses that Carlotta became more competent in negotiating different issues with them.

When the adolescent later mentions the issue of going to the disco, complaining that her parents are too strict about the possibility of going there more often, family

oscillations take place between mother and daughter. The excerpt below (Excerpt 3.3) is an interesting example of family oscillations displayed in different frames (inter-frame) throughout the family interview.

Excerpt 3.3 – Perelli family. M (mother), P (father), A (adolescent), I (interviewer)
  Frame IV: The point of view of the mother – Frame VI: The parenting – Frame
  VIII: The New Year party

80.	I	allora secondo te cos'è cambiato nel rapporto con la mamma *((guardando Carlotta))*?
81.	C	e va beh (…) non so (0.2) come si diceva dire da tutte le due parti si cerca di trovare un=un accordo sì un-
82.	M	si beh aspetta dipende spesso e volentieri dai luoghi e (0.2)[dal tipo di richieste
83.	C	[beh sì in discoteca non te lo chiedo neanche *((guardando la madre))*
84.	M	esatto!

[…]

88.	I	però a te piacerebbe per esempio andare [in discoteca]?
89.	C	certo! eh sì come tutti = come tutti i quindicenni! *((fissando la madre))*

[…]

92.	C	sì magari ecco per le feste della scuola mi mandano invece magari con il gruppo di amiche non è che non penso non si fidino di me magari non si fidano degli altri e io non so non lo chiedo neanche
93.	M	[non ce lo chiede neanche
	C	[cioè lo ho chiesto due volte ma assolutamente no

[…]

285.	I	e sulle richieste che fa Carlotta perche' ha aperto dicendo insomma io ad esempio adesso chiedo di stare fuori fino a più tardi (…)
286.	M	io credo nel senso che lei *((guardando Carlotta))* dovrà sempre chiedere e stare al tiro e noi cercare di (fermarla) credo che la morale sia un po' quella lì (…)

[…]

290.	M	non so se per lei c'è preoccupazione in questo senso lei *((guardando Carlotta))* spererebbe sempre di però-
291.	P	[io penso poi che sia molto ragionevole anche nelle richieste
292.	M	[si=si sono abbastanza

80.	I	then in your opinion what changed in the relationship with your mom *((looking at Carlotta))*?
81.	C	well (…) I don't know (0.2) as we were saying we try to reach an=an agreement yes an-
82.	M	well wait a minute more often depends on the places and [on the kinds of requests]
83.	C	[well I don't even ask you to go to the disco *((looking at her mother))*
84.	M	all right!

[…]

88.	I	but would you like to go? [to the disco]
89.	C	of course! Like all=as all the guys who are fifteen! *((staring at her mother))*

[…]

92.	C	they let me go to school parties but they don't let me go with my girlfriends as I don't think they don't trust me maybe they don't trust the others so I don't even ask
93.	M	[she doesn't ask
94.	C	[well I asked twice but she said absolutely no

[…]

285.	I	and what about the requests that Carlotta advances? For example before she said that she asked to stay out longer (…)
286.	M	I think she *((looking at Carlotta))* has to ask and then toe the line and we have to (stop her) I think the moral issue is that (…)

[…]

290.	M	I don't know but I'm concerned for her *((looking at Carlotta))* she is always hoping but-
291.	P	[I think she is very reasonable in her requests
292.	M	[yes=yes enough

```
        ragionevoli                            […]
[…]
400.  I  tu come l'hai vista Carlotta     400.  I   and how did you see this
         questa situazione [una festa in             situation [a party in the disco]?
         discoteca]?                         401.  C   I felt I mean I was very angry
401.  C  sono mi sono sentita cioè ero               (…) they could have let me go just
         arrabbiata (…) potevano per una             this one time! But you know the
         volta lasciarmi andare! ma a                New Year is not as the other time
         Capodanno non (sono) tutte le               the New Year
         volte ma a Capodanno
```

This extract starts with the mother's individual oscillation and with fractures in coordination; in the prior frames, she had agreed with both her husband and Carlotta that they can reach agreements easily. Here she interrupts the adolescent and contradicts her to stress that to reach an agreement on some requests is still a critical issue.

Carlotta anticipates her mother mentioning her request "to go to the disco" (82-83). The adolescent reveals that she made the request, even if she could anticipate that her mother would not allow her to go; however, at the point 89 taking advantage of the interviewer line of questioning, she stares at her mother and stresses that everybody of her age likes such places. After some exchanges, Carlotta and the mother swap their points of view.

The adolescent takes back the fact that she has resigned to their parents' decisions, while the mother now mitigates the issue of the limitations (286). First, she mentions the daughter's preoccupation with places such as discos, the father intervenes to redefine Carlotta as "reasonable" in her requests (281), and then the mother agrees.

At the end of the frame, family members mention the recent New Year's party in a disco club that the adolescent was not permitted to attend. As showed in the last exchanges of the excerpt, Carlotta was not compliant with her parents and protested on that occasion. While talking about her feelings, she expresses anger by repeating and emphasizing the words "New Year."

In other parts of the abstract, interruptions and overlaps, showing fractures in coordination, are observable.

4.3 The drifting pattern

This pattern is observable in three families: Fanti, Melloni, and Riccardi, and it is characterized by both *family oscillations* and *synchrony* in coordination.

The members of the Fanti family, composed of a divorced mother and her two sons, throughout the interview show a good degree of synchrony, express individual oscillations but also several family oscillations involving mainly the mother and adolescent as in the following extract (Excerpt 3.4).

Excerpt 3.4 – Fanti family. M (mother), D (adolescent), I (interviewer)
Frame VIII: Changes of the family – Frame IX: The future

215. I *((alla madre))* lei da questo punto di vista si vede cambiata per esempio con i figli che adesso appunto uno è al termine della adolescenza e uno che è all'inizio
216. M io mi sento sicuramente sono cambiata=sono cambiata da qualche anno già a questa parte e sono più serena vedendoli crescere in serenità (…) io ecco l'unica cosa che posso dire è questo spero che il fatto di non essere una madre autoritaria non sia stato negativo perché a volte può essere negativo a volte hanno bisogno di sicurezze
217. I cosa ne pensi? *((guardando Daniele))*
218. D beh dipende essere autoritari può essere utile a volte e non utile altre

[…]

221. I fammi capire tipo un esempio sulle uscite del sabato sera

[…]

226. D ma no io dico vado fuori con i miei amici e lei mi dice dove andate io dico boh al cinema così e poi dopo dico quando quando ho finito ti chiamo così te lo dico e finisce lì

[…]

231. M io sono tranquillissima anche perché questo significa che se lui quella sera è fuori anche io con tranquillità posso uscire a mangiare fuori quandoe era piu' piccolo era un patema insomma mi chiamava mi faceva "quando torni?" (…)

[…]

215. I *((to the mother))* do you feel changes with your sons one is at the end of adolescence and the other is at the beginning
216. M I feel changes certainly=I have changed from several years ago now I feel more relaxed because I see that they are fine (…) the only thing I can say is that I've never been an authoritative mother and I hope this is not negative I know that in some cases it can be negative because they need security
217. I what do you think about this? *((looking at Daniele))*
218. D it depends sometimes it can be useful to be authoritative and sometimes not

[…]

221. I let me understand with the example of Saturdays nights out

[…]

226. D I say that I am going out with my friends and she asks me where are we going and I say oh to the cinema and when I am finished I will call you and that's it

[…]

231. M I am very relaxed also because if he is out with his friends this means that I can also go out for dinner when he was younger this was a problem he was always calling me and asking "when will you be back?" (…)

[…]

240.	I	insomma per capire Daniele cosa hai degli orari più più contenuti [a differenza del fratello maggiore] che cioè la mamma ti dà e ti chiede di rispettare?	240.	I	let me understand this Daniele do you have more restricted times [as compared to the older brother] to be back home in the evenings, which your mother asks you to respect?
241.	D	no me li do io perché tanto so che posso	241.	D	no I decide who I know what I can do
[…]			[…]		
254.	I	ma questo l'hai deciso tu in accordo con la mamma?	254.	I	did you decide this with your mother?
255.	D	no è spontaneo	255.	D	no it has been spontaneous
256.	M	è venuto appunto perché non fa mai tardi per cui invece lui ama fare tardi *((guardando Andrea))* arriva sempre tardi lui	256.	M	it comes because he never comes back late by contrast he *((looking at Andrea))* he is always very late

The family oscillations emerging in this dialogue between mother and son concern the issue of parental control. The mother and Daniele alternate their positions on the mother's role while also depicting an atmosphere of good coordination. A family oscillation emerges as to who controls whom. The mother first states that she is not inclined to authoritative behavior and questions whether this is beneficial for her sons (216). She later states that her younger child used to control her when she went out with friends (231). Daniele alternates considerations about the same issue and replies to his mother, who seems surprised about his mature behavior (he, unlike his brother, never comes home late).

Interestingly, the same pattern is observed also in the Riccardi family, which is again composed of a divorced mother and her adolescent daughter, Laura. The synchrony between mother and adolescent is clearly observable in the sequence of mutual gazes and smiles while talking to each other, as shown in the extract below (Excerpt 3.5).

Furthermore, family oscillations are observable when discussing the increasing distance between mother and daughter.

Excerpt 3.5 – Riccardi family. M (mother), L (adolescent), I (interviewer)
        Frame V: The changes in the relationship parent and adolescent –
        Frame VI: The parenting

139.	I	e nel rapporto con la mamma hai notato dei cambiamenti *((guardando Laura))*?	139.	I	and in the relationship with the mother did you notice any changes *((looking at Laura))*?

[…]

141. L   certo perde un po' di=un po'=un po' di ruolo *((guardando la madre))*
142. M   [no cambia=cambia anche il mio ruolo cioè non è piu'
143. L   [non è più quello di imboccarmi
144. M   sì esatto *((guardando la figlia))*

[…]

147. I   e ti confidi di più con le tue amiche da sempre da quando eri bimba per esempio oppure magari ultimamente lo fai di più?
148. L   eh magari adesso lo faccio più con le mie amiche prima magari ero più piccola allora forse boh (0.2) mi confidavo con te prima? *((guardando la madre)) ((la madre annuisce))* (0.2)
149. M   eh prima parlavi di piu' tipo alle elementari e medie

[…]

168. L   e non lo so io per esempio mi trovo molto meglio appunto cioè a confidarmi con le mie amiche oppure con compagni di classe che vedo ogni giorno di cui mi fido molto certo è ovvio

[…]

178. I   lei diceva *((guardando la madre))* no sì in effetti prima alle medie me ne parlavi di più per esempio dei ragazzi
179. M   sì no va beh ma penso che sia giusto un minimo di non lo so di riservatezza cioè è bene che le cose se le dica *((guardando la figlia))* tra le sue amiche piuttosto che con la mamma (…) ogni tanto capita però se lei c'ha voglia parla insomma (…) è la mia curiosità più che la avrei voglia vorrei=vorrei di essere soddisfatta di sapere ma non ottengo niente quando chiedo= chiedo (…)

[…]

189. M   (…) *((guardando la figlia))* sicuramente in alcune cose quando non mi vuol far sapere delle cose non me le fa sapere c'è poco da fare
190. L   però va beh cioè dai però ti dico delle volte delle cose *((guardando la madre))*

[…]

141. L   of course she loses her role a bit=a bit *((looking at the mother))*
142. M   [no my role changes=changes I mean it is not anymore
143. L   [it is not as when you had to feed me as a baby
144. M   yes sure *((looking at her daughter))*

[…]

147. I   and when you were a child did you use to confide in your girlfriends or did you do that more often recently?
148. L   uhm maybe now I confide more in my girlfriends as when I was a child maybe uhm? Did I use to confide with you? *((looking at the mother))((the mother nods))* (0.2)
149. M   well you used to talk more when you were at the elementary or middle school

[…]

168. L   and I don't know for example I feel much more comfortable with my girlfriends or with my classmates as I meet them every day and I trust them

[…]

178. I   you were saying that *((looking at the mother))* she used to talk more about boyfriends
179. M   yes well I think it is good to have a bit of privacy and to talk *((looking at her daughter))* with girlfriends rather than mom (…) sometimes she talks with me but it depend on when she wants to talk (…) it's more my curiosity as I wanna=wanna know and if I know [something] I'd feel better but I know that I won't obtain anything if I keep on asking (…)

[…]

189. M   (…) *((looking at her daughter))* surely if she doesn't want to let me know some stuff I'll never know anything about it there's not much to do
190. L   but ok but I mean come on sometimes I tell you some stuff *((looking at her mother))*

At the beginning of the extract, the mother and Laura agree that the parenting role has changed, as the mother no longer needs to care for her daughter like a little child (143). In this sense, mother and daughter are synchronized in recognizing that their relationship is changing. Later (148, 168), the adolescent says that she likes to talk with her girlfriends about intimate issues, in contrast to when she was a child and preferred to talk intimately with her mother. A family oscillation is activated when the mother first complains that Laura is becoming more concerned about privacy (149), but later acknowledges that this is typical of adolescence (179).

At the end of the frame, the mother expresses again her curiosity in knowing more about her daughter's private life. The adolescent, in different parts of the frame, acknowledges preferring friends rather than parents as confidants, but at the end, changes her point of view and reveals that she still tells her mother personal issues.

4.4. The critical pattern

Two families, Pergoni and Ponti, show the critical pattern, characterized by *fractures* in coordination and by the *absence of family oscillations*.

The Ponti family is composed of the mother, father, and two daughters, adolescent Serena and her sister, Carolina (12 years old). Disagreements between the adolescent and her parents or sister were observed in almost all frames of the interview. Several fractures in coordination were observed in the adolescent, mother, and sister interactions. Only very few individual oscillations were observed, mainly expressed by the mother.

The central issue in this family is that Serena is not changing. In the first frame, the adolescent cautiously expresses some elements of change, especially her openness to new friends, and she asks for her mother's opinion about such a change. The mother belittles these aspects, clarifying that her daughter meets only friends of the family and limits herself in the exploration of new places. Serena ends the first frame by stating that she has not changed. From the second frame, all members begin a "family game" that sets Serena against the others. The mother, father, and sister describe as facts that Serena

disagrees with. They often interrupt each other and seem to support the idea that "she is not mature enough and she often takes arbitrary positions".

It is interesting to consider in particular the last frame of the interview (Excerpt 3.6).

Excerpt 3.6 – Ponti family. M (mother), P (father), S (adolescent), C (sister), I (interviewer)
Frame XIII: The future.

444.	I	senti Serena se ti dico di pensare non so tra tre quattro anni come ti vedi?	444.	I	Serena if I ask you to think about yourself in let's say three four years what can you tell me?
[…]			[…]		
447.	*S*	(0.5) fra quattro anni spero di aver finito la scuola magari cercherò di stare più a T. [una citta' dove vivono alcuni parenti] se non altro per stare lontano da lei *((indica la sorella))*	447.	*S*	(0.5) in four years I will have finished high school and I will try to spend more time in T. [name of an Italian town where her relatives live] especially because that way I can stay far away from her *((points to the sister))*
[…]			[…]		
451.	C	no	451.	C	no
452.	S	sì	452.	S	yes
453.	C	no	453.	C	no
[…]			[…]		
469.	C	io col cavolo che ci vado!	469.	C	I would never go there!
[…]			[…]		
475.	S	sì diciamo non proprio definitiva cioè	475.	S	well not really forever
476.	M	almeno un sei mesi all'anno	476.	M	at least six months a year
477.	S	ma no mamma anche solo un paio di mesi	477.	S	no mom maybe for two months
[…]			[…]		
484.	I	*((al padre))* se pensa a questo tipo di autonomia di sua figlia in un'altra citta'?	484.	I	*((to the father))* do you think of your daughter as autonomous in another town what do you think?
485.	P	no no se è una situazione che conosco mi metterebbe molta più inquietudine penso una citta' piu' grande	485.	P	well it's a situation that I know I would be more anxious if she wanted to go to another big city
[…]			[…]		
492.	I	*((alla madre))* se pensa a tra tre quattro anni come la pensa la sua famiglia?	492.	I	*((to the mother))* and how do you see your family in some years?
493.	M	ah la mia famiglia la vedo molto bene più fra qualche anno che adesso	493.	M	well my family I think will be better in some years
[…]			[…]		
497.	M	Serena sì anche lei avrà fatto dei passi avanti ulteriori e forse anche Carolina sarà più sulla strada (0.2) però noi	497.	M	Serena would have matured somewhat and also Carolina will be on her way and so all our family will have moved some steps forward

```
complessivamente secondo me avremo
fatto un po' di strada in più e
quindi
```

Asked to imagine her future, Serena expresses the desire, ideally, to live in a city where some relatives of her father reside (447). Shortly afterwards, a disagreement typical of this family ensues, which drastically opposes their point of views (451-453). Again at point 469, Serena's sister expresses her clear distance. When at point 476, the mother seems to support Serena's idea to live away from the family; Serena herself repeats her previous opinion, again without expressing alternations of any sort. The father seems to support Serena's view only because she would be in a protected environment (485), reinforcing the message that she is not mature enough. Finally, the mother ends the interview wishing for a better future for her family who needs to find the path to development and maturity, thus expressing an image of her family as static and the wish that the family will change and grow in time.

5. Discussion and new research questions

The Study 2 has highlighted the interlocking between oscillation and coordination as a way to outline different patterns of family interaction. We observed four patterns and argue that they account for different ways in which families go through *microtransitions*.

Oscillation and coordination are the constructs that correspond to the two basic processes of family functioning, continuity and change. The possibility to outline *how* different interactive scenarios emerge from the connection of these two dimensions, permit to advance considerations about how families deal with changes.

Two families were observed in the *quiet* pattern, seemingly to converge on a sort of "affection" to old and consolidated patterns of interaction.

The adolescent of the Albertini family describes in details changes that have occurred in the last years and expresses a high level of competence acknowledged also by other family members. In fact, they do not interrupt or overlap with the adolescent; rather, they orient their points of view in the same direction. When the adolescent starts to oscillate, however, none of the other family members participate in the oscillations, remaining at

an individual level. Similarly, this occurs for parents who express individual oscillations. The mother of the Marani family alternates between her concerns of her daughter's friends and the importance of hanging out with peers in different parts of the interview. Again, the other family members agree, but this does not trigger a family oscillation. These families seemingly share the expression of what Minuchin (2002) calls a "period of stability", demonstrated by well-established and coordinated patterns of family relationships. Any instance of deviation from a state of equilibrium is rapidly reduced, and the amplitude of change is minimized on behalf of well-known family patterns.

An opposite scenario was observed in families that showed a *stormy* pattern - the majority (five) of the recruited families presented this pattern. Compared to the "quiet" families, these seem to be in the "midst" of change. Through the repetition of fractures and continuous oscillations displayed by all family members, these families appear to be searching for a new balance. When the adolescent Silvia of the Contini family and her parents alternate opposite points of view about Silvia's acquired competences in different aspects of her life, they demonstrate that the way they had related to each other no longer works. The continuity and the stability of the family interactive patterns are challenged, and the emergence of new issues in family life is acknowledged in part and denied in others. As in a "storm", these families might be overwhelmed by the contemporary drive for change and the need to re-establish a new solidarity.

The *drifting* pattern, instead, shows a balance between continuity and change. In three families, members appear to relate to each other through "fluent motions", as they retain usual interactive patterns, but quickly incorporated new changes in the family interactions. Of interesting note is that this pattern has been observed in two families with divorced parents. The small number of families with this structure obviously does not allow further generalization, but they show features of interactions in line with the vast literature on the functioning of single-parent families (Hetherington & Arasteh, 1988; Fruggeri, 2009).

In the *critical* pattern, neither continuity nor changes are present as fractures and the lack of family oscillations were observed. In these families, a tendency to deny changes seems to emerge in the course of interactions between family members, as if they were "frozen" to the possibility of acknowledging ongoing changes. In the Ponti family, the

adolescent's attempts to affirm her maturity are clearly observable in the course of the interview. However, the parents and the sister continue to express their own opinions without regard to each other's points of view. In this pattern, family oscillations cannot begin. Moreover, the lack of coordination expressed in frequent disagreements and interruptions reveals that continuity has been lost. It may be that these families are not yet open to changes and that they may be "stuck" in a pattern of non-change, which is intrinsically dissonant with the main assumptions of psychological literature on adolescence.

In sum, this study depicts different scenarios in which families deal with aspects of continuity and change during adolescence. Some interesting considerations could be advanced about family functioning during this period; however, further research will provide a more complex picture of the process of change in families' systems.

The notion of *family oscillation*, in particular, can be improved. Oscillations among family members are the core of my work as they indicate ongoing changes in the family system. However, differently from coordination, oscillation has been observed only at a content level, that is, in terms of alternation between opposite points of view on changes reported by family members. I argue instead that family oscillations shall also be observed at a *relational* level. This is to say that the different "positions" more than the "points of view" should be examined while family members are talking.

In order to do that, the individuation of specific *analog* indicators of oscillation is needed. Furthermore, I posit that the consideration of the relational side of oscillation will allow for a more complex and articulated description of the four patterns of family interaction during *microtransitions*.

Thus, new research questions concluding this study are:

- Is it possible to describe the relational side of oscillation?
- Is it useful to re-define oscillation in relational terms for a better comprehension of the four patterns of family interactions?

To address these questions, I will consider them the main goals of a new study, which will include a larger number of participants and will be presented in the next chapter.

At the core of oscillation: *Stancetaking process* in families' interactions

⋆ Study 3 ⋆

> "All verbal behavior is governed by social norms specifying participant roles, rights, and duties vis-à-vis each other, permissible topics, appropriate ways of speaking and ways of introducing information"
>
> (Gumperz, 1982: 165)

> We are lived by Powers we pretend to understand.
>
> (W.H. Auden, 1907-1973)

1. Introduction

The present study is intended to overcome the limitations I have outlined in the research questions at the end of the Study 2; in this vein, some theoretical and methodological considerations are required.

Study 1 allowed for the construction of the methodological foundation of the entire work, the second outlined the interactional patterns emerging from the interlocking of coordination and oscillations; the third delves deeply into the interactional processes that can account for the dynamics of ongoing changes in families.

In this sense, the issue at the core of this study is to reach a more complex description and understanding of the four patterns of family interaction through focusing on the *relational aspects* of oscillation.

In the previous study, the display of oscillation was observed in the alternation of opposite points of view among family members (in terms of *what* they say with respect to the adolescent's changes). For example, the father may say that his adolescent son is very mature, whereas the mother may intervene to say that he actually is very immature in many aspects of his life. After a while, they swap their opinions and the father then describes the adolescent as immature whereas the mother does the opposite.

However, in this study, more attention is given to *how family members say what they say* by observing the display of the different "positions" they take in the interaction. Taking the same situation described above, I would consider how all family members *position themselves*: which *stances* they assume after the father's statement. How does the adolescent react to his father's definition? Does he accept it, by agreeing with his father, or oppose it? And what is the position of the other family members: Does the mother agree with her husband and then position herself in line with him, or does she align with the adolescent? How do siblings, if present, participate to these interactional exchanges?

In this sense, the Gordian knot of this study is a closer understanding of the display of those *interactive sequences* that can account for the presence or the absence of *oscillations* when family members talk about ongoing changes.

1.1 Observing the relational side of oscillations

In order to observe the relational side of oscillation, I will refer to three theoretical frameworks. First, I will introduce new terms such as *stance*, *positioning,* and *alignment*, taking some suggestions from those disciplines that give particular attention to the study of interactions through the analysis of conversations and discourses. Second, I will consider the studies that have focused on the *issue of power* in the context of family interactions especially during adolescence. Third, I will focus on *how* the specific *position of the adolescent* is co-constructed through the process of stance-taking, involved in the negotiation of power issues.

1.1.1 The stancetaking process

As my research interest pertains the *relational* aspects that define oscillation, the consideration of research fields that focus on the study of *interaction* is fundamental.

Considering that data are based on discursive material, consisting in stream of talks among family members, interactions can be examined through the integration of theoretical contributions from the disciplines that share the slogan that "every social interaction entails a verbal interaction". I argue that bringing together suggestions from different research fields that study interaction through the analysis of language allows for the construction of a framework in which it is possible the re-descritpion of oscillation based on analog indicators.

This implies, at first, terminological clarifications, which will be presented through the review of different theoretical approaches.

In the last decade in the field of social psychology, a "discursive turn" has occurred (Potter, 1998; Potter & Edwards, 2001), and recent theoretical advances have specified the notion of *positioning* (Harrè *et al*., 2009). According to this approach, "positioning is something which happens in the course of an interaction: as such it is a discursive process" (Harrè *et al*., 2009: 10). More precisely, it is defined as the interactional process through which individuals produce a "diversity of selves." In each encounter, participants take, resist, and assign positions by locating themselves and others in relation to values or characteristics, social categories, and discourses: ways of speaking and behaviors occuring at different interactional levels such as 'disciplinary, political, cultural and small group' or around a specific *topic* (Davis & Harrè, 1990). In this context, the notion of topic or content of positions "is local, it may be even momentary and ephemeral" (Harrè *et al*., 2009: 10) and, as such, any positioning act may be challenged. Changes are observable through the modification in the positioning of participants, which in turns modifies the context of interaction among them, and eventually the *meanings of their actions*. The illocutionary force of their *speech acts* has the consequence of changing the unfolding course of the discursive process.

The notion of positioning is relevant for my purposes, as it underlines that people *define themselves* by taking or resisting different positions in their discourses. However

this approach lacks the operational definition about the *process* by which positioning is devised.

In this sense, disciplines, such as linguistic anthropology and sociolinguistic, have consolidated stronger constructs and methodology that can give greater suggestions. Among these, Conversation Analysis (CA) (Sacks *et al.*, 1974; Schegloff, 2007) has emphasized the study of the *sequential organization* of the talk-in-interaction stream during naturally occurring conversations.

In contrast to the positioning theory presented above, conversation analysts provide a strong methodology for documenting how people position themselves with respect to each other in their moment-to-moment conversation. They devised a micro-analytical coding that allows the identification of all the details of interactions: whether they be pauses and repairs, the selection of particular words, or the placement of interruptions and overlaps should not be assumed a priori to be irrelevant to interaction (Sacks, 1992). In addition to these interesting methodological contributions, CA gives relevant clues to the specification of positioning, as it stresses the issue of temporality of interaction with the notion of sequentiality, since "sequences are the vehicle to get some activity accomplished" (Schegloff, 2007: 2).

In sum, the notion of *positioning* sheds light on how people define themselves with respect to others, and the one of *sequentiality* stresses how they maintain or change such positions. I do not intend to go into further details about this approach, as the definitions of *positioning* and *sequentiality* are the necessary steps to introduce a third construct that will bring together the previous considerations.

In particular, I refer to the intriguing notion of *stance*, a concept devised and widely used in the field of linguistic and related disciplines, but to my knowledge still relatively unknown in psychology. Recent considerations on stance are noteworthy and productively in line with my arguments.

According to Englebretson (2007), definitions and conceptions of stance are as broad and varied as the individual backgrounds and interests of researchers themselves. This has entailed some critical aspects: researchers tend to operationalize stance within the frame of their own work, thus reaching as many definitions as the number of researchers

that use it. The opposite is also true, as researchers may use different terminologies to cover what appears to be the same type of phenomena.

The use of this notion is intended to stress the functions of language for which it is used and based on the contexts within which it occurs. More precisely, research on stance, however the term is defined, represents an ongoing trend toward understanding the full social and pragmatic nature of language, as it is used by actual speakers to act and interact.

Englebretson (2007) compiled the contributions of many scholars working with this construct to clarify the process of *stancetaking* in discourse. He suggested five key conceptual principles of stance for consideration:

1) Stancetaking occurs on three (often overlapping) levels – stance is physical action, personal attitude/belief/evaluation and social morality;

2) Stance is public, and is perceivable, interpretable and available for inspection by others;

3) Stance is interactional in nature, it is collaboratively constructed among participants, and with respect to other stances;

4) Stance is indexical, evoking aspects of broader sociocultural framework or physical context in which it occurs;

5) Stance is consequential – taking a stance leads to real consequences for the persons or institutions involved.

The first three principles are particularly attuned to the definition of the relational side of oscillation as they refer both to the positioning of the participants in the interaction and to the co-constructive process among them, which recalls the notion of sequentiality outlined before.

Among other contributors, the contribution of Du Bois (2007) allows for further specifications, which are more attuned to my research interests.

Du Bois proposes the notion of *stance triangle* to shed light on the various elements and processes that are involved in a stance. More precisely, he states that "in taking a stance, the stancetaker (1) *evaluates* an object, (2) *positions* a subject (usually the self), and (3) *align* with other subjects, with respect to any salient dimension of the sociocultural field" (p. 163) (see Figure 4.1). According to the author, stances include

three components or stance acts that are present at the same time in the *stancetaking* process in the discourse.

Subject 1

evaluates

positions

aligns

Object

evaluates

positions

Subject 2
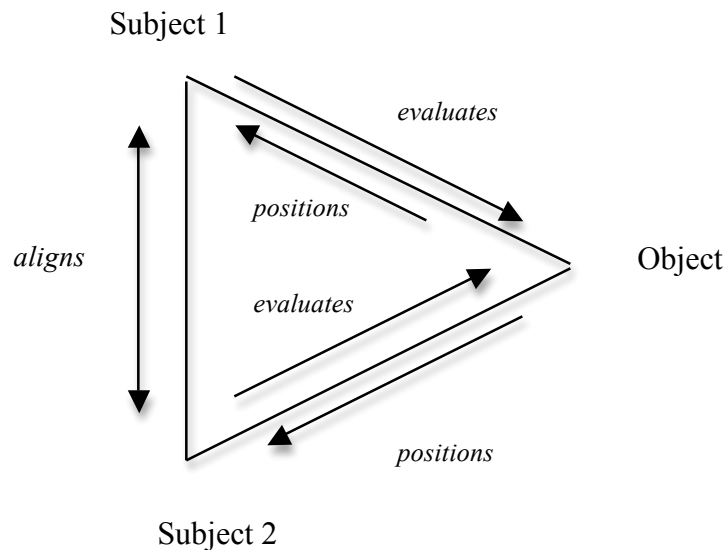
Figure 4.1. The stance triangle. Adaptation from Du Bois (2007: 163).

The *stance triangle* regards these components[9] (evaluations, positions and alignment) as "subsidiary acts of a single overarching, unified stance act" and, more precisely, "each subsidiary act is distinguishable from the others by virtue of its own distinctive consequences, yet the three are yoked together through their integration in the dialogic stance act" (Du Bois, 2007: 163). By taking a stance, an interlocutor simultaneously displays an understanding of a prior stance (evaluates and positions him/herself), orients to, engages with each other's stances and then engages in an intersubjective *stancetaking* (aligns).

---

[9] Some scholars consider these three components as different kinds of stance: for example, some focus on assessment (Goodwin, 2006; Goodwin and Goodwin, 1992; Pomerantz 1984); others on positioning in its as affective stance and epistemic stance (Clift, 2006; Haviland, 1991; Ochs 1996) and others again on alignment (Heritage, 2002).

Consequently, the understanding of the *stancetaking* in discourse can be enhanced by considering the interrelations of the three components. In other words, the three components of stance are *mutually* constitutive: concomitant to evaluating a shared object of stance, stancetakers position themselves; and concomitant to positioning themselves, stancetakers define alignment with each other. Transferring these considerations to the context of family relations, family members in their discourses express evaluations about objects or topics, position themselves to some salient dimensions of their lives, and consequently align with each other. More precisely, in the unfolding talks the expression of evaluations about individual changes of the adolescent, for instance, can be considered as *co-emerging* with positions and alignments of the other family members. This also entails the "embrication" of individual and relational levels: when a family member positions him/herself at the same time s/he aligns with the other members and, viceversa, s/he aligns with the others by positioning her/himself.

In this sense, the *stancetaking process* is an effective mean to describe and understand the relational side of oscillation as it implies alternation of opposite stances (evaluations, positions and alignment) in the families' talks.

A further consideration can now be advanced. The analysis of the alternation of opposite stances in the specific context of family interactions during adolescence can be useful to study a peculiar dimension of family functioning – the issue of *power*.

The link between the observation of the relational side of oscillations through a *stancetaking process* and the issue of power negotiation will be presented in the next paragraph.

1.1.2 Power negotiation in families' interactions

The most challenging aspect of family changes during adolescence is that many contemporary dimensions are called into questions. As I presented in the theoretical frame of the Study 2, many research have revealed that in the transition from childhood to adolescence, new competences are incorporated in the family system through the regulations of distances and the negotiation of the power structure.

According to Patricia Minuchin (1985), *power,* together with cohesion, is a fundamental dimension that should be taken in consideration for the study of family development. Power pertains the ability to control and influence behaviors, while cohesion is related to issues of distance and closeness between family members. Feldman and Gehring (1988) studied the changes in cohesion and power in families with children during the transition between childhood and adolescence. They noticed that cohesion changed from high dependency between parents and children to more independence, while power required more negotiations among family members. In a further study (Wentzel & Feldman, 1996), it was demonstrated that power - related to aspects of parent-child relationships have a significant impact on adolescent functioning.

Olson *et al.* (1982) stress the relevance of power in the study of the adaptability of families to changes, defining adaptability as "the ability of a family system to change its power structure, role relationships, and relationship rules in response to situational and developmental stress" (p.84). Namely, the re-negotiation of the power structures is the clue of the ongoing developmental changes.

Jory (1997) amplifies this consideration when he states that power is an underlying dimension of every family relationship and of virtually every family activity. Its importance lies in the fact that having a sense of control over someone's life is necessary for the health and happiness of humans, including children, adults, and the elderly.

Not surprisingly, a recent growing body of research has specified different aspects of the dimension of power in the field of adolescent development: some in terms of transition from *asymmetry* to *mutuality* and cooperation (Silvesterin *et al.*, 2006); others as changes in the *family rules* (Kreppner, 1996); or again as control and authority in the parenting issues (Smetana, 2005).

However, I argue that some problems are still in place in the study of power, as Broderick (1993) lamented, "literally hundreds of studies have been done on family power, who wields it and at whose expense. The matter has turned out to be complicated and elusive. As a result the scholarly literature on family power is voluminous, complex and often contradictory" (p.164).

The main limitation that I have identified, especially in the context of developmental studies, is the lack of consideration of the *interactional aspects* involved in the construct

of power. As power calls into question notions such as *role* and *status* through which people define themselves with respect to the others, the study of the display of power in interaction is crucial to understand how people adapt to changes in the family context. Interestingly, Sprey (1972) introduced the concept of *powering* to refer to the "ongoing confrontation" of power inputs among family members (p. 236). However, the notion of "power inputs" was not adequately defined.

To overcome these limitations, researches carried out in domains related to psychology, which focus the study of interaction through the analysis of language, offer interesting contributions. For example, sociolinguists (Watts, 1991) and feminists (Osmond & Thorne, 1993) point out that the distribution of power in close-knit social networks (i.e. families) tends to be more *covert* than overt. This is why it is always critical to study it. Family members don't overtly talk about power issues, but rather they *practice* them in the ongoing interactions.

Research on power through the analysis of family discourses (Ervin-Tripp *et al*., 1984; Ochs & Taylor, 1992, 1995; Tannen, 1994, 2001, 2007; Watts, 1991), clearly demonstrate how peculiar linguistic strategies contribute to the construction and de-construction of the underlying dynamics of power in family contexts. Accordingly, it is questionable whether the display of power can be observed through the analysis of families' talks and discussions.

As suggested by Goodwin (2002), power should be located in the actual conversations, rather than in the static notion of social role. In the context of family relations, the consideration of asymmetry between the generations is the main issue of defining the roles of each family member. The analysis of everyday conversations in families with young children (Ervin-Tripp *et al*. 1984) showed that the hierarchical structure is frequently challenged through acts of control and directive toward the parents, rather than being steady.

Consequently, do parents and adolescents control, influence and bid for attention from each other? What does the adolescent do when parents are directive? Is s/he directive as well or is s/he compliant? And what kind of positions do the other family members take?

Some of these questions are the starting point for the analysis of how power issues are displayed in family talks with specific attention to the stances that each family member assumes.

1.1.3 The focus on the adolescent's stance from a systemic perspective

Throughout my research, I have underlined how the systemic approach is the theoretical background of my work. Here, I reiterate that I consider families as an organized system and the individual as a contributing member, part of the process that creates and maintains the patterns that regulate behaviors (P. Minuchin, 1985). I have stressed how, during developmental transitions, any change that affects adolescent children also influences other family members, as part of the same relational context.

Since then, my research has focused greater efforts in devising a strong methodology strictly attuned to and coherent with the theoretical framework. I consider as unit of analysis, the family as a whole. However, after the theoretical considerations I argued in the previous paragraphs, some methodological aspects can be specified as well. Among them, the issue of level of analysis is at the core of the study of interactive processes (see p. 14).

This is why also in this study I will point out how the individual contribution of the adolescent child to the process of change of the entire family is connected to its specific relational pattern (quiet, drifting, stormy, and critical).

The possibility of outlining individual's behavior starting from the textures of relational contexts recalls the idea of *schismogenesis,* widely examined by Bateson (1958; 1972) with reference to different relational contexts. He claimed that schismogenesis refers to "a process of *differentiation* in the norms of individual behavior resulting from *cumulative interactions between individuals* [italics mine]" (1958: 175).

The process of differentiation takes place through different positions assumed by the individual (the adolescent) within an interactive system (the family). In particular, s/he can take a symmetrical position by defining her/himself at the same level as the others or an asymmetrical position by defining her/himself at a complemetary level with respect to the others.

The reference to asymmetric and symmetric *schismogenesis* calls into question the issues of power that, as highlighted above, become relevant in the transition of family members through adolescence. In this work, I also claim that the display of power is observable through the analysis of family discourses. The analysis of the power relations should allow for the undestanding of the individual differentiation of the adolescent and the interactive pattern within which the adolescent differentiates.

Some methodological questions may be raised after these considerations. How is it possible to draw the boundaries of the individual's position, which emerges in the sequences of interaction? More precisely, what are the indicators that allow for the "tracking" of the adolescent's stances in the family talks?

2. Aims

The main aim of the present study is to deepen the understanding of the four patterns of family interaction described in the previous chapter (quiet, drifting, stormy, and critical), considering both coordination and oscillations. While I will use the construct of coordination as I did in the previous studies, the construct of oscillation will be re-defined paying particular attention to the *relational* aspects of *oscillation*.

I intend to shed light on the *forms of sequential interactions* that family members co-construct through a) the anlysis of synchronies and fractures in coordination, b) the analysis of the oscillations displayed through the *stancetaking* process about the ongoing family changes.

Given that taking stances on a specific object implies that a person evaluates someone or something, positioning him/herself through different alignments, I expect that:

1. family oscillations are observable when an alternation of symmetrical and asymmetrical positions takes place in the alignment of each family member with one another, and

2. no family oscillations are observable when each family member aligns with the other, *keeping* the same position either at a symmetrical level or at an asymmetrical one. The process of *stancetaking* should allow for the observation of the ongoing power negotiation. Consequently, each *pattern of*

family interaction described before (quiet, drifting, stormy and critical) should be defined by a specific *form of sequential interactions,* which accounts for the display of the power dynamics.

Moreover, considering that the focus of my work is on adolescence as a privileged window through which the processes of change are observable, and power negotiation is of peculiar interest for child adjustment and identity development, I intend to focus on *how* adolescent children contribute in the construction of the peculiar *forms of sequential interactions*.

To pursue these goals, twenty families were involved and the methodological procedure was further developed.

3. Method

3.1 Participants

Twenty families with at least an adolescent child (14-16) participated on a volunteer basis. As to parents, 18 were cohabiting and/or married couples and two were separated (only mothers participated with her children); as for adolescents, 16 were males (*mean age*= 14.69) and four females (*mean age*=14.50). Three families had an only child; ten families had two children; three families had three children; and four families had more than three children. In three families, one or more siblings refused to participate (see Table 4.1, where *n.p.* stands for not present). In the same family, if more than a child was in the adolescence age range (13-16), we chose the youngest as the target of our analysis.

Table 4.1
Personal data: names, age and sex of family members

Families	Mother's age	Father's age	Adolescent's age and sex (M/F)	Siblings' age and sex (M/F)
Alpi	50	50	Giovanni 15 (M)	Christian 20 (M)
Armani	44	-	Emanuele 14 (M)	Zeno 12 (M)
Beati	53	61	Lorenzo 14 (M)	Paolo 30 (n.p.) (M)
				Alberta 26 (n.p.) (F)
Benedetti	41	48	Teresa 14 (F)	Elisa 13 (F)
				Mara 11 (F)
				Giulio 6 (M)
Carini	46	-	Lucio 14 (M)	Guglielmo 12 (M)
Carta	59	59	Gianluca 16 (M)	Antonio 30 (M)
				Simone 28 (n.p.) (M)
Donati	47	49	Stefano 15 (M)	-
Follini	44	44	Roberto 14 (M)	Chiara 8 (F)
Giuliani	46	50	Daniele 14 (M)	-
Grandi	42	46	Carlo 15 (M)	Jacopo 11 (M)
Liberi	52	52	Gianmaria 14 (M)	Lorenzo 25 (M)
				Filippo 22 (n.p.) (M)
				Elena 12 (F)
Manini	44	50	Erica 15 (F)	Stefania 18 (F)
Pani	43	59	Ombretta 14 (F)	Giorgia 17 (F)
				Luca 15 (M)
				Matteo 11 (M)
Poggiali	42	44	Edoardo 16 (M)	Vittoria 20 (F)
				Augusto 9 (M)
Righi	44	44	Alberto 15 (M)	Bartolomeo 13 (M)
				Ramona 12 (F)
				Andrea 6 (M)
Rossetti	43	43	Dario 15 (M)	Martina 17 (F)
Sassi	38	39	Rosa 14 (F)	Sara 15 (F)
Toscani	50	54	Nicolas 14 (M)	Rebecca 17 (F)
Zanotti	50	58	Andrea 15 (M)	-
Zurlini	50	55	Marcello 15 (M)	Lorenza 17 (F)

All the interviews were collected in a period of six months from December 2007 to May 2008. The procedure for the recruitment was the same as for the previous studies while important changes were introduced in the setting for data collection.

3.2 A new setting for the data collection

The new setting chosen for conducting and video recording the family interviews of this study was the families' home (Figure 4.2).

Figure 4.2. The living room of a family's home where the video recording was conducted

Two reasons were at the core of this choice: one practical and one methodological. As for the practical one, I favored the participation of a larger group of families, recruiting them from more cities of the region. Because of the distance from Parma, for some family members was a problem to reach the laboratory of observation, located in the Department of Psychology.

The second reason concerned the ecological validity of the laboratory setting. Families in a familiar environment feel more comfortable, especially young children. Children can walk around, play, and when tired, leave the room where data collection is conducted. Differently from anthropologists and ethnographers whose main interest is the study of houses and artifacts (David & Kramer, 2001; Ochs *et al.,* 2006; Pontecorvo & Arcidiacono, 2007), we did not require the video recording to be conducted in a specific room. My main concern was that family members could participate in a quiet and comfortable place.

Furthermore, since the technique of the *family interview* had been well established and tested in the previous studies, laboratory equipment for supervision, such as the *one-way mirror,* was no longer needed.

After families' consent to participate was obtained, an appointment was arranged by a phone call, and some details about the video recording procedure and the data consent were given. Families were also informed that a research assistant and I would reach their homes in a day and time most convenient for all family members.

Once in their homes, family members chose a comfortable place for video recording. We mentioned that the room was to contain no noise and that music players and televisions were to be switched off. Most of the families chose the living room, as people favor conversations among couches and small tables.

As family members sat on couches, the research assistant set the camera on the tripod and chose the right angle to include the entire family. I sat on a separate chair, not in front of them, but on a semi-circle position to include all the members in my line of sight. The research assistant sat in the back, close to the camera, and monitored the videotaping for the entire interview. The recording started when I begun explaining the procedure for the data consent and continued until the end of the interview.

3.3 Preparation of the material for the analysis

This new corpus of data consists of 21 hours and 10 minutes of videotaped material. All twenty interviews were at first transcribed and divided in sequential frames, following the conventions I presented in the Study 1. After this, three steps were followed to prepare material for the analysis:

1. Individuation and selection of all the *utterances that trigger a sequence* of free and spontaneous interactional exchanges among family members independently from the questions and the intervention of the interviewer. Suggestions from discourse and conversational analytic methods were considered;

2. Focus on the *quality* of the utterances through which family members aligned in the interactional exchanges. Each interactional exchange was considered finished when family members stopped reacting to the topic debated in the sequential interaction;

3. Application of the *coding system* (described in details in the following paragraph) to each of the selected interactional sequence.

The analysis was conducted on parts of family interviews that largely differed in length. Reliability was assessed throughout the material preparation and the analysis: two independent judges and I worked independently and an agreement higher than 80% was reached.

3.4 Data analysis

Scholars (Goodwin, 1990; Schegloff, 2007) have stated that to study the impact of different utterances in interaction, the analyst must examine not only the utterance itself, but also the *sequential organization* of utterances in the interactional exchange. As Goodwin specifies "utterances in conversation occupy a uniquely interstitial position in that they are simultaneously *context shaped* (that is they are built in response to the frameworks of intelligibility and action created by the immediately prior utterance) and *context renewing* in that each utterance provides the contextual point of departure for the action(s) that will follow it" (2006: 443). In other words, the action that a speaker might be doing with an utterance, may have implications for what actions should or might be done in the next utterance as a response to it, thus *sequentiality* is the criteria followed in the analysis of the stances family members took in interaction.

In line with this consideration, the research team devised a coding system for the analysis of the *utterances* that shaped participant stances. After accumulating a collection of interactions, the judges coded different types of utterances considering sequentiality and, correspondingly, assigned specific labels.

3.4.1 Utterance coding scheme

We called "provocative" all those utterances that triggered different kinds of alignments expressed through *five different* types of utterances (directive, challenge, opposition, compliance, justification) (Figure 4.3).

Both *verbal* and *nonverbal* indexes were considered for the analysis of the utterances.
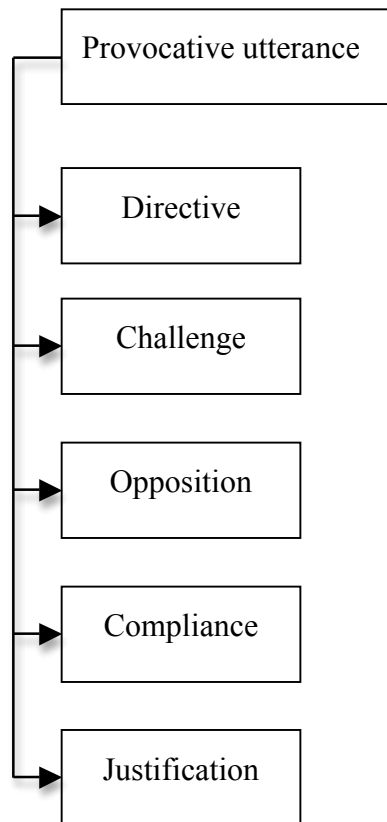
Figure 4.3. Utterances' coding scheme for the analysis of the *stancetaking* process.

Provocative utterance. These utterances are defined provocative as they, in fact "provoke" a sequence of free and spontaneous interactional exchanges among family members. An unspecific connotation was given purposely to these utterances, as no prototypical forms were found. The fact that they are provocative is observed in what *follows* them. Namely, they trigger a sequence of different kinds of utterances. In the examples below, the subject (S) expresses an evaluation about Luca's (S2, the adolescent) behavior that leads to a cascade of interactions among family members (S3, the mother) (Example 1). S2 opposes to S, while S3 challenges S, and S2 concludes the exchange opposing to S again.

Example 1

```
S  Luca e' sempre stato molto critico   S  Luca has always been very critical
S2 no non e' vero                       S2 no it's not true
S3 beh insomma spesso dai!              S3 well it often happened come on
S  infatti scusa anche a scuola con i   S  yes indeed also at school you used
   prof. alzavi spesso la voce e-          to increase your voice when you
   ((guardando Luca))                      were talking to the teachers and-
S2 adesso non esageriamo!                  ((looking at Luca))
                                        S2  well don't exaggerate!
```

Directive. All utterances that refer to acts of control, orders (Example 2a), or direct requests were considered as directives (Example 2b). As for verbal indexes, these utterances are defined by the imperative tense, commonly used in Italian language to express orders and direct questions. As for nonverbal indexes, the *eye gaze* is considered an indicator of a directive utterance: a subject can a) stare at someone else by saying something, b) gazing at him/her without saying anything, or c) direct the gaze toward the interlocutor and widening his/her eyes.

Example 2a.

```
S  Ieri sera sono rientrato piu' tardi    S  Last night I came back later
S2 Dille che cosa hai fatto la scorsa notte!  S2 Tell her what you did last night!
```

Example 2b.

```
S  Ieri sera sono rientrato piu' tardi    S  Last night I came back later.
S2 Che cosa hai fatto la scorsa notte?    S2 What did you do last night?
   ((fissando la figlia adolescente))        ((staring at his adolescent daughter))
```

Challenge. Challenges are observed when a subject "takes action against" the interlocutor, such as re-launching a competition based on new positions. The indexes taken in consideration for challenges in the interactions are: *exclamations*, *increased tone of the voice* and *hand gestures* (Example 3).

Example 3.

```
S    Martina si lamenta sempre per      S    Martina is always complaining about
     qualcosa                                something.
S2   No non e' vero sei tu che mi dai    S2   No it's not true It's you that is
     sempre fastidio quando studio            always bothering me when I'm studying
     perche' non hai niente da fare!          because you don't have anything to
                                              do!
```

Opposition. Oppositions are utterances that refer to a "resistance to" the definition given by the interlocutor. Different from directives and challenges, the subject expresses disagreement *only* by refusing the definition of the interlocutor, rather than controlling or acting against him/her (Example 4). On a verbal level, opposition is observable by the use of grammatical forms and verbs that refer to disagreements (no, but, instead, I disagree, etc.) and on a nonverbal one, through *head movements* such as shaking the head.

Example 4.

```
S    Ultimamente tieni la tua camera    S    Lately you have been keeping your
     piu' in disordine                       room messy
S2   No non e' vero                      S2   No it's not true
     ((scuote la testa mentre guarda          ((shakes his head while looking at
     S))                                      S))
```

Compliance. These types of utterance are defined as "being in line with", and this is a way to express agreements, then *accepting* the definition given by the interlocutor (Example 5). It is observable both at the verbal level (by linguistic forms, e.g., "yes," "it's true," or "I agree") and at the analog one, by nodding.

Example 5.

```
S   Nelle ultime settimane esco anche al        S   In the last weeks, I go out also on
    sabato sera                                      Saturday night
S2  Si e' vero ((annuendo)) hai ragione in      S2  Yes it's true((nodding)) actually
    effetti esci di piu'                             you go out more often
```

Justification. With these utterances a subject accept the definition given by the other, however different from compliances, "defends" him/herself, accepts the responsibility for the fact in question, but denies the pejorative quality associated with it. Thus, justification is coded as referred to the self not to the interlocutor (Example 6). As for verbal indicators, similar grammatical forms as for compliance are observable (e.g., "it's true," "I agree," etc.). However, these are followed by expressions such as "but" or "however," which introduce an explanation of the speaker's position, sometimes followed by specific verbs or forms such as "I think", "in my opinion". Analog indicators can be identified, for instance, in the gaze moving down.

Example 6.

```
S   Adesso comunque sei diventato piu'          S   Actually now you are becoming more
    riservato                                        closed
S2  E' vero ma non sempre ho voglia             S2  Yes it is true but I don't always
    di raccontare tutto e poi spesso torno a        want to tell you everything and then
    casa che sono stanco                             I'm often tired when I'm back home
```

The definitions of the utterances are summarized in the Table 4.2.

Table 4.2
Definitions of the utterances

Types of utterances	Definitions
Provocative	Unspecific utterances that trigger interactional exchanges
Directive	Acts of controls and/or direct questions
Challenge	Taking action against interlocutor's definition
Opposition	Resisting to the interlocutor's definition (disagreement)
Compliance	Accepting the interlocutor's definition (agreement)
Justification	Defending from the interlocutor's definition

For each family, every selected interactional exchange was coded considering the different types of utterances described above. Afterwards, coders conducted a further analysis in identifying oscillations (in the new relational definition) and coordination in the sequence of interaction.

In particular, two other aspects were considered.

1. The *alternation* between up and down positions as indicator of *family oscillations;* in contrast to *stable* positions of family members (either up or down) as indicator of absence of family oscillations.

2. The *synchrony* or *fracture* of *coordination.* For coordination, we used the same coding scheme described in the previous chapters, with particular attention to the indicators that account for power aspects. In accordance with some research (Watts, 1991; Tannen, 2001; 2007), three codes were observed in the unfolding interaction: a) overlaps, b) interruptions, and c) substitutions. More precisely, if in the previous studies we only considered the presence or lack of these indicators of coordination, in the present analysis we considered the specific meaning they assume in the interaction.

   a) *Overlaps*. Two kinds of overlap are considered: one indicates that symmetrical alignments are taking place as in a competition in which a

member re-affirms his/her own position above the interlocutor. The other is a "cooperative" kind of overlap (Tannen, 2001) that is accompanied by indicators of synchrony such as smiling and no interruptions.

b) *Interruptions*. Indicate symmetric alignments in which a subject prevents the interlocutor from completing the expression of his/her position.

c) *Substitutions*. Allow a subject to prevent the interlocutor from expressing his/her position by anticipating him/her and then affirming his/her own position.

An exploration of the "arena" where the interactions took place was also conducted. Given that the *stancetaking process* implies an *object* that family members evaluate and to which position themselves, coders identified all the *topics* discussed by family members in the interviews that allowed for the display of the interactional sequences.

In the next paragraphs, results will be presented focusing first on the *topics* of the interactive sequences following a *provocative utterance* and then on the details of the *forms of sequential interactions*.

4. Results

4.1 *What* family members say: the *sensitive topics* triggering family interactions

Before discussing in detail the *forms* of interaction that characterize the four *patterns* of family interaction (quiet, drifting, stormy, and critical), I will focus on the *topics* debated in the family interviews.

Differently from conversations and discourses naturally occurring in family contexts (Pontercorvo & Arcidiacono, 2007; Tannen, Kendall & Gordon, 2007), interviews have peculiarities that, not surprisingly, can direct the conversation toward spepcific topics. The structure of this technique itself requires the interviewer to carry out data collection by selecting specific areas or thematic contents consistent with his/her research goal; thus, the researcher has more control than the interviewees over the course of the

interaction. Nevertheless, *family interview*[10] is intended to stimulate *circularity* among family members as a way to limit the asymmetry between interviewer and interviewees and to favor the conversation.

Furthermore, as we stated elsewhere (Everri *et al.* 2009), family members can hardly "hide" the patterns they have consolidated through everyday interactions in the course of their lives. Likewise, some topics should become more salient than others especially in peculiar periods of family life. Thus, topics discussed during a family interview should be considered not simply as content, but rather as the "arena" of meaningful topics that permits one to observe the display of interactional dynamics.

In line with these considerations, the analysis of this new corpus of interviews points out that the introduction of a specific topic or the narration of particular episodes activated interactive sequences, as if family members were discussing or confronting as they normally do. These topics were defined *sensitive.*

The connotation of sensitivity here is not intended to stress that some topics can not directly and explicitly be discussed as they hurt people's morality (Linell & Bredmar, 1996), rather they are topics that solicited the "spontaneous" participation of family members in the ongoing talk, and for this reason, they are sensitive.

Some of the topics mentioned in the interview were very intimate, such as the reference to transgressive issues (going out without the parents' permission): in some families they did not trigger any reaction, while in others they launched a long interactive exchange. On the contrary, topics apparently ordinary, such as going out with new friends or the request to have a cell phone, were particularly sensitive to some families, as evident when all family members were passionately involved in the discussion; in other families, the same topics were almost ignored. This is to say that it is not the quality of the content *itself* that is relevant for the analysis of family interactions instead it is that some topics more than others and, for that specific family, trigger a *stancetaking process.*

The sensitive topics were indentified by analyzing, frame *by* frame, all parts of the interviews in which at least two family members were involved in sequential exchanges. For each of these interactional exchanges, the research team (two independent judges and I) considered the specific thematic issues that family members were discussing.

---

[10] For more details about the technique of the family interview see Study 1.

Afterward, a label that summarized the thematic area of the sensitive topic was assigned (see Table 4.3). Inter-judges reliability was calculated, and a level of agreement higher than 80% was reached.

Table 4.3
Sensitive topics discussed in each frame for each family

Families	N. frame	Sensitive topics	N. interactive exchanges
Alpi	II	Discussions between brothers	8
	III	Adolescent's organization	9
	IV	Increased adolescent's competences	10
	V	Family's organization	21
	VI	Curfew	15
	X	Mother's role	4
	XI	Discussions for transportation	25
Armani	II	Relationship between brothers	11
	IV	Parents' separation	5
	VII	Cell phone	12
	VIII	Relationship between adolescent and mother	7
	IX	Relationship between brothers	13
Beati	IV	Father's role	11
	VI	Democracy in making decisions (Ep.)	36
	VII	Relationship between mother and adolescent	10
	VIII	Relationship between father and adolescent (Ep.)	17
Benedetti	VI	Conflicts between parents and adolescent	55
	VII	Adolescent's request to go out with friends	8
	VIII	Adolescent's increased privacy	53
Carini	II	Physical changes	4
	III	To go out without permission (Ep.)	8
	IV	New and old friends	9
	V	Father's role	9
	VI	Conflicts between mother and adolescent	12
	XI	Presence of the father	8
	XII	To leave children alone at home	6
Carta	II	Parenting role	27
	V	Relationship between brothers	13
	VII	School	25
	VIII	Adolescent's requests to go out at night	16
	IX	Adolescent's summer holidays	15
	XI	Disco	28
Donati	I	Scooter (Ep.)	16
	IV	Scooter (Ep.)	12
	VIII	Physical distance (Ep.)	43
	X	Future of the adolescent	38
Follini	III	Increased control over the adolescent's life	3
	V	Adolescent's increased privacy	27
	VI	Discussions between mother and adolescent	12

Giuliani	V	Scooter and disco	40
	VI	Relationship between mother and adolescent	20
	VII	Adolescent's travels alone	39
Grandi	V	Parenting role	8
	VI	Adolescent's request to go out at night	17
	VII	Relationship between brothers	18
Liberi	II	Relationship among siblings	13
	V	Adolescent's requests to go out	11
	VII	Differences between brother and sister	8
	VIII	Cell phone	59
	IX	Future of the adolescent	13
Manini	VI	Sister's boyfriend	9
	VII	Relationship between sisters	63
	VIII	Discussions between the sisters	16
	IX	Disco and value of money	62
Pani	III	Scooter	13
	VI	Dependence on the father for the transportation	23
	VII	Discussions between father and children	54
Poggiali	VII	Conflicts between parents and adolescent	11
	VIII	Curfew	18
	IX	Relationship between mother and sister	7
	XI	Conflicts among siblings	14
	XII	Physical distance (Ep.)	26
Righi	III	Increased privacy of the adolescent's brother	15
	IV	Scooter	23
	V	Adolescent's girlfriend (Ep.)	9
	VI	Discussions between mother and adolescent	21
	VIII	Request to increase the weekly tip	22
Rossetti	IV	Relationship between mother and daughter	28
	V	Differences between the siblings	33
Sassi	VIII	Punishments and rules	9
	XI	Future of sisters	25
Toscani	V	Relationship between siblings	15
	VI	Sister's boyfriend	10
	VII	Relationship between parents and children	11
	VIII	Relationship between mother and sister	60
	X	Future of the sister	4
Zanotti	III	Adolescents' requests to go abroad	13
	IV	Scooter	37
	V	Relationship between mother and son	30
	VI	Conflicts between father and adolescent	6
	VII	Conflicts between mother and adolescent	18
	VIII	Separation between parents and adolescent (Ep.)	7
Zurlini	VI	Parties with friends	8

As shown in the table above, for each family we reported a) the frames in which the sensitive topics were observed, b) the labels that summarize the sensitive topics and, in the last column, c) the number of the interactional exchanges family members used to

confront on sensitive topics. The abbreviation "Ep." enclosed in parentheses stands for "episode" and it specifies that sensitive topics were discussed with reference to the specific episodes where the adolescent was the protagonist.

Let us first consider the *number of frames* (second column of the table) and the *number of interactive exchanges* (fourth column of the table).

We suggest that the number of frames, where sensitive topics were observed, should be considered in the confrontation with the number of interactive exchanges that characterize each frame. In the same frame, family members, indeed, alternated interactive sequences on sensitive topics to detailed descriptions of their points of view and feelings in a discursive form close to monologues. Namely, the interviewee's point of view did not trigger any reaction from the other family members who, in these cases, participated as an "audience." However, considering that the aim of this work is to focus on the parts of interview in which the interactive exchanges were observable, we focused only on the parts of interactive exchanges for each frame, rather than on the ones of monologues.

The number of frames in which family members discussed sensitive topics was variable: from a minimum of one in the Zurlini family to a maximum of seven in the Alpi and Carini families. In some families, like the Benedettis, sensitive topics were observed in only three frames, whereas in the frames VI and VIII, family members confronted each other for more than fifty interactive exchanges (55 and 53, respectively). On the contrary, in the Alpi and Carini families, the number of exchanges was very short and rapid (as for the Alpi's, the range went from 5 to 25 and for the Carini's from 4 to 12) while the number of frames was higher in the other families.

These evidences show that some families take up few sensitive topics (low number of frames) that are examined through long interactional sequences (high number of interactive exchanges), while others tend to focus their discussions on different kinds of sensitive topics (high number of frames) however through shorter exchanges (low number of interactive exchanges).

Between these two extremes, there are families (Liberi, Manini and Donati) that talked about sensitive topics in four/five frames and alternated between long and short interactive exchanges. More precisely, in the Manini family, sensitive topics were

debated in four frames and through interactive exchanges that varied from 9 to 63. Likewise, in the Liberi family, the sensitive topic of the cell phone (frame VIII) involved family members in interactive exchanges much longer in sequence (59 exchanges) than those about the differences between siblings (8 exchanges) or the requests of the adolescent to go out more often (11 exchanges). Again, in the Donati family, the episode about the physical distance (43 exchanges) was discussed in a much longer sequence than the scooter episodes (frames I and IV) that lasted 16 and 12 exchanges, respectively.

In these cases, a *hierarchy* of sensitive topics is a possible explanation: in a family, some topics may be considered more sensitive than others when they involve family members for longer sequences of interaction.

As for the *types of the sensitive topics* (see third column of table 4.3), a closer look showed that most of them referred to a broader thematic area that we defined by the expression of *distance regulation.* Distance regulation is intended here to stress that most of the sensitive topics referred to a semantic polarity about both closeness or togetherness and distance or separateness at different levels (emotional, physical and symbolic).

In almost all families, members discussed the emotional aspects of distance regulation, such as the changes in the relationship between parents and children or between siblings. In only four families (Benedetti, Carini, Poggiali and Zanotti) the reference to conflicts was explicit as in the others, family members specified that the amount of confrontations increased in the last years, however, using a less intense term as "discussion," as we reported in the labels of the sensitive topics.

Other sensitive topics concerned issues of physical and symbolic distance. As for physical distance, we considered the increased privacy of the adolescent and the request to meet people and attend places (new friends, boy/girlfriends, discos and pubs) that takes the adolescent far from the family context. As for symbolic distance, we intended this as a reference to specific requests such as buying a scooter, a sensitive topic mentioned in five families (Donati, Giuliani, Pani, Righi and Zanotti), or a cell phone, discussed in two families (Armani and Liberi). These objects can be considered, in fact, as "symbols of belonging," as they allow adolescents to build a connection with relational contexts other than the family and, contemporary, to define themselves and be identified as members of the peer groups.

Interestingly, six families out of twenty (Beati, Carini, Donati, Poggiali, Righi and Zanotti) discussed sensitive topics on distance regulation through the narration of specific *episodes*. We noticed that family members brought past moments of their family history in which the adolescent served as the protagonist into the course of the current talk. Thus, it is the narration of past experiences that becomes the arena for the display of the interactive sequences.

Episodes that took place in the past can be evoked for many purposes, such as to *launch or justify* present time practices (Ochs & Capps, 2001). In line with this, in the Poggiali family, for example, the sensitive topic, which family members debated in the frame XII, concerned physical distance. The father said that he cannot understand why the adolescent child refuses to accept a car ride from him to school. The mother agrees with him and recalls an episode to justify her position: she recalled that when the adolescent was a child in the kindergarten, he had refused to be taken there by the parents even at that time.

In other cases (Beati, Righi and Zanotti), the narration of particular episodes instead had the function to *provoke* the interactive exchanges. In frame VIII, the mother of Zanotti family recalled when her husband and she had to manage their first separation from their child for a long period of time. This was the starting point for a confrontation on how, nowadays, they deal with the issue of physical distance, considering the increased requests of the adolescent to spend more time in other contexts.

Furthermore, we noticed that past episodes had *both* the functions of triggering interactive exchanges and to justify the specific positions that family members took in the unfolding talk (Carini and Donati). In the Donati family, for example, in three frames out of four, the parents recalled past episodes about scooter and physical distance, where the adolescent was the protagonist. The narration of these episodes not only activated confrontation among family members, but it also allowed them to add details as a way to justify and sustain their specific positions in the talk.

In sum, I have drawn attention to the sensitive topics that family members discuss through the display of interactive sequences. This "snapshot" on *what* triggers different sequences of interaction was the necessary step to move to the focus on the specific *forms of sequential interactions*.

4.2 *How f*amily members say what they say: The *forms of sequential interactions*

The results that I present in this section are focused on the description of the *forms* that the sequences of interaction take when family members are talking about family changes, previously defined as sensitive topics.

This calls into question the notions of *oscillation* and *coordination,* the constructs that are at the core of the study of *microtransitions* observable in the four patterns of family interaction I had depicted in the Study 2. Thus, before presenting in the details this new section of results, I will reiterate the aspects that specify the *four patterns* of family interaction.

These patterns emerged from the combination of fractures and synchrony in coordination on one side, and individual and family oscillations on the other. *Family oscillations* were particularly notable, as they accounted for the way family members were defining and acknowledging the ongoing changes.

Oscillation was observed in the alternation of different opinions or points of view expressed by each family member during the interviews. For instance, the father may describe the adolescent as childish, while the adolescent claims that he is very mature; later in the interview is the father who mentions episodes in which the adolescent is depicted as mature, while the adolescent recognizes his immaturity on some issues.

Coordination was observed when family interactions were synchronic as opposed to when they displayed fractures.

The four patterns of family interactions emerged from the combination of these dimensions and they were defined as:

a) *Critical*: no family oscillations and fractures in coordination.

b) *Quiet*: no family oscillations and synchrony in coordination.

c) *Drifting*: family oscillations and synchrony in coordination.

d) *Stormy*: family oscillations and fractures in coordination.

In this study (Study 3), I move a step further in the description of these four patterns of family interaction, focusing on the *relational side* of *oscillation*.

The theoretical considerations and the methodological advances I presented in the previous paragraphs allowed for the introduction of the notion of *stance,* which permits a new definition of oscillation based on *analog* indicators. Oscillation is then studied as a

stancetaking process observable in the ongoing talks where family members express *evaluations*, *positions,* and *alignments* on specific sensitive topics.

This *stancetaking* process is an expression of power negotiation. As I argued before, when family members take stances in the course of interaction, align with the others by positioning themselves *up* or *down* with respect to their interlocutors, thereby reflecting the confrontation or the confirmation of family hierarchy.

These positions can be *stable* in that each family member never changes the way in which s/he aligns with the others, or *alternated* when, on the contrary, positions are switched between up and down. This process is triggered by specific utterances I defined as *provocative*.

In the description of the patterns, I will focus on the specific *forms of sequential interactions* defining them. More precisely, I will consider:

    a. *Provocative utterances* that trigger the interactive sequences.

    b. *Oscillation.* Family oscillations are defined by the *alternation* of relational position among family members. No family oscillations are evident when family members *maintain* their relational positions.

    c. *Coordination.* As in the previous study, *synchrony* and *fractures* are the indicators for presence or absence of coordination.

Excerpts from the twenty family interviews will be presented to highlight the forms of sequential interactions displayed in each family. For each excerpt, I will report the specific utterances that express the different positions starting from the *provocative utterance* of a family member. Abbreviations for both the utterances and the participants in the interaction are used for practical reasons (Table 4.4).

Table 4.4
Abbreviations used in the presentation of results

Labels	Abbreviations
Utterances	
Provocative	p.u.
Directive	dir.
Challenge	ch.
Opposition	opp.
Compliance	com.
Justification	just.
Participants	
Mother	M
Father	F
Adolescent	A
Brother	B (B2, B3, …)*
Sister	S (S2, S3, …)*
Interviewer	I

Note: * B2, B3 or S2, S3 are used in case of more than one brother and sister.
The progressive number stands for the birth order.

On the left side of each extracts, I indicate the participants' abbreviations, the kind of utterance used, and the interlocutor to whom the utterance is addressed. For example, if the adolescent *challenges* the father, I will indicate it as: A ch. F.

Let us go now into the details of every pattern, starting from the ones showing fractures in coordination as the description of the forms of the sequential interactions requires more attention.

4.2.1. *Re*-defining the four patterns of family interaction

4.2.1.1. The critical pattern: stable-symmetrical forms of sequential interactions

In the critical pattern, two different forms of sequential interactions were observable:

a) the adolescent and one parent align by positioning themselves at a *symmetrical* level (opposing and challenging each other), while the other parent justifies or complies some times with the adolescent, and some other times with his/her partner. Siblings, when present, either take the adolescent's side or the parents' one.

This form of sequential interaction was present in four families: Armani, Beati, Liberi and Pani.

b) the parents (and siblings), differently from the previous form, are together in keeping a *symmetrical* alignment, and the adolescent positions himself at the same level of parents by oppositions and challenges for some interactive exchanges. However, afterwards s/he switches to a down position. Two families, Carta and Donati, showed this form of interaction.

Both the forms of interaction were *stable* throughout the interview as each family member kept always the same position (either up or down) in the alignment with the others throughout the interaction. Thus *no family oscillations* started, while *fractures* in coordination were frequently observed. Let us now consider the first form of interaction (a) that can be summarized as following:

Adolescent and one parent develop a symmetrical interaction while the other parent (and siblings) shifts in supporting either one or the other.

This form is *stable* throughout the sequential exchanges.

The first excerpt refers to the interview with the Beati family: Lorenzo is the adolescent and he has two older siblings not present in the interview, a brother (30 years old) and a sister (26 years old).

Excerpt 4.1 - Beati family. P (father), M (mother), L (adolescent), I (interviewer)
Frame VI. Sensitive topic: Democracy in making decisions (Ep.)

F p.u.	230.	P	e (0.3) no a nove a nove anni il brighello mi ricordo ancòra e era vicino a quella poltrona *((indica la poltrona della sala))* non so quale discussione stavamo facendo e lo stavamo sgridando un po' e lui ma insomma in questa casa non c'è democrazia!	230.	P	and (0.3) uhm when he was nine the urchin I still remember he was close to that armchair *((index the armchair in the living-room))* I don't remember what we were arguing about but we were scolding him a bit and him [said] well we have no democracy in this home!
A ch. F	231.	L	e lo ribadisco tuttora!	231.	L	and I say it again right now!
F ch. A	232.	P	e lo ribadisce tuttora (0.2) però a nove anni da un brighellino alto così noi siamo rimasti così perché ti senti dire la <u>democrazia</u>	232.	P	and he says it again (0.2) but at nine a little urchin like that we were struck 'cause you hear <u>democracy</u>(0.2)

(0.2)

		Italian			English
M com. F	*233.*	M	eh si e' vero *((guardando il marito))*	*233.*	M	eh yes it's true *((looking at her husband))*
F ch. A	234.	P	eh però la democrazia c'è	234.	P	but we have democracy
A opp. F	235.	L	non è vero *((padre dice qualcosa e non ben articolato))*-	235.	L	it's not true *((the father said something in a low voice))*-
F opp. A	236.	P	eh pero' io sono il capo *((sorridendo))*	236.	P	but I am the boss *((smiling))*
	237.	I	ma nel senso che tu che cosa rivendicheresti Filippo (0.2) non so di comportamenti che sono più democratici?	237.	I	but in the sense that you Filippo what do you claim (0.2) like more democratic behaviors?
A ch. F	238.	L	e (0.2) tipo lasciarmi scegliere di più qualcosa come tutte quelle che abbiamo detto finora come la televisione e i libri e anche il gameboy e poi vorrei il computer e senza [democrazia nisba!	238.	L	well (0.2) like I'd like to be free to choose like all the things I said before like the TV and the books and the gameboy and then I'd like a computer but without democracy [nothing!
F ch. A	239.	P	[e vivere senza regole quindi (0.3) fare quello che si vuole eh? Ah!	239.	P	[so live without any rules (0.3) do whatever you want right? Ah!
A opp. F	*240.*	L	no ma almeno la democrazia (0.3) così c'è mamma che è un po' variabile *((annuisce e sorride))*	240.	L	no but at least the democracy (0.3) mom is a bit variable though *((nods and smiles))*
F dir. A	241.	P	però ci sono delle regole ci sono delle leggi in democrazia che bisogna rispettare	241.	P	but there are rules there are laws in democracy you must obey to them

This sequential exchange is provoked by the introduction of a past episode narrated by the father. He recalls that when Lorenzo was a child and the parents reproached him, he protested by stating that there was no democracy in the family. This triggers the prompt reply of Lorenzo who challenges his father; the father relauches another challenge (232), while the mother takes the father's side expressing compliance both verbally and nonverbally (233). Later on, Lorenzo calls his mother into question (240), who nods and smiles as to agree with him, while the father increases the symmetry with his son using a directive utterance (241).

In this sequence *fractures* are observable in the expression of oppositions with interruptions (235-236), and of challenges with overlaps (238-239) underlined also by exclamations. The repetition of some verbal forms can be considered indicators of

fractures in coordination. For example, the repetition of "e" and "e però" at the beginning of a sentence in Italian stresses and increases the pace of the talk, with the consequence of conveying a symmetrical escalation.

In Excerpt 4.2, the same form of sequential interaction is shown, but the role of the parents is reversed.

In the Liberi family, Gianmaria, the adolescent, keeps a symmetrical interaction with both parents. However, in this family, it is the mother who is directive, challenging, and opposing towards the adolescent. The father, instead, alternates an asymmetrical position toward both the mother and the adolescent throughout the exchanges. This sequence of interactions is more complex than the previous one, as it is a family with numerous children: Luciano, 25; Filippo, 22; and Elena 13. Filippo did not participate in the interview. Consider the extract in the next page.

Excerpt 4.2 – Liberi family. P (father), M (mother), G (adolescent), L (brother), E (sister), I (interviewer)

Frame VIII. Sensitive topic: Cell phone

F p.u.	294.	P	sono privi di cellulare ancora loro due *((indica Gianmaria e Elena))*	*294.*	P	they don't have the cell phone yet *((point to Gianmaria and Elena))*
	295.	I	ah ecco questo e bello cioè non in tutte le famiglie funziona così	295.	I	ah right this is nice as I mean not in all families is like that
M ch. A, S	296.	M	si è bello! per loro mica tanto *((sorridendo))*	296.	M	yes it is! but it is not so nice for them *((smiling))*
	297.	I	non ne potete più siete gli unici? *((verso Gianmaria ed Elena))*	297.	I	can't you stand it any more right are you the only ones?
F com. M	298.	P	ma si dai e' bello distinguersi! *((con tono ironico e guardando Gianmaria))*	298.	P	but yes it nice to be different! *((with irony and looking at Gianmaria))*
A ch. F, M	299.	G	no mica tanto *((confusione generale))* no anche questo è un aspetto critico perché aspetta cosa dicono? ah che non siamo abbastanza grandi per usare il cellulare perché non lo usiamo in modo adeguato allora non ho capito chi dice quale sia il modo adeguato	299.	G	no not so much *((general confusion))* no also this is a critical aspect because wait what do they say? Ah yes we are not old enough to use the cell phone as we do not use it in a right way and though I don't understand who says which is the right way
M dir. A	300.	M	io lo dico-	300.	M	I say that-
A opp. M	301.	G	e no!	301.	G	and no!
B dir. A	302.	L	insomma io l'ho avuto a 15 anni quindi è giusto che tu lo abbia a quindici anni	302.	L	in short I got it when I was 15 then it is right you get it when you are 15
A dir. M	*303.*	G	e tu me l'hai proibito secondo te perché? *((la madre dice qualcosa a bassa voce))* [Cosa? *((guardando la madre))*	303.	G	and you have forbidden it to me and why in you opinion? *((the mother says something in a low voice))* [What *((looking at his mother))*
M dir. A	304.	M	[perché non hai ancora l'età	304.	M	[because you are still too young
F com. M	305.	P	non è indispensabile	305.	P	it is not fundamental
A ch. M	306.	G	perché non hai ancora l'età!	306.	G	because you are still too young!
S ch. A	307.	E	non ce l'hanno tutti (0.3) ci sono alcuni della scuola che non ce l'hanno	307.	E	it not that everybody owns it (0.3) some in our school don't have it
M ch. A	308.	M	ecco dai così siete originali	308.	M	come on so you are original
	309.	I	questa e' una regola che avete messo voi genitori *((guardando i genitori))*?	309.	I	Is this a rule that you parents have decided *((lookining at the parents))*?
A ch. M, F	310.	G	e' una stupida regola che hanno messo e non sis a perche' *((il padre tocca la spalla del figlio come per consolarlo))*	310.	G	It is a stupid relues they decided but none knoes why (0.2) *((the father touches his son shoulder as to comfort him))*

In this sequence, the father's statement about the cell phone activates an interactional exchange among all family members, including the siblings. The mother launches a challenge towards both the adolescent son and the daughter (296); the father is compliant with the mother; while the adolescent replies addressing a challenge toward both parents. Gianmaria upholds up positions mainly through challenges (306, 312) and even directives (303) addressed specifically toward the mother, who reciprocates him by positioning herself at the same level. The father, as the mother of the Beati family, sustains both the mother's positions and the adolescents' one by agreeing (nonverbally with the adolescent, 310). Interesting to note in this sequence is the siblings' positions: both the older brother (302) and the sister position themselves up with respect to their adolescent brother. For instance, the sister instead of taking up the challenge of the mother at the beginning of the exchange challenges Gianmaria (307).

Indicators of *fractures* in coordination are evident in the whole sequence (interruptions at points 300-301; overlaps at points 303-304), in particular substitutions are noteworthy, as they convey the attempt of the adolescent, in this case, to anticipate the others and then reaffirm his/her own poisiton (309-310).

In the next excerpt (Excerpt 4.3), for instance, the rapid succession of overlaps and interruptions arrives to the point in which participants cannot complete their utterances. Pani is another numerous family, as Ombretta, the adolescent has a one year older brother, Luca, and two more siblings: Giorgia (17 years old) and Matteo (11 years old).

Excerpt 4.3 – Pani family. P (father), M (mother), O (adolescent), L (brother), G (sister),
       I (interviewer)
       Frame VII. Senstitive topic: Discussions between father and children

| F p.u. | 256. | P | è più difficile ((sorridendo)) (0.3) cioè l'autorità cala credo (0.3) dopo è evidente che sul piano logico si fa- c'è più confronto e dibattito per cui bisogna poi trovare altre strade e sicuramente non discutere troppo (0.2) meglio ragionare però se si è certi di una opinione non è con la discussione che si riesce ad ottenere un indirizzo o un consenso (0.3) bisogna lavorarci un | 256. | P | it is more difficult now ((smiling)) (0.3) I mean the authority decreases I guess (0.3) then it is clear that on a logical level we have- there is more confrontation and debate so we have to find new paths and not discuss too much surely (0.2) it is better to think but if you are sure of a reason it is not by the discussion that you find a way or the consent (0.3) you need to work on it finally |

			po' insomma (…)			(…)
	257.	I	[e lei ((guardando la madre)) si sente cambiata nel rapporto con i suoi figli?	257.	I	[and you ((looking at the mother)) do you feel changed in the relationship with your children?
F dir. B	258.	P	[eh? ((guardando Luca))	258.	P	[what? ((looking at Luca))
B ch. F	259.	L	si cioè dici che se uno ha un parere è meglio non parlarne? ((il padre annuisce)) infatti secondo me e' così che-	259.	L	yes I mean if you have an opinion is better not to talk about it? ((the father nods)) indeed it not like that in my opinion as-
F ch. B	260.	P	no non è vero quello (0.2) alle volte si fa fatica a tenere una posizione o un'opinione è vero che magari tu insisti in un certo senso e io sono convinto di un'altra cosa e quindi se ne parlassimo da stasera a domattina secondo me io non cambierei idea	260.	P	no it is not true (0.2) sometimes it is difficult to keep a position or an opinion it is true that maybe you insist taking a direction and I'm convinced about something else so if we keep on discussing strting from this evening until tomorrow morning I think I'll not change my mind
B ch. F	261.	L	[e si!	261.	L	[yes indeed!
A ch. F	262.	O	[e va be' allora mi spiace ma il confronto di opinioni ci vuole	262.	O	[and then I'm sorry but you need to confront opionions
B com. A	263.	L	[e ma è questo	263.	L	[yes this is it
F com. A	264.	P	[si ci vuole	264.	P	[yes you need it
B ch. F	265.	L	[e ma allora è la tua opinione che va bene	265.	L	[but then it is your opinion that is right
F dir. A	266.	P	[e ma anche tu allora la tua opinione è quella che deve avere ragione?	266.	P	[but then also is it your opinion that must be the right one?
B opp. F	267.	L	è lo stesso discorso	267.	L	it is the same topic
A com. B	268.	O	solo che se non c'è il confronto	268.	O	only that you don't have the confrontation
F ch. A	269.	P	e no il confronto c'è (0.2) solo che si certe cose non si cambia idea anche se uno si confronta non si cambia idea ((la madre annuisce))	269.	P	and no you have the confrontation (0.2) only that on some issues you don't change your mind ((la madre annuisce))
A ch. F	270.	O	non è vero perché magari non ha mai sentito l'opinione di un altro allora o quello che pensa lui-	270.	O	it's not true as maybe you have never listened the other's opinion or what s/he thinks-
F opp. A	271.	P	si può approfondire si può cercare di imparare qualcosaltro ma non-	271.	P	you can deepen it and try to learn something else but not-

			Italian			English
A opp. F	272.	O	e appunto tu hai detto-	272.	O	and right you said that-
F opp. A	273.	P	no non solo-	273.	P	no not only-
A dir. F	274.	O	e tu hai detto che è meglio sentire solo un parere	274.	O	and you said that it is better to listen only to one opinion
F opp. A	275.	P	no (0.2) non ho mai detto quello (0.3)	275.	P	no (0.2) I never said that (0.3)
S ch. F	276.	G	abbiamo la registrazione *((guardando Ombretta))*	276.	G	we have the recording *((looking at Ombretta))*
	[…]			[…]		
F p.u.	281.	P	be' poi ci sono dei (0.3) ogni argomento c'ha le sue motivazioni per svilupparle in un modo o in un altro (0.2)	281.	P	well then you have (0.3) every topics has its motivation to (0.2)
	282.	O	( ) *((a bassa voce))*	*282.*	O	( ) *((in a low voice))*
	283.	P	non mi sembra di rimandare sempre le decisioni come dicevi *((la madre sorride))*	283.	P	non mi sembra di rimandare sempre le decisioni come dicevi *((the mother smiles))*
A ch. F	284.	O	mmm sempre spesso (0.3)	284.	O	mmm always often(0.3)
F opp. A	285.	P	no questo non è vero	285.	P	no this is not true
A ch. F	286.	O	e cioè ti chiediamo qualcosa e se stiamo parlando tu cambi argomento	286.	O	and I mean we ask you something and if we are talking you change the topic
F dir. A	287.	P	e ad esempio?	287.	P	and for example?
A dir. F	*288.*	O	alla sera per esempio anche quando siamo a tavola anche con la mamma ma non solo con me (0.2) spesso *((la madre sorride con imbarazzo))*	*288.*	O	in the evening for examle when we are having dinner also with mom not only with me(0.2) often*((the mother smiles with embarrassement))*
	[…]			[…]		
	292.	I	volevo sapere la mamma in queste discussioni dove sta che cosa fa (0.2) si butta nella mischia? (0.3)	292.	I	I'd like to know where is mom in these discussions? What does she do? (0.2) Are you getting out? (0.3)
M p.u.	293.	M	e non so (0.2) dipende dalle volte (0.3) dall'atteggiamento	293.	M	I don't know (0.2) it depends on the time (0.3) the attitude
F dir. M	294.	P	no tu stai di solito stai indietro stai zitta *((la madre ride))*	294.	P	no usually you stay on the side you are silent *((the mother laughs))*
	295.	I	manda avanti lei *((guardando il padre))* nelle questioni difficili?	295.	I	does she let you go further *((looking at the father))* for the difficult issues?
M com. F	296.	M	no non però può darsi che io anzi senz'altro io medio di più (0.2) ho un	296.	M	no not but it can be that actually for sure I mediate more (0.2) I've a character

```
carattere decisamente più          frankly more(0.2) I mean I
cioè che tende a mediare            don't look for the
(0.2) cioè non cerco lo             conflict(0.2)(…)
scontro (0.2)(…)
```

In this excerpt, the father's evaluation about the dynamic of the family discussions is the starting point of a long sequence in which the father and Luca align using directives and challenges (258-266) for nine exchanges. The adolescent, Ombretta, participates in this first sequence, complying with her brother (268), but later, she leads the symmetrical interaction with the father until the end of the extract. The mother does not align verbally in the interaction rather she expresses compliance with the father by analog indicators in different parts of the sequence (269, 282, 288, 294). Only at the end of the sequence, when the interviewer inquires her directly, she expresses the agreement with her husband verbally.

These three excerpts are a fine illustration of the *absence* of *family oscillations* as each family member constantly aligns with the others maintaining the same positions.

Noticeably a "fight" for the control of the interaction is observable between one parent and the adolescent. Everyone positions him/herself above the other in a symmetrical escalation expressed both verbally and nonverbally. The stances taken by other family members are similarly relevant as they contribute to this interactional process: one parent sustains alternatively the other parent or the adolescent by positioning him/herself down. When siblings are also present this form of interteraction becomes more complex, as they can either participate in the symmetrical interaction positionig themselves above the adolescent as one parent does (Liberi family) or being compliant with him/her, then taking a down position (Pani family).

(b) The following results concern the form of sequential interactions that characterize the variation of the critical pattern. Different from the previous one, this form of interaction can be summarized as:

Both parents keep an up position toward the adolescent who maintains a symmetrical interaction with them in the first part of interaction, but at the end the adolescent switches

by positioning him/herself down. The main difference with previous form (a) is that the two parents stay together justifying or complying with each other.

Two families showed this form of sequential interactions: Carta and Donati.

In the two following excerpts observed in the Donati family this form of sequential interaction is effectively shown.

Consider the two extracts of the Donati family's interview (Extract 4.4 and Extract 4.5) in wich the adolescent Stefano is the only child.

Excerpt 4.4 – Donati family. P (father), M (mother), S (adolescent), I (interviewer)
Frame IV. Sensitive topic: Scooter (Ep.)

F p.u.	101.	P	e io però sapendolo così responsabile e tutto dico il motorino è pericoloso lo accompagno a scuola una mattina vedo un ragazzino che scende dalla micro-car e va a scuola e io dico [al figlio] ti piacerebbe la macchinina? e lui dice (0.2) sì va bene poi apprendo in questo momento (0.2) grazie di essere venuta qui da noi[all'intervistatrice] apprendo questa sera (0.3) che gli piacerebbe di più il motorino della micro-car *((si gira verso il figlio e la madre lo segue con lo sguardo))*	101.	P	and then knowing that he is very responsible for everything I think the scoter is dangerous in the morning I took him to school and I saw a guy who got off a micro-car and then he went to school and I asked him [his son] would you like that small car? And he said (0.2) ok then I realize right now (0.2) thank for being here with us tonight [to the interviewer] (0.3) he would like rather the scooter than the micro-car *((he looks at his son and the mother follows him with her gaze))*
	102.	I	ah quindi non era una cosa dibattuta?	102.	I	ah then wasn't it something that you already debated?
	103.	P	lo apprendo questa sera!	103.	P	I realized this evening!
A opp. F	104.	S	no io l'ho chiesto più di una volta [non è stato solo una volta	104.	S	no I asked that more than one time [it wasn't only one time
F opp,. A	105.	P	[Stefano	105.	P	[Stefano
M com. F	*106.*	M	diciamo che non hai insistito più di tanto	*106.*	M	let's say that you didn't insist too much
F ch. A	*107.*	P	ma fa niente! cioè io adesso posso dire una cosa in diretta? prendiamo in esame questo questo discorso del motorino io non ho mica nessun genere di problema *((alza le mani in segno di arresa))*	*107.*	P	but never mind! I mean now can I say something live? Let's examine this issue about the scooter I don't have any problem *((he raises his hands as to yield))*

A com. F	*108.* S ( ) *((Stefano sussurra qualcosa tenedo lo sguardo in basso))*	*108.* S ( ) *((Stefano whispers something keeping his gaze down))*
F dir. A	109. P eh? *((la madre osserva Stefano con sguardo interrogativo))*	109. P what? *((the mother looks at Stefano with a questioning gaze))*
A com. F	110. S niente=niente *((tiene lo sguardo in basso))*	110. S nothing=nothing *((he keeps his gaze down))*

Excerpt 4.5 – Family Donati. P (father), M (mother), S (adolescent), I (interviewer)
Frame VIII. Sensitive topic: Physical distance (Ep.)

M p.u.	197. M c'è stata una sera in cui lui [il marito] era via e ho detto beh non vieni a letto con me [al figlio]? a letto con te? (0.3) e da quella sera lì è andato a letto nel suo letto cioè quella è stata una pugnalata	197. M one night he [her husband] was abroad and I told him [her son] well don't you come into the bed with me? Into the bed with you? (0.3) and from that night he went into his own bed and that was a big stab wound
	198. I ma questo quando è successo? Stefano tu te e lo ricordi?	198. I but when did it happen that? Stefano did you remember that?
	199. S cos'era la seconda elementare? *((guardando il padre))*	199. S when was this? Second year of the elementary school? *((looking at his father))*
F opp. A	200. P eh no	200. P well no
M com. F	201. M no è stato dopo	201. M no it was later
F com. M	*202.* P quinta o prima media	*202.* P fifth year of the elementary school or first year of the middle school
A opp. F	*203.* S oh no=no!	*203.* S oh no=no!
F opp. A	*204.* P sì=sì	*204.* P yes=yes
A opp. F	*205.* S no=no=no cosa dici!	*205.* S no=no=no you are saying what!
M dir. A	206. M quarta quinta come minimo	206. M fourth fifth at least
A opp. M	207. S no=no	207. S no=no
F dir. A	208. P Stefano *((tocca il figlio))* fermati siamo venuti ad abitare in questa casa nel 2005	208. P Stefano *((he touches his son))* stop we came to live here in this house in 2005
M com. F	209. M esatto	209. M exactly
A opp. M	210. S non ci venivo più *((fa segno di no col dito))*	210. S I haven't come there anymore *((he shakes his finger as to say no))*
F opp. A	211. P no io a letto con te ci sono venuto hai un bel da	211. P no I slept with you and it's useless to say no my dear

			Italian				English
A opp. F	212.	S	no=no		212.	S	no=no
F ch. A	213.	P	mi dispiace ma io nel 2005 venivo ancora a letto con te tre anni fa		213.	P	I'm sorry but in 2005 three years ago I used to sleep with you
A opp. F	214.	S	no!		214.	S	no!
F ch. A	215.	P	(…) e dicevo il ragno strappa uccelli cos'è questo strano animaletto? poi andavo sotto le coperte e andavo a prendere il pisello e glielo strappavo questo è il ragno strappa uccelli! (…) veniva nel suo lettone king size e noi siamo venuti ad abitare qui nell'agosto 2005		215.	P	(…) and I used to say the little dick-grasping spider what's this little animal? And then I used to go under the sheets and playing as to grasp his dick and the spider grasped it this is the little dick-grasping spider!(…) it used to go into his king size bed and we came to live here on August 2005
A opp. F	216.	S	no=no		216.	S	no=no
F dir. A	217.	P	purtroppo io mi ricordo benissimo*((tocca il braccio del figlio e annuisce))*		217.	P	unfortunately I remember that very well *((he touches his son arm and nods))*
	[…]				[…]		
	219.	P	sono rimasto tutta notte qua e quindi tu facevi la seconda media forse prima media		219.	P	I stayed here all night long so you were attending the second year maybe the first year of the middle school
A opp. F	220.	S	no neanche		220.	S	no not even that
M dir. A	221.	M	fa lo stesso <u>diciamo che c'è stato</u>		221.	M	never mind <u>let's say that it happened</u>
F com. M	222.	P	diciamo che un giorno è finito diciamo cosi'		222.	P	let's say that one day it stopped let's say that
A com. F, M	223.	S	(mah) *((Stefano si muove sulla sedia e distoglie lo sguardo))*		223.	S	(mah) *((Stefano moves on the chair and he looks away))*

In the shorter sequence (Excerpt 4.4), the interactional exchange develops starting from the recall of an episode about purchasing a scooter for Stefano, the adolescent.

It is interesting to note how the adolescent's moves from an up position to a down one in the alignment with his parents by nonverbal indicators. Indeed after an initial resistance to his father's position (104) Stefano aligns with him at an asymmetrical level by both moving his gaze down on the table and lowering the tone of his voice (108). The father, on his side, firmly upholds a symmetrical position in the alignmetns with his son by overlappig (fracture) and using Stefano' first name (105) as a way to get his attention. The mother aligns with the father by completing his utterances as to reinforce his position (106) and, likewise she supports the directive of her husband toward Stefano with a

questioning gaze (109).

Later (Excerpt 4.5), the mother mentions another sensitive topic concerning the sudden physical distance. This episode provokes a cascade of oppositions by the adolescent that are clearly detachable in the sequence of "no" he repeats throughout the talk. However, as in the previous excerpt, after a while he switches his positions and complies with his parents (223). Mother and father align by sustaining each other's positions, and once more by expressing reciprocal agreement (201, 202, 209, 222); whereas they both maintain an up position in the alignment with Stefano.

In sum, also in this form of sequential interactions no family oscillations were observable as members interacted maintaining the same positions, which were also diplayed by many fractures in coordination. However differently from the previous form (a), the symmetrical exchanges involved both parents "allied against" the adolescent in this sort of competition between equals; the adolescent, in this case, held out the symmetrical interaction, but at the end he surrendered by agreeing with his parents.

4.2.1.2. The stormy pattern: alternating between up and down positions

As in the critical pattern, families that show a *stormy* pattern are characterized by *fractures* in coordination; however, *family oscillations* are observable as each family member *alternates* between taking up and down positions in the alignment with the other. Similar to the critical, in the stormy pattern two variations are indentified: form (a) and form (b). The form (a) of sequential interactions can be defined as:

All family members constanly change their reciprocal positions toward one another from up to down and from down to up positions.

This form of sequential interactions is observable in two families: Manini and Alpi.

Let us consider some extracts from the interview with the Manini family in which the alternating positions are evident in the alignments during the unfolding talk. In this family two children are present: Erica, the adolescent, and Stefania, her sister who is 17.

115

In the excerpt below (Excerpt 4.6), the father and Erica start their interaction by aligning at a symmetrical level as they reciprocally position up to the other, whereas the mother takes a down one nonverbally.

Excerpt 4.6 – Manini family. P (father), E (adolescent), I (interviewer)
Frame VII. Sensitive topic: Relationship between sisters

F p.u.	*111.*	P	(…) ripeto quello che facevano cinque anni fa lo fanno anche adesso non (0.3) ecco adesso non vedo questo grosso cambiamento *((la madre annuisce))*	111.	P	(…) I repeat it what they are doing now is what they used to do also five years ago (0.3) I mean currently I don't see big changes *((the mother nods))*
A dir. F	*112.*	E	a ballare ci andavo cinque anni fa?*((guardando il padre))*	*112.*	E	did I use to go to dace five years ago? *((looking at her father))*
F ch. A	113.	P	e va be' quando ci vai? due volte su-	113.	P	ok but how many times do you go there? Two times out of-
A opp. F	114.	E	e va be' comunque	114.	E	yes but in any case

In this short sequence an interesting snapshot of family interactions is observable: the father minimizes the changes of his daughters and the mother nods, expressing compliance with him. Erica promptly intervenes with a directive addressed to him as, in a rhetorical way, to deny the way her parents positioned her (112). The father once more does not acknowledge this change and he challenges the adolescent, but Erica resists to this definition. At a first look, this form of interaction does not differ from the ones of the critical pattern, but if we pay attention to the display of the stancetaking process in the next extracts, *family oscillations* will clearly emerge.

For instance, in the next excerpt (Excerpt 4.7, taken from the subsequent frame of Excerpt 4.6) the positions of the father and the adolescent are reversed. Differently from above, both of them comply, in particular, at the end of the sequence. In this case a family oscillation is observable in that the parent and the adolescent have changed their positions from one frame to the other (inter-frame oscillations). In the extract below it is also displayed a family oscillation between the sisters (intra-frame oscillations).

In the initial part of the excerpt, Erica and her sister agree that discussions with their grandparents are complicated. Gradually the tone of the talk increases as highlighted by the sequence of overlaps that indicates *fractures* in coordination. Afterwards, the sisters

116

switch their positions: they now align through directives and oppositions (286-289) for a while. At the end of the extract, the father intervenes in agreement with the adolescent who reciprocates (290-292).

Excerpt 4.7 – Manini family. P (father), M (mother), E (adolescent), S (sister), I (interviewer)
Frame VIII. Sensitive topic: Discussions between sisters

M p.u.	280.	M	(…)Stefania è solare molto comunicativa ti parla e ti racconta tutto mentre invece Erica non c'è dubbio che ti dica niente non parla	280.	M	(…)Stefania is cheerful very communicative and she talk to you and tells you everything while Erica be sure that she doesn't tell you anything she doesn't talk
A com. M	281.	E	[si ma cioè perché	281.	E	[yes but I mean 'cause
S com. A	282.	S	[si ma è vero perché cioè tu non=non	282.	S	[yes but it's true I mean you don't=don't
A just.	283.	E	[ma si e' vero perche' ad esempio con le mie amiche parlo (…) tipo invece quando andiamo a mangiare con i nonni e siamo tutti e quattro in macchina ascolto e basta perche'-	283.	E	[but yes it is true because for example with my girlfriends I talk (…) like instead when we go out to have dinner with the grandparents and we are all the four of us in the car I listen and that's all because-
S chall. A	*284.*	S	anche perché ci vuole un po' impegno perché se uno si vuole approcciare a parlare con i nonni a parte che una sorda e quindi già quello *((ridono tutti))*	*284.*	S	also because you have to put some efforts when you talk with the grandparents except that one is deaf and already that *((all laughing))*
			[…]			[…]
A just.	288.	E	no ma perché con i nonni fate dei discorsi più impegnati	288.	E	no but because with the grandparents you get involved in complicated issues
S dir. A	289.	S	eh? ma stai scherzando?	289.	S	what? are you kidding me?
A opp. S	290.	E	e si Stefania parlavate di politica parlate di ogni tanto-	290.	E	yes Stefania you used to talk about politics sometimes you talk of-
S dir. A	291.	S	macché! con chi con la nonna?	291.	S	you don't say! With whom with grandma?
A opp. S	292.	E	[be' SI STEFANIA! ogni tanto capita!	292.	E	well YES STEFANIA! [Sometimes it happens!
F com. A	293.	P	[be c'ha ragione=c'ha ragione questa è la sua idea è rimasta che la nonna	293.	P	[well she's right=she's right this is her idea she was struck by the grandma
A com. F	294.	E	[si ma è vero cioè voi fate discorsi impegnativi e io magari non ne so quanto voi e allora preferisco ascoltare che magari dire delle loccate (0.3)	294.	E	[yes but it's true I mean you take up complicated issue and maybe I don't know as you do and then I prefer to listen than to say stupid things (0.3)
F com. A	295.	P	ehm va bene	295.	P	ehm all right

In the next excerpt (Excerpt 4.8) the alternation of the positions all family members is is observable. Here, the mother provokes a sequence of exchanges about the decision-making in the family.

Excerpt 4.8 – Manini family. P (father), M (mother), E (adolescent), S (sister), I (interviewer)
Frame IX. Sensitive topic: Disco and value of money

M p.u.	350.	M	no ma lei non conosce Mario per cui lui è una persona che non farebbe mai nulla e per questo le ragazze dicono che poi decide sempre la mamma (…) io che sono probabilmente ho un carattere un po' più forte sotto questi punti di vista (0.2) spesso e volentieri l'ho dovuto mettere davanti al fatto compiuto (…)	350.	M	no but you don't know Mario as he is a person who would never do anything that's why the girls say that it's the mother who always decide (…) I'm probably I've a stronger character for some of this issues (0.2) I often had to do soothing for him ex post facto (…)

[…]   […]

F ch. M	*355.*	P	però io sarò troppo da una parte e tu sei troppo dall'altra *((la madre fa un ghigno abbassa lo sguardo e scuote la testa))*	*355.*	P	but I'll be too much on one side but you are too much on the other *((the mother sneers and shakes her head))*
A ch. F	356.	E	nella stessa famiglia e completamente diversi! (0.3)	356.	E	in the same family and totally different! (0.3)
F just	357.	P	io di solito non sono d'accordo perché al sabato sera prima vanno a bere l'aperitivo poi a mangiare la pizza e poi al cinema	357.	P	I usually don't agree because on Saturday they go out at first to have a drink then to have a pizza and then again to go to the cinema theatre
	358.	I	ma questo per un discorso di suo principio?	358.	I	but is this for some principles you follow ?
	359.	P	si di principio e anche economico eh perché noi non navighiamo nell'oro	359.	P	yes for some principles and also for economical issues well because we don't swim in gold
S opp. F	360.	S	e ma non e' solo economico perche' il discorso che mi hai fatto adesso sulle vacanze	360.	S	but it is not only an economical issue because the reasons you gave me now for the holidays
				361.		
F dir. S	361.	P	e ma ti ho mai detto di no una volta?	362.	P	but have I ever said no to you one time?
S com. F	362.	S	tu in principio mi dici no poi è chiaro che se poi ci tengo *((il padre annuisce))*	363.	S	at the beginning you say no then it is clear that if I care *((the father nods))*

[…]   […]

F p.u.	397.	P	(…) penso che si meritino la mia fiducia per tutte le altre problematiche che ci potrebbero essere	397.	P	(…) I think they deserve trust for any other possible issues

S com. F	398.	S	si=si ma no in quello e' vero cioe' io sento di avere un appoggio da quel punto di vista	398.	S	yes=yes that's true I mean I feel I can rely on him in that sense
F just.	399.	P	io per esempio non mi sono mai tirato indietro se c'è da andarla a prendere alle 3:00 se c'è da portarla indietro a casa delle amiche	399.	P	for example I never step back when I had to go pick her up at 3:00 or if I've to take her back in her girlfriends' home
S com. F	*400.*	*S*	*no=no ma infatti=infatti ((la madre annuisce))*	*400.*	*S*	*no=no right=right ((the mother nods))*
M com. S	401.	M	si noi stessi ci siamo anche messi a disposizione anche di altri genitori che ad esempio non=non cioè non ci sono e soprattutto devo dire che lui è fantastico sotto questo punto di vista (…)	401.	M	we also are available for other parents who don't=don't I mean they cannot go there and overall I've to say that he is amazing for these aspects (…)

The father refuses the way that his wife has positioned him as he replicates by launchig a challenge addressed to her. She does not reply verbally rather she expresses her dissent through the gaze and the posture (355). Interestingly, after this exchange between the parents, the adolescent expresses a comment that conveys a challenge addressed to the father (356). Here the father switches his positions as he justifies himself in response to Erica (357). Similarly, the sister, at first, opposes to her father, but then changes her position by agreeing with him (360). The mother as well, at the end of the interactional sequence modifies her position as she now agrees with the father by nodding (400).

This last excerpt is an effective example of the how an oscillatorty sequences display in the stancetaking process among family members. Each member changes his/her positions sometimes positioning up to the others, and some other times down. Afterwards, either in the same or among frames, they swap the way they have aligned with each other.

Consider also the following parts of the interview with the Alpi family, which like the Maninis, has two children present: the adolescent Giovanni and his older brother, Cristiano (20 years old). In the following excerpts (Excerpt 4.9 and Excerpt 4.10) *family oscillations* emerge in the interactional sequence among the father, adolescent, and brother.

Excerpt 4.9 – Alpi family. P (father), M (mother), G (adolescent), C (brother), I (interviewer)
Frame II. Sensitive topic: Discussion between brothers

B p.u.	40.	C	recentemente *((guardando il fratello))* è successo qualcosa che non accadeva più o meno da quando ci lanciavamo i castelli dei lego da quando ci siamo detti un po' qualcosa pero' boh neanche tanto io e lui andiamo molto d'accordo	40.	C	recently *((look at his brother))* it has happened something that it did not happened since we used to throw lego castles to each other as we argued about something but not so much as he and I go along pretty well
F opp. B	41.	P	[avete litigato *((guardando Cristiano))*	41.	P	[you had a fight *((looking at Cristiano))*
A opp. F	42.	G	[abbiamo discusso	42.	G	[we discussed
B com. A	43.	C	abbiamo discusso in maniera accesa *((guardando il padre))* però sì no rispetto ad altri andiamo molto d'accordo	43.	C	we had a high pitched discussion *((looking at his father))* but we go along very well compared to others
A com. B	*44.*	*G*	*non mi ricordo di avere mai litigato davvero con lui*	*44.*	*G*	*I don't remember to have ever had a real fight with him*

Excerpt 4.10 – Alpi family. P (father), M (mother), G (adolescent), C (brother), I (interviewer)
Frame II. Sensitive topic: Adolescent's organization

F p.u.	66.	P	diciamo che lo riteniamo abbastanza grande ((guardando Giovanni)) da potersi organizzare determinate cose che soprattutto quelle che riguardano che riguardano lui (…) in questo c'è sempre un po' ma lo fa la mamma ((guardando la moglie)) ma lo faccio io ma l'ha fatto non l'ha fatto e si arriva all'ultimo minuto finchè poi si arriva allo scontro perché non-	66.	P	let's say that we consider him old enough ((looking at Giovanni)) to orgnize his own stuff (…) and this there is alway but it's the mother that should do that ((looking at his wife)) but then I can do that and then he didn't do that and so on until you are late and then at the end a fight lights up
	67.	I	è così Giovanni o non ti sai organizzare?	67.	I	is it like that Giovanni or are you not able to organize on your own?
A ch. M, F	68.	G	ma secondo me sì solo che secondo loro faccio troppo tardi oppure quando devo andare cioè andare a scuola parto sempre all'ultimo minuto ((guardando la madre)) tutti strippano credendo che io arriverò in ritardo invece	68.	G	well in my opinion I'm able to do that but in their opinion I'm too late and when I've to go to school I go out at the last minute ((looking at his mother)) everybody go crazy as they believe I'll be late instead
B dir. A	69.	C	effettivamente arrivi in ritardo arrivi dopo ((guardando il fratello))	69.	C	actually you are late you arrive later ((looking at his brother))
A ch. B	70.	G	l'importante è quello! ((ridendo))	70.	G	that's important! ((laughing))

In the first extract (Excerpt 4.9), the father and the adolescent are involved in a symmetrical interaction segmented by fractures: they oppose and overlap to each other (41-42). The brother complies with Giovanni, who reciprocates by agreeing whith him; however, later on in the same frame (Excerpt 4.10), the brothers swap their positions as they now address directives and challenges to each other (69-70).

In the next sequences, the alternations of mother and father's positions are also observable. In the extract below (Excerpt 4.11), for instance, the father's evaluation about Giovanni's increased maturity provokes a series of exchanges in which the parents constantly alternate oppositions to compliances, thereby showing oscillations.

Excerpt 4.11 – Alpi family. P (father), M (mother), G (adolescent), I (interviewer)
Frame II. Sensitive topic: Adolescent's organization

F p.u.	*86.*	P	diciamo che come dico spesso Giovanni è uno che parla piano ma va in giro armato nel senso che normalmente tranquillo silenzioso calmo rilassato fa le sue cose poi però quando deve imporre il suo desiderio non dico che alza la voce ma lo fa *((guardando Giovanni))* e questo e' chiaramente negli ultimi tempi di più con più coerenza in fondo motivando anche i suoi perché per ma quel che riguarda nei miei confronti sì *((guardando la moglie))*	86.	P	let's say that as I always say Giovanni is someone that speaks in a low voice but he is well equipe in the sense that he is sually quiet silent relaxed and he does his stuff but when he desires something and he wants it I cannot say that he raises his voice but he does it *((looking at Giovanni))* and this is more clear in recently and he does that with more coherence finally and he gives his reasons toward me he is like that *((looking at his wife))*
M opp. F	*87.*	M	è sempre stato *((la madre scuote la testa))*	87.	M	he has always been like that *((the mother shakes her head))*
F com. M	88.	P	è sempre stato sì d'accordo	88.	P	yes right he's always been like that
M com. F	89.	M	è sempre stato molto tranquillo ma quando non voleva una cosa sì non lo fa e non c'è nessuna possibilità di fargli cambiare idea uno potrebbe picchiarlo a sangue ma non cambia idea	89.	M	he's always been very quiet but when he didn't want to do something he didn't do that and you cannot make him to change his mind even if you beat him
F opp. M	90.	P	ok però quello che voglio dire-	90.	P	ok but what I wanted to say-
M opp. F	91.	M	l'ha sempre fatto	91.	M	he always did that
F opp. M	92.	P	quando era piccolo lo faceva a livello istintivo cioè c'era un sì o un no e una contrapposizione adesso argomenta di più il perché della contrapposizione questo è quello che voglio dire *((guardando la moglie in maniera continua))*	92.	P	when he was a child he did that in a more instinctive way I mean you got yes or no and a contrast while noe he argues more the oppositions I meant that *((staring continuously at his wife))*
A com. F	93.	G	e poi i maggiori conflitti sono appunto quello chiama questo chiama quell'altro muoviti così e io comunque chiamo solo che non cambia niente se chiamo alle 2:30 o se chiamo alle 3:00 *((guardando i genitori))*	93.	G	and then mosto f the conflicts are about calling this calling that and hurry up and so on so I call but it doesn't change anything if I call at 2:30 instead of 3:00 *((looking at his parents))*
M ch. A	94.	M	dopo ti dimentichi e io devo sempre dire ti sei ricordato? *((guardando Giovanni))* io ho migliaia di biglietti nella mia agenda che uso per lavoro ritira Giovanni ha telefonato ha fatto quindi se tu lo facessi subito avremmo già risolto tutto lì	94.	M	then you forget and I've always to tell you did you remember to do that? *((looking at Giovanni))* I've thousands of notes in my journal and I ues them to work to go and pick up Giovanni and Giovanni called he did and then if you did that immediately every would have been all set

F opp. M   95.   P va ma su beh su quello   94.   P   right but only for that

The adolescent intervenes in this interactional sequence between the parents by sustaining his father's position (93). Interestingly, the mother replies launching a challenge to Giovanni (94) who does not respond, but instead it is the father who takes advantage to oppose to the mother once more.

Afterwards in the interview (Excerpt 4.12), all family members switch their positions another time.

Excerpt 4.12 – Alpi family. P (father), M (mother), G (adolescent), C (brother), I (interviewer)
Frame XI. Sensitive topics: Discussions for transportation

M p.u.	*312.*	M	dopo un po' ho capito che per lui era un problema del tipo se tu non mi dai l'abbonamento dell'autobus tu credi troppo piccolo e non sono idoneo quando ho capito questo ho preso l'abbonamento dell'autobus ma lui andava a calcio da solo tornava da solo a calcio e aveva bisogno dell'abbonamento ma non è mai andato a scuola da solo in autobus e anche per le cose sportive non insomma in teoria non aveva bisogno però quando ho capito che era un problema *((guardando Giovanni))*	*312.*	M	after a while I understood that it was a problem not to have the bus pass for him because you are considered as a child and when I realized this I bought him the bus pass as he needed it to go back and forth form the soccer coaching but he never went to school alone neither to school by bus before an then in theory he didn't need it but when I understood it was a problem_*((looking at Giovanni))*
A opp. M	313.	G	non è vero che non ne avevo bisogno perché spesso lo uso e dato che *((guardando la madre))*	313.	G	it's not true I didn't need it becuse I use it considerino *((looking at his mother))*
M opp. A	*314.*	*M*	*allora non lo usavi era inutile però*	*314.*	*M*	*at that time you didn't use it it was useless though*
A opp. M	315.	G	qualche volta	315.	G	some times
M just	*316.*	M	qualche volta potevi prendere quello del fratello sì da quando ho capito che era un problema che tu lo vivevi come io credo tu sei piccolo te l'ho preso *((guardando Giovanni))*	*316.*	M	you should have taken your brother's pass some times well since I understood that for you it was a problem as you thought you were considered as a child I bought it to you *((looking at Giovanni))*
			[...]			[...]

A p.u.	339. G	a volte è più comodo l'autobus della bici quando devo andar lontano o quando piove o quando c'è brutto tempo o quando	339. G some times the bus is more comfortable than the bike when I've o go far or when it is raining or when the weather is bad
B dir. A	340. C	si però obiettivamente quando l'hai preso?	340. C but frankly when did you take it?
M com. B	341. M	si possono contare su una mano	341. M you can count it on your fingers
B com. M	342. C	all'inizio adesso lo usi sicuramente di più ma quando l'hai preso ci sei andato due volte	342. C now you use it more definitely but at the beginning when you got it you took that only two times
M com. B	343. M	sì	343. M yes
A just.	344. G	o quando vado va beh	344. G or when I go never mind
M com. A	345. M	sì=sì va bene	345. M yes=yes it's ok
A just	*346.* G	quando piove non vado in bici [perche' sai	*346.* G when it is raining I don't take the bike ['cause you know
F com. A	*347.* P	[va bene infatti *((guardando Giovanni))*	*347.* P [all right indeed *((looking at Giovanni))*

In this last sequence further family oscillations are observable. The mother and adolescent align through a series of oppositions, but after a while they switch their positions: the mother gives a justification of her behavior (316) the adolescent does the same (344, 346) and, at the end, it seems they have reached an agreement, sustained by the father as well (347).

It is clear, once more, how the oscillatory process is observable through the constant alternation of up and down positions. In the stormy pattern family members align by continuously accepting and resisting to the reciprocal definitions and evaluations, thereby allowing each other to exange his/her own positions. Furthermore, indicarots of fractures are evident in different parts of the excerpts, particularly interruptions and overlaps.

The second form (b) of sequential interactions of the stormy pattern was observed in three families (Rossetti, Toscani, and Zurlini). The description of this form of interaction is not presented here as the peculiarities we observed did not allowed a confrontation with the other forms. In these families, the adolescent maintains a peripheral position

throughout the talk, as the attention of family members is focused on the firstborn child. Interestingly, in all these families the firstborn is a daughter who is 17, and the adolescent is her brother who is 14. The whole interview was then "displaced" on the firstborn rather than on the adolescent, with the family members showing oscillations on sensitive topics in which the firstborn served as protagonist. In addition, they alternated synchrony and fractures in coordination during the talk.

For these reasons, the research team and I decided to define this form of sequential interactions as a variation of the stormy pattern. However, considering these aspects and the fact that the adolescent's stance was not clearly detachable because of the displacement on the firstborn child, we decided not to consider this pattern in the analysis. Rather, we suggest that this should be an interesting path for further analysis.

Family oscillations could also be identified in family patterns of interaction in which family members coordinate with a great level of synchrony. This is the case of the drifting pattern described in the following paragraph.

4.2.1.3. The drifting pattern: negotiating by taking different positions

The form of sequential interactions that defines this pattern is intriguing.

Differently from the stormy pattern, sequences of compliances and justifications were observed in different parts of the excerpts, and they were alternated mainly with oppositions. Thus, *family oscillations* were displayed as family members changed their positions during the talk. Nevertheless, no fractures were present and family members did not interrupt each other and even when overlapping they were intended to complete the previous speaker's utterance. Furthermore, nonverbal indicators stress the display of *synchrony* throughout the interactions.

This form of sequential interaction can then be summed up as:

Adolescent and parents (and siblings when present) align by negotiating the reciprocal positions. Family members switch between accepting, most of the times the definitions given by the others, which can be legititmated (justfication), and resisting sometimes to them (oppositions).

The Carini, Giuliani, and Zanotti families showed this form of sequential interactions.

In the Zanotti family, the display of synchrony is clearly observable in the gaze contact, the smiles, and the laughs when family members align with each other (Excerpt 4.13). The adolescent's name is Andrea and he is an only child.

Excerpt 4.13 – Zanotti family. P (father), M (mother), A (adolescent), I (interviewer)
Frame V: Sensitive topic: Relationship between mother and son.

M p.u.	203.	M	e' sempre stato un rapporto cosi che abbiamo sempre avuto tra me e lui [l'adolescente] perche' comunque lui forse e' arrivato piu' tardi perche' lui e' arrivato che (0.2) noi eravamo belli	203.	M	the relationship between him [the adolescent] and me have has always been like this as he maybe he was born late because he was born that (0.2) we were like
F com. M	204.	P	non lo volevamo=non lo volevamo piu' ((sorridendo e guardando Andrea))	204.	P	we didn't want him=we didn't want him any more ((laughing and looking at Andrea))
M com. F	205.	M	eh ((sorridendo e guardando Andrea)) pensavamo di non averlo	205.	M	well ((laughing and looking at Andrea)) we thought we cannot have him
F com. M	206.	P	ci eravamo messi ((guardando la moglie))	206.	P	we were like ((looking at his wife))
M com. F	207.	M	l'anima in pace e poi e' arrivato (0.2) per cui il nostro rapporto era e' sempre stato basato sulla fiudicia per cui quando è lui arrivato non è che ha sconvolto il nostro modo di rapportarci il rapporto che avevamo con lui era uguale a quello che ((si gira verso il marito che annuisce)) era un po' alla pari ecco non so se è un bene o un male	207.	M	we were about about to give it up and then he came (0.2) thus our relationship has always been based on trust I mean when he arrived it didn't change the way we used to related to each other the relationship we had with him was the same ((she turns toward her husband who nods)) it was equal I don't know if it was good or bad
F opp. M	208.	P	ma per me è stato un po' un male perché forse ci riconosce poco come genitori e forse più come amici ((sorridendo e guardando la moglie))	208.	P	but for me it was a bit bad because maybe he doesn't see us as parents but rather as friends ((laughing and looking at his wife))
	209.	I	ah si avete questa sensazione? Cosa dici tu Andrea è così?	209.	I	really do you have this feeling? What do you think Andrea is it like that?
A opp. F	210.	A	ma insomma (no) no dai ((a bassa voce))	210.	A	well maybe (no) no come on ((in a low voice))
M opp. A	211.	M	si ogni tanto ti dimentichi che [sono tua mamma	211.	M	yes sometimes you forget I'm your mother [I'm your mother
A opp. M	212.	A	[dipende	212.	A	[it depends

M opp. A	213.	M	[ma da quello che dici (0.2) guarda che io sono la tua mamma	213.	M	[but considering what you say (0.2) look I'm your mom
A opp. M	*214.*	A	ma dipende dalla situazione è dai *((sorridendo e guardando la madre))*	*214.*	A	but it depends on the situation come on *((laughing and looking at his mother))*
M opp. A	215.	M	e non si può dire proprio così alla mamma sono la mamma *((ridendo))*	215.	M	and you shouldn't say exactly that to your mom *((laughing))*
A opp. M	216.	A	ma no dai *((sorridendo))*	216.	A	no come on *((laughing))*
	[…]			[…]		
M opp. A	218.	M	e io dico ma ti stai dimenticando che stai parlando con la mamma e lui si fa niente *((ridendo))*	218.	M	and I tell him well you forget you are talking to your mom and he says it's ok *((laughing))*
A just	219.	A	e ma per quello che dico per raccontargli non e' che ( )	219.	A	but for what I tell her is not so ( )

In the first exchanges the mother and father comply with a great deal of synchrony. Even later, when the father switches his position and opposes to her (208), he smiles to lighten the tone of oppositions. Likewise, in the symmetrical exchanges between the mother and the adolescent (212-218) disagreement is expressed by smiling, laughing, and decreasing the tone of the voice. Furthermore, verbal forms that downgrade dissent in the Italian language, such as "ma insomma", "dipende," and "no dai," were also included.

Family oscillations are observable in the sequence of alignments, as the adolescent after resisting through a series of oppositions to her mother's positions, at the end of the extract (219) he justifies. In this sense, he accepts the definition given by his mother but he also legitimates it, infact, instead of being compliant he "defends" his position by giving the reasons for his behavior.

In the excerpt below (Excerpt 4.14), the mother and father also reverse their positions.

Excerpt 4.14 – Zanotti family. P (father), M (mother), A (adolescent), I (interviewer)
Frame V: Sensitive topic: Relationship between mother and son.

F p.u.	234.	P	ma noi non controlliamo mai niente *((ridendo e muovendosi sulla sedia))*	234.	P	but we never control anything *((laughing and moving on his chair))*
M opp. F	*235.*	M	insomma *((ridendo))*	*235.*	M	so=so *((laughing))*

A com. M	236.	A	si va be' ((si sovrappongono tutti e tre)) (0.2) non dico che non ci sia niente di controllato	236.	A	well I mean ((overlapping each other)) (0.2) I don't thin that they never control
F just	237.	P	magari le altre famiglie ( ) [sono più	237.	P	maybe other families ( ) [are more
A just	238.	A	[diciamo che si interessano di quello che faccio e così però non è che mi controllano	238.	A	[let's say that they care for what I do like that but they don't control me
	[…]			[…]		
M opp. A	246.	M	no be' (0.2) un minimo si controllo magari lo facciamo ((padre con l'indice indica no)) però	246.	M	no actually (0.2) we control a bit ((the father shakes his finger as to says no)) but
	247.	I	perché magari aumentano [le ansie	247.	I	because maybe you become more [anxious
	248.	M	[perché dobbiamo essere onesti	248.	M	[because we have to be honest
F com. M	*249.*	*P*	*no perché può essere che succeda (…) be' certo bisogna essere onesti perché può sempre essere che succeda qualcosa e oramai la violenza c'è dapperutto per cui i casi succedono anche qui a L. anche se e' una cittadina che e' un po' cosi' abbastanza tranquilla*	*249.*	*P*	*no because it can happen (…) well of course we have to be honest because it can always happen something as violence is everywhere nowadays so even here in L. that is a pretty quiet town some episodes have happened*
M com. F	250.	M	pero' per esempio quando e' capitato [che	250.	M	but for example when did it happen [to
F com. M	*251.*	*P*	*[noi consigliamo di stare con il gruppo che si conosce*	*251.*	*P*	*[we always suggest him to stay with the group of people he knows*
M com. F	*252.*	*M*	*si con il gruppo*	*252.*	*M*	*yes with the group*

In this sequence, parents start the interaction by opposing to each other, while toward the end they converge by expressing mutual compliance. It is interesting to note how overlapping interactions, as evident in the previous excerpt, can be intended as an expression of synchrony and, more precisely, as a way to specify the interlocutor's position by completing his/her utterances.

In the next excerpt (Excerpt 4.15), for instance, the development of a sequence of overlaps between the father and the adolescent is clearly observable, as they oscillate by alternating compliances to oppositions while they align.

The following extract concerns the interview with the Giuliani family in which the adolescent Daniele is the only child.

Excerpt 4.15 – Giuliani family. P (father), M (mother), D (adolescent), I (interviewer)
Frame V. Sensitive topic: Scooter and disco

F p.u.	182.	P	(…) capisco il discorso su discoteca motorino eccetera però anche su queste non è che ci siano dei casi per cui c'è il caso motorino o il caso discoteca cioè è chiaro che c'è quando lui ci ha detto i miei amici questo sabato vanno in discoteca e ci vorrei andare anche io	182.	P	I understand the issue of the scooter etcetera but also on these issues we don't make cases so we don't have the case of the scooter or the case of the disco then it is clear that when he told us my friends go to the disco this Saturday and I'd like to go too
	183.	I	a chi l'ha chiesto a tutti e due oppure prima la mamma e poi il papa? (0.2) di solito a chi le fai queste richieste?	183.	I	whom did he ask to both of us or at first at the mom and than to dad? (0.2) usually whom does he ask to?
	184.	D	ma di solito a tutt'e due ((guardando il padre))	184.	D	well usually to both of them ((looking at his father))
F opp. A	185.	P	[a tutt'e due però	185.	P	[to both of us though
A com. F	186.	D	[se no altrimenti alla mamma	186.	D	[otherwise only to mom
	187.	P	no ma diciamo (0.2)[che è ((guardando la moglie))	187.	P	no but let's say (0.2)[that ((looking at his wife))
A ch. F	188.	D	[si di solito la mamma è più buona perché lui ((ridendo))	188.	D	[yes usually mom is nicer because he ((laughing))
F opp. A	189.	P	ma no di [solito	189.	P	no but [usually
	190.	I	[o fa un po' il rompiscatole come dice lui? ((guardando il padre))	*190.*	I	[or is he a bit a pain as he said? ((looking at his father))
A ch. F	191.	D	no perché se lo becco nella giornata no ((ridendo e guardando il padre))	191.	D	no because if he has an off-day ((laughing at looking at his father))
	192.	I	la mamma è sempre la via preferenziale	192.	I	mom is always the best choice
	193.	D	si anche quand'è la giornata no (0.2)	193.	D	yes also when she has an off-day (0.2)
	194.	I	può andare	194.	I	it's ok
M com. A	195.	M	si può andare bene o (0.2)	195.	M	yes it can be ok or (0.2)
F just.	196.	P	no però stavo dicendo che cioè non è che ci sia un caso discoteca un caso motorino che diciamo così abbia come dire insomma monopolizzato l'attenzione per	196.	P	no but I was about to say that we don't make cases about the disco or the scooter that can how can I say had monopolized our attention
	197.	I	si abbia causato cose che	197.	I	yes that maybe caused stuff
	198.	P	ma no lui mi ha fatto un ragionamento semplice visto	198.	P	no but he told me a very simple thing as he had to

			che c'era da venire poi a casa molto tardi poi lui essendo anche molto più giovane rispetto ai suoi gli si è spiegato che per questa volta lui era meglio che stesse a casa				come back very late and then he was also younger than the others and then we told him that for this time It was better if we stayed at home
	199.	I	ma più giovane per una ragione anagrafica?	199.	I	but you mean younger because of his age?
	200.	P	si=si perché lui è di dicembre per cui è come se lui avesse avesse un anno in meno	200.	P	yes=yes because he is born in December and then it is as if he is one year younger
M com. F	201.	M	[si	201.	M	[yes
F com. M	202.	P	[poi i suoi amici ci sono andati quelli che si vengono anche qui da noi per cui gli hanno raccontato eccetera cosa che per noi comunque non è che voglio dire però che sia un tabù [la discoteca] certamente cioè lui ci andrà (…)	202.	P	[then their friends went there and they came here and told him etcethera and this is ok for us I mean [the disco] it is not a tabu' for sure he will go there (…)
	[…]			[…]		
	204.	I	insomma non c'è stata (0.2)	204.	I	finally you didn't have (0.2)
	205.	F	no=no	205.	F	no=no
A com. F	206.	I	insomma l'hai *((guardando Daniele))* accettata! *((Daniele annuisce))*	206.	I	I mean you *((looking at Daniele))* have accepted it! *((Daniele nods))*

In this sequence, a family oscillation displays by overlaps between the father and the adolescent and in a relaxed emotional climate (smiles and laugh). The short utterances that shape their positions can then be considered a chain of specifications on the sensitive topic they are discussing, rather than as sudden interruptions as observed in the stormy pattern. Interestingly, as in the Zanotti family, few challenges (188-191) are expressed through nonverbal forms that mitigate the effect of this position.

Furthermore, father's justification (196, 198) is noticeable after that the adolescent positioned above him by addressing a challenge. In these short exchanges (191-198) it is clear how the father legitimates the way his son defined him by providing specific arguments.

Negotiation is then the aspect that characterizes the form of sequential interactions of the drifring pattern. This term is intended here to underline a way in which family oscillations are displayed in a context of synchrony in coordination. As I showed in the

extracts above, family members exchanged their positions by accepting (compliances) or resisting (oppositions) to the definitions given by the others. However, they overall acknowledged and further elaborated those definitions as a way to reach agreements through the expression of the different positions.

4.2.1.4. The quiet pattern: keeping homeostatic positions

The last form of sequential interactions, observed in the data, defines the quiet pattern and it is the one identified in majority of the families: Benedetti, Follini, Grandi, Poggiali, Righi, and Sassi.

In this form of sequential interactions, family members do not show family oscillations, and they are synchronized in coordination. The lack of family oscillations is observable in that each family member upholds stable positions during all the talk; moreover, the alignments are displayed only through compliances and justifications. Thus, this form of interaction is defined as *homeostatic* and in this sense it can be summarized as it follows:

All family members align one with the other by always accepting the reciprocal definitions, thereby expressing their positions by being compliant and giving justifications.

Interestingly, two families (Righi and Benedetti) in which the adolescent child is the firstborn showed this pattern. In the excerpt below (Excerpt 4.16), about the Righi family, the father's statement about the adolescent's weekly tip triggers a long sequence of alignments in which all family members participate by converging on the same positions.

In the Righi family four chidren are present: Alberto, the adolescent, Bartolomeo (13), Ramona (12) and Andrea (6).

Excerpt 4.16 – Righi family. P (father), M (mother), A (adolescent), R (sister), B (brother), I (interviewer)

Frame VIII. Sensitive topic: Request to increase the weekly tip

F p.u.	286.	P	ma anche per il discorso della paghetta no che dicevamo prima poi nell'ultimo anno è lui [l'adolescente] quello che ha più richiesto ma anche giustamente (…) abbiamo detto questo è il budget settimanale che ti consente di fare le tue cose se spendi di più non ne hai se spendi meno li spendi dopo	286.	P	but also for the issue of the weekly tip as we mentioned before in the last year he [the adolescent] made more requests but it is also right (…) we decided to give him weekly budget which allows him to do his stuff and if he spends more than that he can't have more money if he saves it he can spend the money also later
M com. F	287.	M	si ti gestisci	287.	M	yes you have to manage it
F com. M	288.	P	magari è più una cosa di gestione che magari all'inizio non gli piaceva neanche tanto ((guardando Alberto e sorridendo))	288.	P	it is more the issue to manage it and maybe at the beginning he didn't like it ((looking at Alberto and laughing))
	289.	I	perché? com'era? ((guardando Alberto))	289.	I	why? How was that issue? ((looking at Alberto))
A com. F	290.	A	cioè che era più scomoda cioè prima avevo tipo la paghetta era cinque euro adesso tipo è aumentata a venticinque però mentre prima non li usavo neanche cioè certi mesi non li usavo mai adesso invece certe volte faccio fatica	290.	A	well at the beginning it was a bit uncomfortable I mean before I used to have five Euros as tip and now it is increased to twenty-five but if before in some months I didn't even use all the money now instead it's sometimes harder
	291.	I	cioè aumentano le esigenze	291.	I	do you mean you have more needs?
	292.	A	si	292.	A	yes
S com. A	293.	R	e anche per il motorino si spende molto ((guardando Alberto))	293.	R	and also for the scooter he spends a lot ((looking at Alberto))
	294.	I	certo	294.	I	right
A com. S	295.	A	se una volta devo fare benzina e poi devo andare a R. li uso già tutti	295.	A	if I've to get gas and then I've to go to R. I finish all of it
	296.	I	e certo (0.2) però sai che la cifra è quella e non è modificabile? diciamo per ora poi (0.2)	296.	I	right (0.2) but you know that the amount is that and you can't change it for now right? Then (0.2)
	297.	A	non è modificabile ((guardando la madre e sorridendo))	297.	A	no it can't be changed ((looking at his mother and laughing))
F just	298.	P	non è modificabile no adesso c'è l'inflazione ((la madre ride)) cioe' se una sera devi andare a mangiare una pizza e non hai i soldi non ci vai e come no? ((ridendo))	298.	P	it can't be changed as now we have inflation ((the mother laughs)) I mean if one night you wanna go out for a pizza and you don't have the money you don't go there right? ((laughing))

	299.	I	e questa cosa come l'avete decisa no stabilire una cifra che è anche poi una regola no? Non so l'avete deciso-	299.	I	and how did you decide this amount that it is a rule right? I don't know you decided-
M com F	300.	M	si=si	300.	M	yes=yes
F com M	301.	P	si l'abbiamo decisa insieme e l'abbiamo maturata anche vedendo come si muoveva l'entità delle sue spese ma da questa estate in avanti perchè prima in realtà non c'era *((i due fratelli maggiori parlano sottovoce))*	*301.*	P	we decided that together and we came up with this considering also his expenses but we decided this form this summer as before he actually didn't *((the two older brothers speak in a low voice))*
	302.	I	non c'era l'esigenza	302.	I	he didn't need it
	303.	P	si un po' com'è adesso per Bartolomeo non è che la paghetta adesso gli serva più di tanto	303.	P	yes as for Bartolomeo now he doesn't need the weekly tip so much
M com. F	304.	M	si=si	304.	M	yes=yes
B com. M	305.	B	si per uscire a prenderci un gelato	305.	B	yes to go out and buy an ice cream
M com. B	306.	M	o andare al cinema	306.	M	or go to the movie theatre
F just	307.	P	si è più un fattore simbolico che altro anche lì per non dire mamma dammi i soldi per prendermi un gelato (…)	307.	P	yes it is more a symbolic issue so he doesn't have to say mom give me the money for the ice cream (…)

In the whole sequence, it is clear how the family members, including the siblings (293, 305), constantly justify and comply with one other, thus maintaining the same positions. The repetition of "si" at the beginning of the utterances, and the completion of the interlocutor's position by adding details (287-288; 304-307) are other indicators of agreement and synchrony in coordination. As for the drifting pattern, nonverbal aspects of synchrony, such as smiling and looking for the gaze contact, are also observable.

In this sequence, and as in other parts of the interview not reported here, it is interesting and contrary to expectations that families with four children can align, maintaining positions of agreements and acceptance of the mutual definitions in a context of synchrony for long sequences. In line with this, consider also the next extract (Excerpt 4.17) of the Benedetti family that has a composition closer to the Righis.

Teresa is the adolescent and she has three siblings: Elisa (13), Mara (11) and Giulio (6). The youngest child's statement provokes a long sequence of alignments.

Excerpt 4.17 – Bendetti family. P (father), M (mother), T (adolescent), E (sister), G (brother), Ma (sister), I (interviewer)
Frame VI. Sensitive topic: Conflicts between parents and adolescent

B p.u.	*127.*	G	d'estate loro due *((indica le due sorelle maggiori))* bisticciano per i vestiti anche lei *((indica la mamma))*	*127.*	G	during the Summer they fight *((points to his older sisters))* for the clothes *((points to his mother))*
	128.	I	i vestiti	128.	I	the clothes
S com. B	129.	E	perché magari lei lascia	129.	E	because she does
	130.	I	in disordine	130.	I	a mess
	131.	E	in disordine	131.	E	a mess
	132.	T	( ) *((sorride e annuisce))*	132.	T	( ) *((laughs and nods))*
	133.	I	( ) questo è un classico	133.	I	( ) this is very common
	134.	E	lei *((guardando Teresa))* lascia l'armadio disordinato e quando la mamma lo apre si arrabbia un po' *((Mara guarda la sorella Elisa annuendo))*	134.	E	she ((looking at Teresa)) leaves her closet in a mess and when mom opens it she gets a bit angry *((Mara looks at her sister Elisa nodding))*
M com. S	135.	M	un po' si *((sorridendo))*	135.	M	yes a bit *((laughing))*
	136.	E	e lei dice che non ha il tempo di metterlo a posto però dopo	136.	E	and she says that she doesn't have the time to set it but later
	137.	I	queste cose qua? *((guardando Teresa))*	*137.*	I	these stuff? *((looking at Teresa))*
A com. S	138.	T	sì questo sempre	138.	T	yes this always
	139.	I	cioè è sempre stato un po' il tuo modo di essere?	139.	I	I mean is this always been your habit?
A just.	140.	T	ultimamente sto peggiorando *((sorridendo e guardando la madre che annuisce))*	140.	T	recently I'm getting worst *((laughing and looking at her mother who nods))*
	141.	M	e anche sulla disorganizzazione se posso	141.	M	and also about her disorganization if I can
	142.	I	sì=sì dica pure	142.	I	yes=yes you can
M p.u.	143.	M	lei assolutamente è disorganizzata cioè insomma su alcune cose ovviamente è organizzata però è sempre un po' in attesa dell'ultimo secondo (…) *((Teresa sorride e abbassa lo sguardo))*	143.	M	she is totally disorganized I mean for some issues she is organized naturally but she is always late (…) *((Teresa laughs and moves her gaze down))*
	144.	I	è un po' l'argomento delle discussioni	144.	I	is this the topic of the discussions?
	145.	M	sì	145.	M	yes
F com. M	146.	P	l'uso del tempo non esattamente adeguato alle situazioni	146.	P	the use of her time is not totally fitted to the situations
	147.	I	ma tipo non so nella scuola?	147.	I	but I don't know like in the school?

M com. F	148.	M	beh un po' in tutto	148.	M	well a bit in everything
F com. M	*149.*	P	ma in generale il fatto di aspettare l'ultimo momento facciamo ( ) però avendo il tempo a disposizione magari se uno si organizzasse un attimo *((guardando Teresa))*	*149.*	P	but in general the fact to wait until the last moment ( ) but having time if you know how to organize a little *((looking at Teresa))*
M com. F	150.	M	poi mettersi avanti mettersi a posto lo studio perché comunque nello studio se c'è ordine magari studi meglio e io non sono una precisa però insomma	150.	M	then to be more organized with her homework because when you study and everything is all set maybe you can study better and I'm not a tidy person but I mean
F com. M	151.	P	confermo *((la madre sorride))*	151.	P	I agree *((the mother laughs))*
	[…]			[…]		
	155.	P	sì uno deve pagare di tasca propria le proprie inadeguatezze	155.	P	yes you have to pay on your own your inadequacies
	156.	I	ma questo un po' sempre sei stata così cioè sei d'accordo intanto	156.	I	but are you always been like that I mean do you agree at first?
				157.		
A com. F	157.	T	sì anche perché	158.	T	[yes because also
F com. A	158.	P	sì non è cambiata in questo no	159.	P	[yes she hasn't changed in this
	[…]			[…]		
A just.	169.	T	cioè ultimamente almeno sta peggiorando anche perché ci sono molti più impegni quindi allenamento oppure uscire studiare fare i compiti cioè io ho molti più impegni quindi dico non ho tempo per fare le cose quindi essendo già disordinata di mio si arriva a dei livelli	169.	T	I mean recently I'm getting worst because I'm very busy thus I've the coaching or to go out or to study and do my homework I mean I've much more things to do and I don't have time to do other things so being already messy I touch some levels

In the first part of the excerpt, the two sisters agree with their brother's statement: Elisa specifies her position verbally, while Mara complies by nodding at her (134). The mother is also involved in this alignment, at the beginning, by simply complying with Elisa (135). However, later the mother "amplifies" her position by adding more elements (141-143) that trigger a new cascade of alignments, on the same sensitive topic, in which also the father takes part. As for the adolescent, Teresa, she accepts the definition given by the other family members mainly through justifications (140-169) by which she provides more details about her position.

The use of justifications is also evident in the last excerpt (Excerpt 4.18). Here, not only Carlo, the adolescent, aligns with the other family members through justifications, but also the parents give specific explanations by which they "defend" their own positions. In the Grandi family also a younger child is present, Jacopo who is 11.

Excerpt 4.18 – Grandi family. P (father), M (mother), C (adolescent), J (brother), I (interviewer)
Frame VI. Sensitive topic: Adolescent's request to go out at night

M p.u.	194.	M	(…) mi ha fatto una richiesta [Carlo] una sera o due di andare a C. coi suoi amici e non glielo abbiamo concesso io a maggior ragione non gliel'ho concesso perché andavano in un locale comunque	194.	M	(…) he [Carlo] asked me to go out with his friends in C. one or two nights and we didn't allowed him to go because they were going into a club though
	195.	I	in una discoteca?	195.	I	in a disco?
	196.	P	eh no una specie di	196.	P	no it was a kind of
	197.	M	un pub	197.	M	a pub
F com. M	*198.*	P	un pub una birreria *((Jacopo annuisce))*	*198.*	P	a pub a brewery *((Jacopo nods))*
M just	199.	M	però io ritengo che non sia ancora in età e neanche che ci siano delle cose che in questo momento possano interessargli visto che si beve si fuma queste cose qua e non è motivato *((guardando il marito))*	199.	M	but I believe that he is still to young and then I don't think he can find things of his interest there as they drink and smoke all these stuff and he his not interested *((looking at her husband))*
F com. M	200.	P	anche perché comunque non potrebbero entrare al di là di tutto fino a 16 anni	200.	P	also because they are not allowed to go there as you after all as you have to be older than 16
	[…]			[…]		
M just.	204.	M	sì ne abbiamo parlato lui *((guardando il marito))* sarebbe stato anche propenso a dire sì va bene anche se va a fare un giro io dico non mi pare che sia necessario ancora adesso più avanti avrà delle conquiste che pian pianino farà più avanti quindi	204.	M	yes we talked about it together and he *((looking at her husband))* would also let him go just to take a look but I say I don't think he needs that as later he will have the possibility to win more permissions slowly
	205.	I	e tu *((guardando Carlo))* come hai reagito a questo diciamo limite che ti è stato imposto?	205.	I	and *((looking at Carlo))* how did you react to this limitation?
A just	206.	C	no va beh comunque avevo degli amici della compagnia che si fermavano lì mi è un po' dispiaciuto comunque però	206.	C	no well some friends' of mine were there and then I regretted it a bit but
	207.	I	è stato un po'	207.	I	it was a bit
	208.	C	ho provato a chiedere qualche	208.	C	I tried to ask some more time

			volta in più però poi però alla fine( )				but at the end ( )
	209.	I	quindi c'è il tentativo di richiesta ma poi hai ceduto ecco *((sorridendo))*	*209.*	I	so you tried to ask but then you yielded it though *((smiling))*
	210.	C	no comunque c'è sempre questa cosa qua che sono fortunato perché c'è una compagnia di venticinque persone cioè noi abbiamo una compagnia di venticinque persone poi c'è chi si aggiunge (…)	210.	C	no but actually there is always that I'm lucky as I've a group of twenty-five people I mean I have a group of friends of twenty-five people and then others add to it (…)
F just.	211.	P	ma poi io l'ho già detto secondo me lui è fortunato avere tutti questi vincoli tutti questi stop se nella vita tu hai tutto così facilmente poi alla fine ti rompi le scatole (…) *((Carlo annuisce))*	211.	P	but then I already said that in my opinion he is lucky as he has all these limitations and stop if in your life you have everything so easily at the end you're sick of it (…) *((Carlo nods))*

In this sequence, the mother gives specific reasons for refusing the adolescent's request (199-204); the adolescent justifies as well (206) and at the end, he systains his father's position by nodding at him (211). From these exchanges, the construction of reciprocal agreements through a series of compliances and justification emerge clearly. Challenges and oppositions have never been eppressed either verbally or nonverbally.

From the two excerpts I reported above the *homeostasis* that characterizes this form of interaction has clearly emerged. All family members never switch their positions as they consensually align on the sensitive topics debated, thereby family oscillations could not emerge. Furthermore, as for the drifting pattern, each family member is extremely coordinated with the other as shown both verbally and nonverbally.

In the table below (Table 4.5) the patterns of family interaction and the specific forms of sequential interactions are summarized. The adolescents' stances, which will be presented in detail in the next paragraph, are also indicated.

Table 4.5
Patterns of family interaction, forms of sequential interactions and adolescent's stances

Analog Oscillation / Coordination	No oscillations		Family oscillations
Synchrony	**Quiet** (Homeostatic) *Down-down* Benedetti Follini Grandi Poggiali Righi Sassi		**Drifting** (Negotiation) *Down-down-up-up* Carini Giuliani Zanotti
-	-		**Stormy (b)** *(Firstborn child, Up-down,)* (Alternated) Rossetti Toscani Zurlini
Fractures	**Critical (a)** (Stable and symmetrical) *Up-up* Armani Beati Liberi Pani	**Critical (b)** (Stable and symmetrical*)* *Up-up-down* Carta Donati	**Stormy (a)** (Alternated) *Up-down-up-down* Alpi Manini

4.3 The *adolescent's stance* in the different patterns of family interaction

As a third step in the analysis of data we considered how the position of the adolescent emerged from the texture of the different forms of sequential interactions. For each pattern, I present the most salient parts in which it is clear how in the *stancetaking* process the adolescent assumes a specific position, either *down* or *up,* and either *stable* or *alternated*, as the result of a process of co-construction displayed in family talks.

It is important to underline that the positions that the adolescent takes time by time in the course of the sequence of exchanges should be considered as the result of a situated interactional process. For example, if we take two different scenarios where the adolescents position themselves at a symmetrical level in the alignment with the father, the possibility for the adolescents to maintain that position or to change it, by positioning themselves down, is linked to the position taken, not only by the father, but also by the other family members.

Consequently, in one scenario the adolescent might uphold a stable symmetrical position in the alignment with the father by reciprocal oppositions and challenges. In the other scenario it may happen that after aligning at a symmetrical level for a while, the adolescent switches his/her position and becomes compliant with his/her father.

What is then that allow the alignments to take one direction rather than another?

In the example above, I described the course of the interaction focusing on the exchanges between two participants, but what were the other family members doing in the two different scenarios? As it is known, to consider the whole family as a unit of analysis means to acknowledge that interactions are at least *triadic*. Then it is arguable that in a symmetrical escalation between two persons the possibility to keep it relies on the "moves" of a third person, who even not directly involved in the symmetrical exchange, can sustain either one or the other.

In this sense, in the presentation of this new section of results I will show how even individual positions (either *up* or *down*) are the result of alignments that involve all family members.

Let us now consider two patterns that present opposite forms of sequential interactions: the *quiet* and the *stormy* patterns.

In the quiet pattern, all family members aligns with each other by keeping an *homeostatic* form of sequential interaction (everybody complies and justifies) and they are *synchronized*; whereas in the stormy pattern, each family member *alternates* between *up* and *down* positions through *fractures* in coordination.

Which stance do adolescents take while they evaluate, align, and position themselves in the sequential interactions with the other family members?

As for the stormy pattern, in the Table 4.5 above, the positions taken by the adolescent are summarized as *Up-down-up-down* to stress that s/he often switches her/his position as part of the oscillatory process. On the contrary, in the quiet pattern, the adolescent's positions are defined as *Down-down.* If we focus the alignments of adolescents in the forms of sequential interactions in both these patterns, it is possible to "track" their moves. In particular, starting from the same down position, it is possible to observe the course that different alignments take.

Consider the table below (Table 4.6) in which I reported the extracts of the alignment sequences of each family member in relation to the others. The adolescents' alignments are indicated by their utterances, highlighted in grey.

Table 4.6
Adolescent's stance in two families with different patterns: Quiet (Benedetti family) and *Stormy* (Manini family)

	Benedetti family	Manini family
Frames	VI	VII
Sensitive Topic	Conflicts between parents and adolescent	Relationship between sisters
Members' alignments	S p.u. A com. S B p.u. S com. B B p.u. S com. B M com. S A com. S	[…] M p.u. F com. M S opp. F M just S ch. A A just. S ch. A M dir. S S ch. M M com. S

140

A p.u.	
M com. A	[...]
F com. M	
M com. F	A p.u.
	S dir. A
F p.u.	A ch. S
M com. F	S dir. A
F com. M	M just.
	A ch. S
M p.u.	
F com. M	F p.u.
M com. F	S opp. F
A just.	F opp. S
	A com. F
[...]	
	M p.u.
	A just
	S chall. A
	A opp. S

As shown in the table above, the two frames I have selected effectively show the *stancetaking* process of two adolescents who positioned themselves at a down level in the alignment with their interlocutors.

In the Benedetti family, Teresa expresses compliance, while in the Manini family, Erica justifies. The course of their alignments along the interaction, however, is different as it is clear that Teresa keeps constantly down, while Erica often switches between up and down. We can understand the differences by considering the positions of the other family members.

In the Benedettis, none of them change their initial positions in the course of the alignments (all comply). By contrast, all members of the Manini family move at least once their positions by alternating between up and down. In the Manini family, therefore, the adolescent has the possibility to be positioned and then position herself at different levels. In other words, Erica can alternate justifications and compliances to challenges and oppositions, as also the other family members continuously swap their positions. Thus, the adolescent sometimes complies with the father but some others she can oppose to him as the mother may agree with Erica, thus allowing her to keep an up position in the alignment with the father.

On the contrary, in the Benedetti family all members agree in the way sensitive topics are discussed. Teresa never relents to the ways that others define her nor she repositions

them re-launching a challenge or opposing to them. The fact that none changes in course of the interaction, makes more complicated for Teresa to differentiate her positions from the others' ones.

In the next two extracts both the adolescents initially show an *up* position in the alignment with the other family members. Let us first consider the two variations of the *critical*. As described in the previous paragraph, the critical pattern presents two forms of sequential interactions which also correspond to two different adolescent's stances: in the form (a) it is defined as *Up-up*, while in the form (b) it is defined as *Up-up-down.*

In the table below (Table 4.7), excerpts of the sequences are illustrated for the Beati family [form (a)] and for the Donati family [form (b)].

Table 4.7
*Adolescent's stance in two families with different pattern*s:
Critical (a) (Beati family) and *Critical (b)* (Donati family)

	Beati family	Donati family
Frames	VI	VIII
Sensitive Topic	Democracy in making decisions (Ep.)	Physical distance (Ep.)
Members' alignments	[…] A p.u. M com. A F opp. A M com. F A ch. M, F F p.u. A ch. F F opp. A M com. F F ch. A A opp. F F opp. A A ch. F F ch. A A opp. F F dir. A	M p.u. F opp. A M com. F F com. M A opp. M, F F opp. A M com. F A opp. M, F F dir. A M com. F A opp. M F ch. A A opp. F M com. F F opp. M M com. F F dir. A A opp. F

A ch. M	[…]
M just.	
	M dir. A
	F com. M
	A com. M, F

At a first glance, the two sequences reported in the table might look similar, considering the prevalence of *up* positions such as oppositions and challenges. However, a more detailed analysis reveals that in the Beati family the adolescent, Lorenzo, maintains a constant symmetrical alignment with his parents. On the contrary, in the Donati family the adolescent, Stefano, upholds the symmetry for a while, but, in the end, yields and moves to a *down* level, becoming compliant.

What does contribute to these differences? If we focus on the form of sequential interactions of the Beati family, we will notice some differences in the parents' alignments. More precisely, the father creates a symmetrical alignment with the adolescent, as he keeps opposing and challenging him, while the mother complies some times with the father and other times with the adolescent. This role played by the mother allows Lorenzo to have an "ally" or a supporter in the alignment with the father.

Let us consider now the dynamics displayed in the Donati family. In this case, Stefano is involved in the same symmetrical alignment with his father. However, he cannot rely on any partner, as both mother and father are strictly "allied." In fact, the parents work as team: when the father positions himself above the adolescent, the mother complies with him, and viceversa, when the mother is directive or opposes to the adolescent, the father complies with her. In the course of the interactions, the adolescent attempts to resist his parents' definition, as shown in the sequence of opposition he

displays in the interaction; however, given the compact alignment of their parents, he surrenders by agreeing with them.

The last pattern shown is the *drifting,* where the adolescent's stance is defined as *Down-down-up-up.*

In the form of the sequential interactions that define this pattern, we observed the adolescent positioning her/himself with the parents. However, in some parts of the interactional sequences, s/he switches to "up" positions, as a way to resist to the definitions provided by other family members. Consider the following excerpt about the sequential alignments of the frame V (Table 4.8).

Table 4.8
Adolescent's stance in the drifting pattern (Zanotti family)

	Zanotti family
Frames	V
Sensitive Topics	Relationship between mother and son
Members' alignments	M p.u.
	F opp. M
	A opp. F
	M ch. A
	A opp. M
	M dir. A
	A just.
	M dir. A
	A just.
	M p.u.
	A com. M
	M dir. A
	A just.
	F p.u.
	M opp. F
	A com. M
	F opp. A
	A com. F
	M opp. A
	F com. M

In this sequence, Andrea, the adolescent child of the Zanotti family alternates compliances and justifications to oppositions. As previously specified, in the families that showed this pattern, the use of justifications was observed and interestingly, adolescents frequently used this kind of utterance, as evident in the table above.

A noteworthy aspect of this dynamic is also that the adolescent rarely challenges given the prevalent use of justifications. This outlines the difference between the adolescent's stance emerging from this pattern and the one observable in the stormy. Furthermore, oppositions are expressed through some verbal and nonverbal indicators that mitigate their effect. Andrea aligns taking a down position with his mother when she is directive towards him. This implies that he responds to an act of control by conforming to it; however, by choosing justification instead of compliance, he accepts the interlocutor's definition, but he "defends" his own position as taking responsibility for it.

Likewise, in the course of interaction the adolescent has the possibility of resisting by opposing to his interlocutors; thus he can switch to an "up" position and then align at a symmetrical level with them. In other words, it is as if the adolescent is mainly compliant with his parents, as for the adolescents of the quiet pattern; however in the drifting the adolescent can change their positions "moving up" in the hierarchy, as the other family members sometimes alternate symmetrical alignments with asymmetrical ones as well.

To reiterate, the adolescent participates in the oscillation process as he switches positions along with other family members, albeit he seems to converge more often toward the consent with his parents, except in specific instances in which he expresses his dissent.

5. Discussion and new research questions

In this study, some improvements were attempted to overcome the limitations encountered in the Study 2.

Thanks to the theoretical integrations of fields related to psychology and to the introduction of methodological advances, it was possible to use the notion of stance and then to re-define at a more specific interactional level the four family patterns for the

study of microtransitions. This allowed for the identification of specific forms of sequential interactions, which were analyzed in the stancetaking process that occurred as family members were interviewed about ongoing changes.

Results were presented in three separate paragraphs for reason of clarity. However, they should be considered as different focalizations rather than isolated one rom one another.

First, I would like to point out that the micro-analytical "turn" we introduced for the analysis of the specific forms of sequential interactions allowed for the identification of more nuances in the four patterns of family interactions, as they were presented in the previous study. It has been possible to identify specific variations of both the critical and the stormy pattern.

Second, not only I could provide a description of the relational side of oscillation through specific analog indicators, but I could also point out the display of the power dynamics as family talks unfolded. Consequently, each pattern of family interaction is defined by a specific interactional form, which informed us on how family members are dealing with the ongoing changes in their relations. More precisely, by taking different stances in the discourses elicited in the inteview, family members have shown how they are "moving" along family's hierarchy. In addition, I could identify how individual positions (focusing on the adolescent) co-emerge in the course of interaction, thereby highlighting that they are *situated* rather than the result of personalty traits. This aspect is particularly relevant, as any research, to my knowledge, has provided similar evidences since now.

Furthermore, the topics of the family talks were reviewed, not in a way to qualify or quantify them, but rather as a means of exploring the display of interactional dynamics. It is interesting to note, how the "sensitivity" of topics discussed in the families is not connected to "general principles" or expectations stereotypically associated to adolescence, such as sexuality or trasgressive behaviors. Rather family members can be activated or higly involved in debating very ordinary topics or episodes of everyday family life.

In sum, what is it added to the understanding of family developmental processes during adolescence?

146

If we consider the advances given by the results of this study, the patterns of family interactions can be now understood in a more complex framework. It is known that the context of family relations is an asymmetrical relational context by defintion. However, in narrowing the lenses on each pattern of family interaction, it was possible to identify how either by oscillating or by being coordinated or not coordinated, family members are continuosly and reciprocally changing, adapting or resisting to their interlocutor's definitions.

In the *critical* pattern, for instance, the father and child define their relation as equal, as shown by the maintainance of the *stable symmetrical alignments*. In this case, power is not negotiated, but rather it is observable in a symmetrical escalation, in which the adolescent is firmly challenging his father's role with the siblings and/or the mother as "allies".

In the case of the *stormy* pattern, family members, instead, seem to be in the course of defining the nature of their relationship. In fact they continuously *alternate* sequences in which they define themselves as uneven, to sequences in which they are more symmetrical, that is they define themselves as equal. This also allows the adolescent to take different roles in the interaction, and to experiment different relationship with the others.

In the *drifting* pattern, family members are *negotiating* power as they change their positions between opposite hierarchical polarities but with reciprocal legitimations. In fact, the adolescent, as part of this process, mainly differentiates from the others as s/he keeps a down level in the interaction with parents, (for example giving justifications when the interlocutor is directive), but in some parts s/he defines her/himself at the same level of her/his interlocutors.

In the *quiet* pattern, power is not negotiated. As each family member converges on the same interactional "plot," it can be argued that, in these families, there is no need to challenge the definition of the their relationship (*homeostatic*). The adolescent seems to be in line with the positions of others and accepts the definition given by other family members, as to say that the process of differentiation has not yet taken place or, on the contrary, it has just finished.

147

This last consideration outlines a fundamental issue that I intend to develop in next studies. And more precisely, till now I have placed greater efforts in the specification of the patterns of family interaction, but this is still a static snapshot of different kinds of interactional dynamics. Thus the next step in my scientific duty is to try to depict the "movement" of these different family patterns.

Therefore, the new research questions that emerge from these results are:

- Do these patterns of family interaction change?
- Can we consider these patterns as characteristic of family styles of interaction or rather as different phases of the same developmental process?

Assuming that these patterns change:
- Do these four patterns evolve one from the other?
- Which is the "direction"? Do families that show a critical pattern move towad a stormy pattern or viceversa?
- And again, do these patterns evolve towards new ones that I could not observe in my studies.

In order to try to answear to these questions, a longitudinal study is needed. Indeed, longitudinal studies evince something that is crucial to the understandings of everyday family life, that is the interconnection of time and texture in relational dynamics. In other words, only *longitudinal data* can offer "a movie rather than a snapshot" (Berthoud, 2000: 15).

FAMILIES UNDER THE MICROSCOPE:
CONCLUDING REMARKS

I introduced the entire project with what I defined a challenge: is it possible to observe the process of change? At the beginning that question sounded more as a philosophical question rather than a specific research goal. However, after three years of intense work I think I may have "approached" a response.

The microscope that I metaphorically used to refer to the *theoretical* and *methodological* choices I made with the constant confrontation and support of a research team, allowed me to provide a better understanding of the amazing, and still partially unknown, processes by which human systems incorporate changes.

The specific results I have reached through the three studies previously illustrated have been described at the end of each of them. In these concluding remarks I will rather reflect on the implicative, methodological and experiential aspects of my work.

It has been hard to choose the right lenses: sometimes too wide at the risk of loosing the particulars, and some others so narrow to make the background blur. The research team and I worked many hours in looking for the "right balance" among the different lenses. Thus, I wish that the "picture" emerging from the composition of the different family scenarios I have illustrated in these three studies have become clearer and clearer by moving through the pages.

I am aware that in this work, despite the energy that required, I took only a snapshot of how family members co-regulate during microtransitions, given by the everyday and continuous "relational unbalances" that characterize the families' lives.

However, I believe that the obtained results can provide some indications on how families face their life challenges, since the way in which families go through periods of change can predict members' adjustment (Reiss, 1981; Walsh, 2006). In this sense, my work can illustrate possible processes of development in families facing changes.

The family patterns and their implications. It is hard to elaborate on the meaning and implications of the observed patterns of family interactions, especially as far as the topic of normative or problematic processes of family adjustment are concerned. However, a few words can be dedicated to the two patterns characterized by the absence of family

oscillations: *quiet* and *critical*. The fact that in these families no oscillations were observed, raises the issue of *non-change*, which in itself may eventually put the family members at greater risk as compared to those sharing other interactive patterns. More in particular, the absence of tension to change observed in the quiet pattern relies on *stability* (coordination) as if family members tended to "manufacture consent" instead of change and differentiation. On the contrary, the absence of change in the critical pattern is connected to the *lack of stability* and cohesion among members. Indeed, in the critical pattern the two different forms of sequential interactions clearly show patterns of "resistance to" change, as the symmetric escalation between parents and adolescent illustrated.

How do families arrive at this state, and how can they move towards new paths, oriented to change? At this moment it is not possible to advance any prediction about the evolution of the patterns. However, these results can be useful "tools" for all practitioners who are called to counsel families meeting difficulties or obstacles during children's "normal" adolescence.

The well-developed knowledge in the field of family therapy may be useful also for the observation of non-clinical families, who encounter problems without necessarily being pathological. Nowadays the urge and challenge for psychologists and educators is to reach a deeper understanding of transitional processes in "normal" families, in order to design prevention programs and to implement intervention for parents' and adolescents' counselling. The idea of "strengthening family resilience" (Walsh, 2006) has become central both in the research field and in the work with families. The very idea of family resilience implies more knowledge about the different ways families can cope with their transitional phases. I am aware that the whole research project has only depicted *possible paths* that families can undertake in dealing with the adolescence of children. However I wish this work also contributes to specify programs of intervention aimed at supporting families in the coping processes.

The innovative methodological procedures that have been devised in this work can orient family therapists in the elaboration of clinical hypotheses and then favor, also in that field, the emergence of an "empirically informed therapeutic work" (Steinglass, 1995).

As the longstanding tradition of family therapy has shown, working with families can be at the same time as creative and enriching as boring and frustrating. Doing research with families calls into question aspects similar to family therapy, however with different goals and results.

Research as "political" activity. These three years of research experience made me realize that doing research, particularly when focusing on matters that are socially relevant, has to be intended as a political activity in the sense that the scientist's decisions entail a personal engagement at each step of the research, starting from the definition of the epistemological framework. Thus, doing research "*with*" instead of "*on*" families is a political choice, which affects the subsequent course of the whole research project. In this sense, I stressed on purpose the preposition "with" to underline that I chose to situate my work within an orientation of studies in which both participants and researcher actively *participate* in the process of "data construction" (Clark & Moss, 2001; Fruggeri, 1998b; McNamee, 1994). Similarly, doing research *with* (and also *within*) families cannot be considered as a mere and aseptic way of collecting information that are "out there" and jealously owned by family members, but rather it should intended as the *choice* to engage in a *relational process* involving not only the participants but also the researcher. This also implies that the researcher develops a competence defined as *reflexivity* (Dely, 2007; Mantovani, 2008; Moustakis, 1990). I have gradually realized how relevant is the assumption of responsibility that the researcher has to take into account in order to continuously and reflexively monitor each step of the research process including her/himself in it.

Doing research with families for me has been much more then simply interviewing them. It has been a life experience.

The experiential dimension of the research. In these three years I have learned a lot from "my" families, I have shared and empathized moments of their everyday life, and conversely families did the same with me, I assume.

I remember that several times, when the interview was over and I was on the way back home, I realized that I would have been curious to know what family members were talking about after I left. And families probably experienced the same feeling of sharing with me what happened after my departure from their homes, since several times they

sent me a text message thanking for the opportunity I offered them to talk about themselves and their relations, and telling me that they had long been talking about what happened and came out during the interview.

Other times it happened that once I switched off the camera, we kept on talking and, interestingly, in a couple of occasions parents and children started asking me questions about myself as if the roles were switched. It was fun but also illuminating for the considerations on reflexivity I made above. Then, I do not mention here all the times I was invited for dinner, or when they offered me cookies, cakes, wines and homemade liquors. It has been very easy to put on weight doing research within families (especially Italian families).

More seriously, it has been a real journey working with families: starting from the phone calls I had with a family member (in almost all cases with the mothers) to arrange the appointment for the interview, to the touching and critical moments I experienced in the course of these three years. All this has changed me on the professional and personal sides.

Critical moments in the research process. Working with families can be complicated too. First of all, recruitment was very hard. I contacted families at first through schools, youth associations and also through "words of mouth". Considering the huge amount of letters I printed and distributed, I must admit that the percentage of positive answers is less than minimal. It should be noted, however, that all families that participated in these three studies (32) did not receive any compensation: their adhesion to participate was completely on a volunteer base. This aspect can represent a limitation of this study, as families were self-selected. Indeed, all families were very motivated to participate, they mainly belonged to the upper or middle class, and they were all of Italian origins.

Another critical aspect is that this work requires all family members to participate. This implies to be very flexible and adapt to family members' schedule as, for instance, to re-arrange the appointment for the interview according to the families' needs. In Study 1 and Study 2 all family members were invited to the laboratory of observation. At the beginning, this setting generated some tension in the family members, however as the interview proceeded they became more comfortable and relaxed, and seemed to ignore the one-way mirror and the cameras on the ceiling. I was then not surprised, as it also

happened in my still short clinical experience as family therapist, that some families asked to meet the team that was behind the mirror and they were curious to know the procedure and the research and the equipment we had been using.

In Study 3 the setting has changed and I went, with an assistant, to the families' homes. A notation for the implications of the *change* of the setting is needed, as it is related to the issue of ecological validity that I have partially mentioned in Study 3. The main reason why the research team and I decided to enter the families' homes is very practical: I could reach them any time (laboratory was closed in the evenings and in the weekends, when most families are free) and in different cities of the Region (laboratory is located in Parma). However, we were conscious that this change might have effects on how family members behaved and interacted. It was instead very interested to note that families displayed the same patterns of interaction both in the laboratory setting and in the natural one. As Fivaz-Depeursinge and Corboz-Warnery (1999) have pointed out, behaviors may change, but family interactive patterns are cross sectional to contexts.

Further steps… regrets and new curiosities. In the course of these three years I had the opportunity to video record many hours of family interactions. This is undoubtedly a rich corpus of data that will also give me opportunities to carry out further analyses in the future. However, it has also implied that I had to make some choices about the parts to include in the work I presented. I regret that I could not include in this dissertation all the material I collected. In particular, I left behind two corpus of data, one related to a *problem-solving task* that families completed after the interview, and the second comprising a *longitudinal data collection* with a further small sample of eight families.

The main regret actually concerns the *longitudinal study*. This study was designed to answer theoretical and methodological issues raised by the previous studies. One of the crucial questions opened by the results of Study 3 was whether the four identified patterns are to be considered as stable or as developing forms of family interactions. According to Cowan (1991), transitions *amplify* processes that are already in motion before the transition even begins, because the way in which families handle current change is a direct reflection of how they have handled transitions and crises in the past. Following this and other authors' suggestions (Breunlin, 1988; Reiss, 1981), I argue that the interactive patterns I illustrated probably express specific ways in which family

members interact in *particular moments* of their lives, that is, every time they are dealing with change. In order to explore this aspect a longitudinal study has been planned and actually realized.

I have met eight families in their homes for four times in this last year. However, data collection ended only a month ago, and so far I have not had the possibility to deeply analyze them. This is why I did not include these data in my dissertation as a final study. I just want to point out here that a first sight to these data allows me to state that some of these families actually "moved" from one pattern of interaction to another. For instance, I observed a movement from a stormy pattern towards forms of interaction closer to the negotiation characterizing a drifting pattern.

However, before responding to the crucial question on whether the patterns of interaction are idiosyncratic styles of family interaction or, instead, different moments that a family goes through during microtransitions, other "months" (at least) of analysis are required.

The other corpus of data I did not include pertains to the material I collected with a problem-solving task. After the family interview, families were invited to build a puzzle called the "the pyramid of the pharaoh" in order to observe how they interact when taking decisions in critical situations. Interesting aspects emerged but again these results would not allow me to keep coherence with the three studies I presented in the current work. Fortunately, some of the problem-solving data will soon be published (Everri & Molinari, in press).

What else can be added? Many other lenses can be applied to the microscope.

The lines of research stemming from this project are various. For instance in the different parts of the interviews, I noticed that family members mentioned aspects related to *moral value*s or confronted with their *families of origin* with reference to parenting. These aspects were left behind in the analysis but I consider them as particularly "attractive" for the formulation of new research questions starting from these same data.

Similarly, other "variables" were not considered, among them, gender. The focus on *gender roles* in the context of families with adolescents might give further details about the different stances that family members take in the course of their interactions. As

Gilligan (1990: 56) has pointed out "initiation into the demands of patriarchy, that is code and scripts of manhood and womanhood, tends to occur at adolescence".

The attention to the birth order of siblings is also of great interest. In the data I presented in Study 3, a sub-group of families was not included in the analysis as during the interview family members tended to drive their attention to the firstborn child instead to the adolescent. Interestingly the first child was a daughter who was two years older than the adolescent (a son). One of these families' mother clearly said, referring to her adolescent child: "He is not ready yet! I've more troubles with her [her daughter] recently". Adolescents themselves tended to be more "peripheral" in these interviews, if compared to those of other families.

For sure other investigations are needed, however an interesting "working hypothesis" is that in these families all members are still oscillating on the firstborn and therefore leave the second in the background.

Furthermore, it should be noted that families might go through *multiple transitions* at a given time in their life course. For multiple transitions I mean, for instance, divorce/separation contemporary to adolescence, or job loss contemporary to the birth of a child. Transitions could also be cumulative or of different intensity, thus in some period some transitions might become more salient than others. These are only some of the other possible lenses.

I am aware that much work needs to be done, and many limitations still characterize this project. However, just let me say, borrowing an image from the process of sculpture of the famous Michelangelo that I have *only started to* "liberate the figure imprisoned in the marble" by outlining paths of family development which were brought to a "fairly finished state" with some parts further back still only rough-hewn, thereby still struggling to be freed.

Further concluding remarks are left to the words of Gregory Bateson:

…

D: What did you mean by conversation having an outline? Has this conversation had an outline?

F: Oh, surely yes. But we cannot see it yet because the conversation isn't finished. You cannot even see it while you're in the middle of it. Because if you could see it, you would be predictable – like the machine. And I would be predictable – and the two of us together would be predictable –

D: But I don't understand. You say it is it important to be clear about things and you get angry about people who blur outlines. And yet we think it is better to be unpredictable and not to be like a machine and you say we cannot see the outlines of our conversation till it's over. Then it doesn't matter if we are clear or not. Because we cannot do anything about it then.

F: Yes, I know and I don't understand it myself… but anyway, who wants to do anything about it?

Metalogue: Why do thing have outline
(Steps to an Ecology of Mind, 1972: 32)

★★★

156

REFERENCES

Aldous, J. (1990). Family development and the life-course: Two perspectives on family change. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 52, 571-583.

Baltes, P. B. (1987). Theoretical propositions of life-span developmental psychology: On the dynamics between growth and decline. *Developmental Psychology*, 23, 611-626.

Baltes, P. B., Lindenberger, U. & Staudinger, U. M. (1998). Life-span theory in developmental psychology. In W. Damon & R. M. Lerner (Eds), *Handbook of child psychology. Vol. 1. Theoretical models of human development* (pp. 1029-1143). Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Bateson, G. (1955). A theory of play and fantasy: A report on theoretical aspects of the project for study the role of paradoxes of abstraction in communication. *Psychiatric Research Reports*, 2, 39-51.

Bateson, G. (1958). *Naven.* Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press

Bateson, G. (1972). *Steps to an ecology of mind*. New York: Chandler (tr. it. *Verso un'ecologia della mente*: Milano, Adelphi, 1976).

Bateson, G. & Mead, M. (1942). *Balinese Character: A Photographic Analysis*. New York: Academy of Sciences.

Beitin B. K. (2008). Qualitative research in marriage and family therapy: who is in the interview? *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 30, 48-58.

Bengston, V. L., Allen & K. R. (1993). The life course perspective applied to families over time. In P. Boss, W. Doherty, R. La Rossa, W. Shumm, S. Steinmetz (Eds.), *Sourcebook of families theories and methods: A contextual approach* (pp. 469-499). New York: Plenum.

Bercelli, P., Leonardi, P. & Viaro, M. (1999). *Cornici terapeutiche*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina.

Bertalanffy, L. von (1968). *Teoria generale dei sistemi. Fondamenti, sviluppo, applicazioni.* Milano: Mondatori, 2004.

Berthoud, R. (2000). Introduction. In R. Berthoud (Ed.) *Seven years in the lives of British families*. London: Policy Press.

Breunlin, D. (1988). Oscillation theory and family development. In C. J. Falicov (Ed), *Family transitions. Continuity and change over the life cycle* (pp.133-158). New York: The Guilford Press.

Broderick, C. & Smith, J. (1979). The general systems approach to the family. In W. Burr, R. Hill, F. Nye & I. Reiss (Eds), *Contemporary theories about the family, vol. 2*, (pp. 112-129). New York: The Free Press.

Brody G. H. & Flor, D. L. (1996). Coparenting, family interactions and competence among African American youth. In J. P. McHale & P. A. Cowan (Eds.), *Understanding how family-level dynamics affect children's development: studies of two-parent families. New Directions in Child Development*, 74. 77-91.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development*, Cambridge, MA: University Press.

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1995). *The bioecological model from a life course perspective: Reflections of a participant observer*. In P. Moen, G. H. Elder & K. Lüscher (Eds.), *Examining lives in context*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

Bronfenbrenner, U. & Morris, P. A. (1998). The ecology of developmental processes, in W. Damon, R. M. Lerner (Eds) *Handbook of child psychology, Vol 1. Theoretical models of human development* (pp. 993-1028). Hoboken, N.J., John Wiley & Sons Inc.

Burck, C. (2005). Comparing qualitative research methodologies for systemic research: The use of gounded theory, discourse analysis and narrative analysis. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 27, 237-262.

Burgess, E. (1926). The family as a unity of interacting personalities, *Family*, 7, 3-9.

Caprara, G.V., Regalia, C., Scabini, E., Barbaranelli, C. & Bandura, A. (2004). Assessment of filial, parental, marital and collective family efficacy beliefs. *European Journal of Psychological Assessment*, 20, 247-261.

Carter, B. & McGoldrick, M. (1988). Overview: The changing family life cycle: a framework for family therapy. In E.A. Carter e M. McGoldrick (Eds.). *The changing family life cycle* (2nd ed.) (pp. 3-28). NY: Gardner.

Chamberlain, K. (1999). Methodolatry and qualitative health research. *Journal of Health Psychology*, 5, 285-296.

Chibucos, T. R., Leite & R.W. (2005). *Readings in family theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cicognani E. (2002). La percezione degli stili educativi genitoriali negli adolescenti, *Bollettino di Psicologia Applicata*, 236, pp. 19-31.

Cigoli, V. (1985). Adolescenza, progresso e degrado del processo di individuazione familiare. In E. Scabini (a cura di), *L'organizzazione famiglia tra crisi e sviluppo* (pp. 202-239). Milano: Franco Angeli.

Clark A. & Moss P. (2001), *Listening to young children: The mosaic approach*. Trowbridge: National Children's Bureau.

Collins, W. A. (1990). Parent-child relationships in the transition to adolescence: Continuity and change in interaction, affect, and cognition. In R. Montemayor, G. R. Adams, & T. P. Gullotta (Eds.), *From childhood to adolescence: A transitional periods?* (pp. 85-106). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Collins, W. A. (1995). Relationship and development: family adaptation to individual change, in S. Shulman (Ed), *Close relationships and socioemotional development* (pp. 128-154). New York: Ablex.

Collins, W. A., & Laursen, B. (1992). Conflict and relationships during adolescence. In C. U. Shantz & W. W. Hartup (Eds.), Conflict in child and adolescent development, pp. 216-241. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cowan, P. A. (1991). Individual and family life transitions: A proposal for a new definition. In P. A. Cowan & M. Hetherington (Eds.), *Family transitions* (pp.3-30). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Cusinato, M. (1990). *Psicologia delle relazioni familiari*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Daly, K. (1992). The fit between qualitative research characteristics of families. In J. F. Gilgun, K. Daly & G. Handel (Eds), *Qualitative methods in family research* (pp. 3-11). Newbury Park, CA: Sage..

Daly, K. J. (2007). *Qualitative methods for family studies e human development.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

David N., Kramer C. (2001), *Ethnoarcheology in action*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Du Bois, J. W. (2007). The stance triangle. In R. Englebretson, *Stancetaking in Discourse. Subjectivity, evaluation, interaction* (pp. 140-182). Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Duranti, A. (1997). *Linguistic Anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Edwards, D., & Potter, J. (2000). *Discursive psychology*. London: Sage.

Eggenberg, S. K. & Nelms, T. P. (2007). Family interviews as a method for family research. *JAN Research methodology*, 282-292.

Elam, G. & Fenton K. A. (2003). Researching sensitive issues and ethnicity: lessons from sexual health. *Ethnicity and Health*, 8, 15-27.

Elder, G. H. Jr. (1977). Family history and the life course, *Journal of Family History,* 2, 279-304.

Elder, G. H. Jr. (1994). Time, human agency, and social change, perspectives on the life course. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 57, 4-15.

Elder, G. H. Jr. (1998). The life course as developmental theory. *Child Development*, 69, 1-12.

Englebretson, R. (2007). *Stancetaking in Discourse. Subjectivity, evaluation, interaction* (pp. 140-182). Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Ervin-Tripp, S. M., O'Connor, M. C., & Rosenberg, J. (1984). Language and power in the family. In Schulz, M. & Kramerae, C. (Ed.), *Language and power* (117-135). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Everri M., Molinari L. (in press), Analisi di un problem solving familiare: una ricerca su famiglie con figli adolescenti. *Rivista di Studi Familiari*.

Fasulo, A. & Pontecorvo, C. (1999). *Come si dice?* Roma: Carocci.

Feetham, S. L. (1991). Conceptual and methodological issues in research of families. In A. Whall & J. Fawcett (Eds). *Family theory development in nursing: state of the science and art* (pp. 55-68). Philadelphia, PA: F.A. Davis.

Feldman, S. S. & Ghering, T. M. (1988). Changing perceptions of family cohesion and power across adolescence. *Child Development*, 59, 1034-1045.

Fischer, L., Kokes, R. F., Ransom, D. C., Philips S. L. & Rudd, P. (1985). Alternative strategies for creating "relational" family data. *Family Process*, 24, 213-224.

Fivaz-Depeursinge, E. & Corboz-Warnery, A. (1999). *The primary triangle. A developmental systems view of mothers, fathers and infants*. New York: Basic Books (tr. it., *Il triangolo primario*, Milano: Raffaello Cortina, 2000).

Fogel, A., Garvey, A., Hsu, H. & West-Stroming, D. (2006). *Change processes in relationships: a relational-historical research approach*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Ford D. H. & Lerner, R. M. (1992). *Developmental systems theory: An integrative approach*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage

Fruggeri, L. (1998a). *Famiglie. Dinamiche interpersonali e processi psicosociali*. Roma: Carocci.

Fruggeri, L. (1998b) La ricerca come processo di interazione. In S. Manghi (a cura di) *Attraverso Bateson* (pp. 83-97) Milano: Raffaello Cortina Editore.

Fruggeri, L. (2005). *Diverse normalita'*. Roma: Carocci.

Fruggeri, L. (2009). *Osservare le famiglie. Metodi e tecniche.* Roma: Carocci.

Gabb J. (2008). *Researching intimacy in families*. Palgrave Macmillan: New York.

Gesell, A. (1928). *Infancy and human growth*. New York: Macmillan Company.

Giddens, A. (1992). *The transformation of intimacy: sexuality, love and eroticism in modern societies*. Cambridge: Polity Presss.

Gilgun, J. F., Daly, K., Handel, G. (1992). *Qualitative methods in family research*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Gilligan (1990) *Joining the resistance: psychology, politics, girls and women*, Michignan Quarterly Review.

Gilligan C. (1990). *Making Connections: The Relational Worlds of Adolescent Girls at Emma Willard School*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Gjerde, P. F. (1986). The interpersonal structure of family interaction structure settings: parent-adolescent relations in dyads and triads. *Developmental Psychology*, 22, 297-304.

Goffman, E. (1974). *Frame Analysis*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard at the UP.

Goldman, R., Pea, R., Barron, B. & Sharon, J. D. (Eds.) (2007). *Video research in the learning sciences*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Goodwin C. (1994), Professional vision. *American Anthropologist*, 96, 606-633.

Goodwin C. (1996), Transparent vision. In E. Ochs, E. Schegloff & S. Thompson (Eds.), *Interaction and grammar*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Goodwin C. (2006). Retrospective and prospective orientation in the construction of argumentative moves. *Text and Talk*. 26, 443-461.

Goodwin M. H. (2002). Building power asymmetries in girls' interaction. *Discourse & Society*, 13, 715-730.

Granic, I., Hollenstein, T., Dishion, T. J. & Patterson, G. R. (2003). Longitudinal analysis of flexibility and reorganization in early adolescence: A dynamic systems study of family

interactions. *Developmental Psychology*, 39, 606-617.

Grotevant, H. D. & Cooper, C. R. (1985). Patterns of interaction in family relationships and the development of identity exploration in adolescence. *Child Development*, 56, 415-428.

Grotevant, H. D. & Cooper, C. R. (1986). Individuation in family relationships. *Human Development*, 29, 82-100.

Gumperz J. J (1982) (Ed). *Language and Social Identity*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Harden, J. Scott S., Backett-Milburn, K., Jackson, S. (2000). Can't talk, won't talk?
Methodological issues in researching children.
Sociological Research on line.

Harold, R. D., Colarossi, L. G. & Mercier, L. R. (2007). *Smooth sailing or stormy waters*? *Family transitions through adolescence and their implications for practice and policy*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Hartman, A. (1978). Diagrammatic assessment of family relationships. *Social Casework*, 59, 465-476.

Herman, E.S & Chomsky N. (1988). *Manufacturing consent. The political ecnomomy of the mass media*. NY: Pantheon Books.

Harré, R., & Davies, B. (1990). Positioning: The discursive production of selves. *Journal for the Theory of Social Behavior*, 20, 43–63.

Harré, R., Moghaddam, F. M., Pilkerton Cairnie, T., Rothbart, D. & Sabat, S. R. (2009). Recent Advances in Positioning Theory. *Theory and Psychology*, 5-31.

Hartick, G. A & Lindsey A. E. (1995). The lived experience of family: a contextual approach to family nursing practice. *Journal of Family Nursing*, 1, 148-170.

Hartup, W. W. & Laursen, B. (1991). Relationships as developmental contexts. In R. Cohen, A. W. Siegel (Eds), *Context and development* (pp.253-279). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Havighurst, R. J. (1953). *Human development and education*. New York: David McKay.

Hetherington, E. M. & Arasteh, J. D. (Eds.) (1988). *Impact of divorce, single parenting, and stepparenting on children*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Hill, J. P. (1983). Early adolescence: a research agenda. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 3, 1-21.

Hill, R. (1981). Theories and research designs linking family behavior and child development: a critical overview. *Journal of Comparative Families Studies*, 12, 1-18.

Hill, R. & Holmbeck, G. N. (1987). Disagreements about rules in families with seventh-grade girls and boys. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 16, 221-245.

Hofer, M. (2004). The role of discourse in the transformation of parent-adolescent relationship. In A. N. Perret-Clermont, C. Pontecorvo, L. B. Resnick, T. Zittoun & B. Burge (Eds.), *Joining society*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Holmbeck, N. G. (1996). A model of family relational transformations during the transition to adolescence: parent-adolescent conflict and adaptation. In J. A Graber,. J. Brooks-Gunn, A. C. Petersen (Eds.), *Transitions through adolescence. Interpersonal domains and context.* Mahwah, N.J: Erlbaum.

Holstein, J. A. & Gubrium, J.F. (2005). Interpretive practice and social action. N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Linconln (Eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (483-505). CA: Sage.

Houck, G. M. & Kodadeck, S. M. (2001). Research in families and family nursing. In F. A. Davis, *Family health care nursing: theory, practice and research* (2nd ed.) (pp. 60-77). Philadelphia, PA: Hansom S.M.H. Ed.

Jacob, S. & Ochs, E. (1995). Co-construction: An introduction. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 28, 171-183.

Kantor, D. & Lehr, W. (1975). *Inside the family*. *Toward a theory of family process*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Kerig, P. K. & Lindhal, K. M. (2001). *Family observational coding systems: Resources for systemic research*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum (tr. it., *Sistemi di codifica per l'osservazione delle relazioni familiari*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2006).

Kidd, S. A (2002). The role of qualitative research in psychological journals. *Psychological Methods*, 7, 126-138.

Kosco, M., Warren, N. A. (2000). Critical care nurses' perceptions of family needs as met. *Critical Care Nursing Quarterly*, 23, 60-72.

Kreppner, K. (1989). Linking infant development-in-context research to the investigation of life-span family development In K. Kreppner & R. M. Lerner (Eds), *Family systems and life-span development* (pp. 33-64). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Kreppner, K. (1995). Differential experiences within the family during adolescence: consistencies of relationship assessments and concrete communication behaviors over time. In J. J. Hox, B. F. van der Meulen, J. M. A. M. Janssens, J. J. F. ter Laak & L. W. C. Tavecchio (Eds.), *Advaces in family research* (pp. 103-122). Amsterdam: Thesis Publisher.

Kreppner, K. (1996). Parent-child relationships: childhood and adolescence, in A.E. Auhagen, M. von Salisch (Eds), *The diversity of human relationships* (pp. 81-105). New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Kreppner, K. (2002). Retrospect and prospect in the psychological study of families as systems. In J. P. McHale & W. S. Groenick (Eds.), *Retrospect and prospect in the psychological study of families*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Kreppner, K. (2005). Family assessment and methodological issues. *European Journal of Psychological Assessment*, 4, 249-254.

Kreppner, K. (2009). Analizzare le "strutture profonde" dei processi familiari (pp. 41-70). In L. Fruggeri (a cura di), Osservare le famiglie. Metodi e tecniche.Roma: Carocci.

Kreppner, K. & Ullrich, M. (1998). Talk to mom and dad, and listen to what is in between. In M. Hofer, P. Noack & J. Youniss (Eds.), *Verbal interaction and development in families with adolescents* (pp. 83-108). Greenwich, CT: Ablex.

Lanz, M. & Rosnati, R. (2002). *Metodologia della ricerca sulla famiglia*. Milano: Led.

Laursen, B. & Collins, W.A. (1994). Interpersonal conflict during adolescence. *Psychological Bulletin*, 115, 197-209.

Lerner R. M & Spanier, G. B. (1978). A dynamic interactional view of child and family development. In R. M. Lerner & G. B. Spanier (Eds.), *Child influences on martital and family interactions: A life-span prespective* (pp. 1-22). New York: Academic Press.

Lerner, R. M. & Steinberg, L. (2004). *Handbook of Adolescent Psychology*. New York: Wiley.

Lewis, M. D. (2000). The promise of dynamic systems approaches for an integrated account of human development. *Child Development*, 71, 36-43.

Linell, P. & Bredmar, M. (1996). Reconstructing topical sensitivity: Aspects of face-work in talks between midwives and pregnant women. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 29, 347-379.

Madill, A. & Gough, B. (2008). Qualitative research and its place in psychological science. *Psychological Methods*, 3, 254-271.

Malagoli Togliatti & M., Lubrano Lavadera, A. (2002). *Dinamiche relazionali e ciclo di vita della famiglia*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Mantovani, G. (2008). *Analisi del discorso e contesto sociale*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Margolin, G., Oliver, P. H., Gordis, E .B., O'Hearn, H. G., Medina, A. M., Ghosh, C. M. & Morland, L. (1998). The nuts and bolts of behavioural observation of marital and family interaction. *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review*, 1, 195-213.

Mazzoni, S. & Tafà, M. (2007) (a cura di). *L'intersoggettività nella famiglia. Procedure multimetodo per l'osservazione e la valutazione delle relazioni familiari*. Milano: Franco Angeli.

McGoldrick, M. & Carter, B. (1982). The family life cycle. In F. Walsh (Ed), *Normal family processes*. New York: Guilford Press, (tr. it., Il ciclo della famiglia. In F. Walsh, a cura di, *Stili di funzionamento familiare. Come le famiglie affrontano gli eventi della vita*, pp. 259-296, Milano: Franco Angeli, 1986).

McGoldrick, M. & Carter, B. (2003). The family life cycle. In F. Walsh (Ed), *Normal family processes. Growing diversity and complexity* (pp. 375-398). New York: The Guilford Press.

McHale, J. P., Kuersten, R. & Lauretti, A. (1996). New directions in the study of family-level during infancy and early childhood. In J. P. McHale & P. A. Cowan (Eds.), Understanding how family-level dynamics affect children's development: studies of two-parent families. *New Directions in Child Development*, 74, 5-26.

McNamee, S. (1989). Challenging the patriarchal vision of social science: Lessons from a family therapy model. In Carter K. & Spitzack C. (Eds.), *Doing research on women communication: perspectives on theory and methods* (pp. 95-117). Norwood, NJ: Alblex.

McNamee, S. (1994). Research as Relationally Situated Activity: Ethical Implications. *Journal of Feminist Family Therapy*, 6, 69-83.

McNamee, S. & Gergen, K. J. (1992). *Therapy as social construction.* London: Sage.

Minuchin, P. (1985). Families and individual development: provocation form the field of family therapy. *Child Development*, 56, 289-302.

Minuchin, P. (2002). Looking toward the horizon: present and future in the study of family systems, in J.P. McHale, W.S. Grolnick (Eds), *Retrospect and prospect in the psychological study of families* (pp. 259-278). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Minuchin. S. (1974). *Families and Family Therapy*. Cambridge, MA: University Press.

Molinari L., Monacelli N., Everri M & Fruggeri L. (in press), Coordinazioni e oscillazioni nei processi di microtransizioni familiari, *Psicologia Clinica dello Sviluppo*.

Molinari, L., Everri, M. & Fruggeri, L. (in press). Family microtransitions: observing the process of change in families with adolescent children. *Family Process*.

Moustakis, C. (1990). *Heuristic research design, methodology and applications*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Neale, B. & Bagnoli A. (2007) www.reallifemethods.ac.uk/research/young/

Neale, B. & Flowerdew, J. (2003). Time, texture and childhood: the contours of longitudinal research. *International Journal of Social Research methodology*, 6, 189-200.

O'Brien, M. (2005). Studying individual and family development: Linking theory and research. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 67, 880-890.

Ochs E., Graesch A. P., Mittman A., Bradbury T. & Repetti R. (2006), *Video ethnography and ethnoarchaeological tracking*. In M. Pitt-Catsouphers, E. E. Kossek, S. Sweet (Eds.), *The work and family handbook: Multi-disciplinary perspectives and approaches*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Ochs, E. (1979). Transcription as theory. In E. Ochs & B. Schieffelin (Eds), *Developmental pragmatics* (43-72). New York: Academic Press.

Ochs, E. & Capps, L. (2001). *Living narrative. Creating lives in everyday storytelling*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Ochs, E. & Taylor, C. (1992). Family narrative as political activity. Discourse & Society, 34, 301-340.

Ochs, E. & Taylor, C. (1996). "The father knows best dynamic" in family dinner narratives. In K. Hall (Ed.), *Gender articulated: Language and the socially constructed self* (pp. 99-122). London: Routledge.

Olson, D. H. (1977). Insiders' and outsiders' views of relationships: research studies. In G. Levinger & H. L. Rausch (Eds.), *Close relationships*. Amherst, MA: University of Massachusets.

Olson, D. H. (1990). Family circumplex model: theory, assessment and intervention. *Japanese Journal of Family Psychology*, 4, 55-64.

Osmond, M. W & Thorne, B (1993). Feminist theories: The social construction of gender in families and society. In: P.G. Boss, W.J. Doherty, LaRossa, R, Schumm, W. R. & Steinmetz, S. K., (Eds.), *Sourcebook of Family Theories and Methods: A Contextual Approach*. New York: Plenum.

Palmonari, A. (1997). *Psicologia dell'adolescenza*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Pearce, B. (1994). *Interpersonal communication: making social worlds*. New York: Harper Collins.

Pearce, B. & Cronen, V. (1980). *Communication, action and meaning*. New York: Praeger.

Penn, P. (1985). Feed-forward: future questions, future maps. *Family process*, 24, 299-311.

Plano Clark, V. L., Hddleston-Casas, C. A., Churchill, S. L., O'Neil Green, D. & Garret, A. L. (2008). Mixed methods approaches in family science research. *Journal of Family Issues*, 29, 1543-1566.

Pomerantz, A. (1984). Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: Some features of preferred/dispreferred turn shapes. In J. M. Atkinson & J. Heritage (Eds.), *Structures of social action* (pp. 57-101). Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Potter, J. (1998) Discursive Social Psychology: From Attitudes to Evaluations. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 9, 33–66.

Potter, J. (1998). Discursive social psychology: from attitudes to evaluative processes. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 9, 233-266.

Potter, J. (Ed.) (2007). *Discourse and Psychology: Volume III Discursive Psychology*. London: Sage.

Potter, J. & Edwards D. (2001). *Discursive social psychology*. In W.P. Robinson, H. Giles, The New Handbook of Language and Social Psychology. John Wiley & Sons Ltd.

Puing, A., Koro-Ljungberg, M. & Echevarria-Doan, S. (2008). Social constructionist family system research: conceptual considerations. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 16, 139-146.

Rapaport, R. (1963). Normal crisis, family structure, and mental health. *Family Process*, 2, 68-80.

Reiss, D. (1971). Varieties of consensual experience. *Family Process*, 10, 1-28.

Reiss, D. (1981). *The family's construction of reality*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Reiss, D. (1989). La famiglia rappresentata e la famiglia reale: concezioni contrastanti della continuità familiare. In A. J. Sameroff & R. N. Emde (Eds), *Relationship disturbances in early childhood. A developmental approach*. New York: Basic Books (tr. it., *I disturbi delle relazioni nella prima infanzia*, Torino: Boringhieri, 1991).

Rose, G. (2000). *Visual methodologies: an introduction to interpreting visual objects*. London: Sage.

Rutter, M. (1990). Functions and consequences of relationships: some psychopathological considerations. In R.A. Hinde, J. Stevenson-Hinde (Eds.), *Relationships within families: mutual influences* (pp. 323-353). Oxford: Claredon Press.

Sacks, H., E. A. Schegloff, E. A. & Jefferson, G. (1974). A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language* 50, 696-73.

Sacks, H. (1992 [1964-72]). *Lectures on Conversation (2 Vols.)*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Sameroff, A. J. & Seifer, R. (1983). Familial risk and child competence. *Child Development*, 54(1): 1254-1268.

Scabini, E. (1995). *Psicologia sociale della famiglia*. Torino, Bollati Boringhieri.

Scabini, E. & Cigoli, V. (2000). *Il famigliare. Legami, simboli e transizioni*. Milano: Raffaello Cortina.

Schegloff, E. A. (1995). Discourse as an interactional achievement III: The omnirelevance of action. *Research on Language and Social Interaction*, 283(3): 185-211.

Schegloff, E. A. (2007). *A primer in conversation analysis*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Schwandt, T. (2001). *Dictionary of Dictionary of qualitative inquiry*. (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Scott, M. B. & Lyman, S. M. (1968). Accounts. *American Sociological Review*, 33, 46-62.

Seidman, E. & French, S. E. (2004). Developmental trajectories and ecological transitions: A two-step procedure to aid in the choice of prevention and promotion of interventions. *Development and Psychopathology*, 16, 1141-1159.

Selvini Palazzoli, M., Boscolo, L., Cecchin, G. & Prata G. (1980). Hypothesizing, circularity, neutrality: three guidelines for the conductor of the session. *Family Process*, 19, 3-12.

Settles, B. H. (1999). The future of families. In M. Sussman, S. K. Steinmetz & G.W. Peterson (Eds.) *Handbook of Marriage and Family* (pp. 307-326). New York: Plenum.

Shantz, C. U. & Hartup W. W. (1992) (Eds.), *Conflict in child and adolescent development*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Silverberg, S. B., Steinberg, L. (1987). Adolescent autonomy, parent-adolescent conflict and parental well-being. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 16, 293-312.

Silverstein, M. S., Bauxbaum Bass, L., Tuttle, A., Knudson-Martin, C. & Huenergardt, D. (2006). What does it mean to be relational? A framework for assessment and practice. *Family Process*, 45, 4, 391-405.

Smetana J. (2005) (Eds) Changing boundaries of parental authority during adolescence. *New directions for Child and adolescent development*, 108. Wiley Periodicals.

Smetana, J. C. (1995). Context, conflict and constraints in adolescent-parent authority relationship. In M. Killen & D. Hart (Eds.), *Morality in everyday life* (pp. 225-249). Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Speer, M.T. (1970). Family systems: morphostasis and morphogenesis. *Family Process*, 9, 259-278.

Sprey, J. (1999). Family dynamics: An essay on conflict and power. In M. B. Sussman, S. K. Steinmetz & G.W. Peterson (Eds.), *Handbook of Marriage and Family* (pp. 667-686). New York: Plenum.

Stainglass, P. (1995). Editorial. The clinical power of research. *Family Process,* 34, 125-126.

Steinberg, L. D (2002). *Adolescence.* New York: McGraw-Hill.

Steinberg, L. D. (1981). Transformations in family relations at puberty. *Developmental Psychology,* 17, 833-840.

Tannen, D. (2001). *Only Say This Because I Love You: Talking to Your Parents, Partner, Sibs, and Kids When You're All Adults*. New York: Ballantine.

Tannen, D. (2006). *You're Wearing THAT?: Mothers and Daughters in Conversation*. New York: Ballantine.

Tannen, D., Kendall, S. & Gordon. C. (2007) (Eds.). *Family talk. Discourse and identity in four American families*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Tannen, D. (2007). Power maneuvers and connection maneuvers in family interaction. In D. Tannen, S. Kendall, C. Gordon. (2007) (Eds.). *Family talk. Discourse and identity in four American families* (pp. 27-48) New York: Oxford University Press.

Tannen, D. (2007). *You just don't understand. Women and men in conversation*. New York: Harper and Collins.

Taylor, L. C., Barnett, M. A. (2005). Spotlight on methods: Observational methods for studying families. In V. L. Bengston, A. C. Acock, K. R. Allen, P. Dilworth-Anderson & D. M. Klein (Eds.) *Sourcebook of family theory and research* (pp.379-380). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Tomm, K. (1985). Circular interviewing: a multifaceted clinical tool, in D. Campbell, R. Draper (eds.), *Application of systemic family therapy: the Milan approach*. London: Grune and Stratton, pp. 33-45.

Von Foester, H. (1974). *Cybernetics of cybernetics*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Walsh, F. (2006). *Strengthening family resilience*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Warren C. A. B. (2002), Qualitative interviewing, in J. F. Gubrium, J. A. Holstein (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research: context and method*. Thousand Oachs, CA: Sage.

Watts, R. (1991). Power in family discourse. In J. A. Fishman, *Contributions to the Sociology of Language*. New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

Watzlawick, P., Beavin, J., & Jackson, D., (1967). *Pragmatics of Human Communication.* New York: W. W. Norton.

Wentzel, K. & Feldman, S. S. (1996). Relations of cohesion and power in family dyads to social and emotional adjustment during early adolescence. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 2, 225-244.

White, J. M. (2004). *Advancing family theories*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

White, J. M. & Klein, D. M. (2002). *Family theories* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

White, J. M. & Klein, D. M. (2008). *Family theories*. (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Wynne, L. C. (1988). An epigenetic model of family process. In C.J. Falicov (Eds), *Family transitions: Continuity and change over the life cycle* (pp.81-107). New York: The Guilford Press.

Youniss, J. (1983). Social construction of adolescence by adolescents and parents, in H. D. Grotevant & C. R. Cooper (Eds.), *New diretions for child development, vol. 22. Adolescent development in the family*. San Franciso: Jossey Bass.

★★★

Marina Everri.
January 2010