

## **“What does it mean to exist within (home)places?” - migration and everydayness family life bound with curriculum and schooling**

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### **Abstract**

The study will focus on three northern migrant families in the United States with school-age children who returned to Portugal. The choice to inquire families connected by the continuum historic Portuguese landmark of migration (Casa-Nova, 2005; Matias 2014; Solar & Villaba, 2007) was to (re)collect the shared story of those who come to be simultaneously local and global. They talk about overcoming obstacles, integration and mobility in the “hybrid” society that they dwell and call “home.” Telling stories is a natural part of life and all humans have stories about their experiences to communicate to others. The research puzzle focuses on the phenomenon of migration and everydayness family life bound with school. This text intertwines curriculum place with migrant families and school (Amthor, 2013; Gjoaj, Zinn & Nawyn, 2013; Sallaf, 2013; Whitlock, 2007). Metaphorically writing, each individual is an island belonging or urging to (be)long to a place. Skin, a versatile barrier that keeps the brain in touch with the outside world allowing an endless conversation between the inner self and the places we inhabit. According to Whitlock (2007) “place is a curriculum landscape that brings the particularity into focus by allowing us to examine ourselves [...]: we can see ourselves as subjects within a particular setting” (p. 46). In this narrative inquiry (Amado, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 1991/2000, Clandinin 2013; Creswell, 2008; He & Phillion, 2008; Merriam, 2009), stories assumed different forms that were told, written, drawn, or painted. The stories (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007) were the milieu that provided the way of thinking about an experience and a (con)text to the production of knowledge. It is therefore important the triangulation of the different field texts sources taken into consideration for the writing of the narrative to reflect the authenticity of the multiplicity of voices heard and words written, as well as the multiple ways of viewing the world. Knowing that the essence of a narrative study is an intrusion in the family’s life, the questioning about power related tensions (Ludhra & Chappel, 2011) allowed the researchers to keep co-composed decisions. In this project, the researchers encountered participants that were willing to share their daily school life in the United States and Portugal and keen to find solutions for the challenges that emerged in their family daily life due to migration. We discovered in the individual family stories that the dual role of being a child and, also, a student bound the school ambiance to their family shared story. The major concern of these three families were not the policies on education but the way school everydayness blurred and changed their daily family lives. The key lies in a curriculum that allows each “place” to express itself from a past legacy, inherited through self-cultivation, self-reflective, self-regeneration,

creates an "island" of knowledge where the "trees" are information, the "fruit and flowers" are meaning and the "seeds" are wisdom. School is a sum of multiple "places". We should not be afraid to look into a story and ask: "What does it mean to exist within (home)places?"

**Keywords:** families, school, migration, curriculum of place.

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

This paper is a fragment of a narrative inquiry (Clandinin & Connelly, 1991/2000; Clandinin 2013; He & Phillion, 2008; Merriam, 2009), in progress, in a doctoral program in Educational Sciences that tries to understand the singularities of six families all with school-age children and living in Portugal at the present moment. This fragment brings forward three families and is focused in an analytical argument about the place of school curriculum on the migrant family daily lives.

McNeils (2006) wrote "[t]he fashion in curriculum research is now moving away from the search for broad generalizations and abstract principles of guiding practice.[...] Narratives, qualitative inquiry in school settings, [...] are prominent approaches at local level" (p.336). In this narrative inquiry, the collection of useful, rich and in-depth field texts came from three northern migrant families in the United States with school-age children, connected by the continuum historic Portuguese landmark of migration (Casa-Nova, 2005; Matias, 2014; Solar & Villaba, 2007). We should not forget that migration is an ongoing phenomenon of the Portuguese history since the end of fifteen century. At the turn of the millennium there has been an increase in the number of the Portuguese abroad. The United Nations consider migrants as people who are outside their country of birth or citizenship for a period equal or superior to twelve months. The numbers are significant - in 2000 there were one hundred and seventy-five million people outside their place of birth. However, the International Organization for Migrants estimated for 2011 that one in every thirty-three people were in move (Spring, 2009; Gold & Nawyn, 2013). Data from the Emigration Report (Relatório da Emigração) of 2013 shows that in 2010, the Portuguese represented 1% of the total number of emigrants, a percentage seven times greater than the weight of the population of Portugal in the total world population (0.16%). The Report regarding the migratory phenomenon confirmed shifts in terms of its sociological evolution. For the present study we will highlight just two of the seven cited: the migration of a significant number of workers with higher academic qualifications and the emigration of the entire family, including a significant number of children in school age. Reinforcing what Gjoaj, Zinn & Nawyn (2013) claimed, migration "cannot be disconnected from family processes" (p.292). The wave of people has pushed forward concerns about how nations maintain social cohesion in an increasing of population diversity. Spring (2009), alerts that Global Commission on International Migrations "declares the existence of nations containing a single cultural population a thing of the past" (p. 191). Suárez-Orozco & Sattin (2007) wrote "[w]anted: Global Citizens" (p.58). To find the global citizens we need to join to the reflection curriculum and schooling. Whitlock (2007) argues

[c]urriculum and schooling - like living a life- do not take place in isolation, but in every day. Students and teachers are who we are in large part because of where we are; we are shaped by place; we believe, behave, speak and desire in place; we interact with each other in place (p. 44).

For people to be global first they need to allow their selves to be at a permeable transformative place. Lived experience occurs in a specific sociospatial place. Pires et al (2014) statistical report of 2014 about Portuguese Emigration distinguishes three sets of emigrational countries. We will focus in the first set, the American continent (Brazil, Canada, U.S.A. and at a reduced scale Venezuela), countries with a significant volume of Portuguese aged emigrate population and in decline due to the substantial reduction of emigration from Portugal. Paraphrasing Pires et al (2014) report between 2000 and 2013 the Portuguese entries in the United States had a negative average growth of 2.7%. In 2000, they entered approximately 1,300 Portuguese in the USA and in 2013 about 900 (918). In 2013 the Portuguese entries constituted 0.1% of the total number of entries in this country. The United States is now the ninth country where more Portuguese emigrate to. The Portuguese are a minority among the foreign-born residing in the United States: 0.4%. However the United States continues to be the third country in the world where more Portuguese emigrants live.

As migrant families, they are more aware of themselves than ever. In this state of being, interpretation followed by reinterpretation allows enlightening, a comprehension of the inherently social being which asks after its own being. The families no longer belong to one country. They become citizens of "their world" and their stories belong to the "hybrid" world. Humans were always story tellers and families' share memories of solitude among others. "Memory as a place, as a building, as a sequence of columns, cornices, porticoes. The body inside the mind, as if we were moving around in there, going from one place to the next, and the sound of our footsteps as we walk, moving from one place to the next." (Auster, 1992, p.79) People can live a thousand adventures, unravel mysteries, live happily ever after, endure tempests, tedious days or merely die. How to narrate a life story? Thereafter was silence. As the child grows it turns to "memory: the space in which a thing happens for the second time" (Auster, 1992, p. 81). No subject should be treated as information or erased from the collective memory. It should be regarded as a possibility, a move forward for active learners to scope in deep thought and gain awareness, both of social and cultural reality and (re)gained consciousness of their ability to transform social reality. We share Pinar (2012) faith that schools "can be indispensable in educating the public to understand its history and analyze its present circumstances" (p. 122). Metaphorically writing, imagine an island with a tower mill as a public school, where the wind unsets and unravels moods. The "seeds" of "wisdom" are being smashed in tiny pieces creating an interdisciplinary curriculum. Even them, in their wisdom, struggle for equilibrium. If it is too windy, the tower mill cannot operate the sail and the sail bar may be destroyed. Curriculum theory is far from being a peaceful territory. For families a casual reading about curriculum can lead to conflicting messages. They have the idea that it is rapidly changing, new programs in Portuguese language, mathematics, science education, vocational

courses and training models. But families also get the idea by watching their children/students courses of study, textbooks, lessons, and written tests that schools remain unchanged, teaching the same subjects in the same familiar way. One explanation, according to McNeil (2006) "is that there is a curriculum of rhetoric, official proclamations, and a curriculum of practice behind the classroom door" (p.91). In Portugal we have centralized educational system, where the Ministry of Education has authority, over curriculum sets of goals. When government changes, due to elections, the curriculum planning policy varies every few years. However, McNeil (2006) notes "no curriculum derived from outside agencies is successful without teacher commitment" (p.91). Nevertheless schools are engaged in a responsible way to provide equal opportunities to all their students to prevail in the challenge of what needs to be taught and how. In spite of the imposed curriculum, there is always space to adapt the students' areas of interests and to implement the goals of curriculum in order to reflect the society needs, where the school is included. Suárez-Orozco & Sattin alerts "[b]ut for the most part, schools today are out of sync with the realities of a global world" (2007, p. 58). In the global world also, symbolically called the "global educator city" (Fernandes, 2011, p.32) deciding what should be taught, how, for how long and to whom a matter which challenges schools attention presently. Imagine now a tower mill, where there is no wind to smash the "seeds" of "wisdom" but the ground beneath has blooming "flowers" that bring new "meanings" about being shaped by place. Understanding where we are, learning and learners has become a matter of survival not only for curriculum builder but also for schools. The Portuguese Ministry of Education in the Recomendação n.º2/2015, is concerned about the fact that every year more than 150,000 students, of the Portuguese educational system, are giving up on their process of learning and failing in the same grade. Students fail, particularly in the early years of schooling, do not improve their academic achievements and they are more likely to stay farther and farther behind his/her peers. There is also, according to the document, an association between school failure, increased levels of demotivation, indiscipline and school dropout. This document uncovers a restlessness that brings new guidelines, new perspectives and a rethinking of what it means to be in interaction with each other in place and shaped by it.

How many of us behave as foreigners in school? The major problem in schools is that we are educated to be the center of the world, our world (Picp, 2009). "Today's challenge is collaborating to solve global problems that spill over national boundaries" (Suárez-Orozco & Sattin, 2007, p. 60). In order to seek solutions we need to open ourselves to a different mindset allowing the educators to build a curriculum in tune with the "hybrid" world. In the community that the families belonged to, they started to see people like little islands surrounded by a sea of inanimate objects, nature, feelings or sensations. "Ruptures such as migration result in multiple and often contradictory emotional expression" (Boehm et al, 2011, p.14). Being a foreigner can not only make them feel completely lost, anxious, displaced, homesick, melancholy but also amazed. They were Portuguese but had incorporated fragments of a new culture. They had changed, some consciously but others seemed unaware of these transformations. The revelation happened when they returned to Portugal.

The key lies in a curriculum that allows each historical “place” to express itself from a past legacy. That through self-reflective, self-cultivation, self-regeneration creates a “island of knowledge” where the “trees” are information, the “flowers” are meaning and the “seeds” are wisdom. The wind unsets and unravels moods. School becomes a space with permeable boundaries; our personal transformative place. When school becomes “homeplace[s]” (Whitlock, 2007, p.58) transformative conversations happen. We should not be afraid to look into the “mirror of identity” (Whitlock, 2007, p. 61) and ask: What does to exist within (home)place mean?

The choice to inquire families was to (re)collect the shared story of those who come to be simultaneously local and global. In this context we share Boehm et al (2011) endeavor that it “should be focused on coming to know how people of any age encode the world in their negotiations of external and internal forces” (p.18). The families talked about overcoming obstacles, integration and mobility in the “hybrid” society that they dwell and call “home.” In this narrative inquiry, stories can assume different forms that may be told, written, drawn or painted, and all humans have stories about their experiences to communicate to others. As Clandinin & Rosiek (2007) wrote, a story “is a portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful” (p.38). One of the researchers, Elisabete Carvalho, has known the three families during their stay in the United States and noted that the conversations converge to one recurrent concern; school. However, the step forward to initiate the relationship researcher-families only took place after their return to Portugal. As pointed by Amthor (2013)

the dynamics of migration in globalization have promote attention outside the initial destination country. This implies an increased need to examine the process of return migration and how educational institutions respond to the complex situations of educating nationals who are, in fact, immigrants in their own countries and experience difficulties in transitioning to their ‘home’ country (p.406).

Without forgetting the difficulties experienced and narrated by the families, this study tries to emphasize the positive characteristics of migrant family dynamics and educational environments – schools. Also, this text intertwines curriculum place with migrant families and school as a potential approach for understanding positive responses to the complex situation of the process of return. Therefore, the research puzzle focuses on the phenomenon of migration and everydayness family life bound with school.

### **Families Narratives**

Three migrant northern families in the United States with school-age children, who returned to Portugal, were chosen due to the singularity that the proposal for mobility was presented by the company where they all work and migration emerged to them as a professional challenge. This was their first migratory experience and decided to do it as a family. They all went to the same Southern State in the U.S.A and lived in the same townhouse. They came to Portugal on holidays two to three times a year and stayed each time an average of two weeks. The children were all born in Portugal for the exception of Lopes’s

son (pseudonym) who has dual nationality. The offspring attended first the American educational system and then the Portuguese system. They have become bilingual. According to Fiese and Sameroff (1999) point of view "[f]amily narratives move beyond the individual and deal with how the family makes sense of its world, expresses rules of interaction, and creates beliefs about relationships" (p. 3). Researchers tried from the family history scrapbook, which addresses migration, place and school, to co-compose a space to understand the research puzzle.

### **Research path**

The information gathered for this paper were selected from the families' interviews (Amado, 2013) used as a conversation (Clandinin, 2013; Ludhra & Chappel, 2011), the children's drawings (Creswell, 2008; Merriam, 2009), children's choice of a color for their school(s) and the families' diaries (e.g. Chen & Chen, 2013).

The setting where the interviews took place was suggested by the families, their home. Justification - their children would feel more comfortable and quiet in a surrounding that they knew. Due to this, when the researchers entered their houses, observation brought in-depth of the everydayness. Creswell (2008) explains that "[e]ngaging in both roles [participant and non-participant] permits you to be subjectively involved in the setting as well as to see the setting more objectively" (p. 223). Therefore researchers adapted to situations as they happen in a continuous negotiation of the relationship established, and defined the moments of gathering the information, corroborating and validating it. The interviews began but immediately ended as a dialogue respecting the way individuals structured their narratives within their family interactions. Respecting also, the family flexibility to "travel" between each other's points of view. The family diaries are hybrid intersubjective texts with drawings, poems and photographs (Alù, 2010; Chen & Chen, 2013). The texts are reflective, of the migration phenomenon in the families' everydayness, revealing generational perspectives where the relationship with the school dynamics stand out. The act of storytelling reveals the family co-construction of what is narrated and disclosures the family relational world. The person who tells the story, does it not only for the researchers but to all the members of the family, including himself. Therefore, becomes an actor in his/her personal experience of the event involving everyone who listens to into the negotiation of the plot. Pinnegar & Daynes (2007) claims that "the use of the story, and a focus on a careful accounting of the particular are hallmarks of knowing in narrative inquiry" (p. 25). Aware of the dual role dilemma that the narrative researchers play within an intimate relationship with the participants and within a professional relationship with a scholarly community, ethical considerations were raised. The recognition of the existence of the dilemma and that the researchers of this study cannot solve the tensions created by it, outlined the ethical practice of this narrative inquiry (Josselson, 2007). Furthermore, the dilemma of the dual role arises from the scholarly obligation to produce an accurate, authentic report of field texts from what has been learned. For a better understanding of "the power related tensions present in the research, and the need to explore ways of diffusing them" (Ludhra & Chappel, 2011, p.112), the researchers have recalled the ethical inquiry: "What

is my relationship to the participants? Who benefits from this study? Who may be at risk in the context I am studying?” (p.113) Knowing that the essence of a narrative study is an intrusion in the family’s life, this questioning allowed the researchers to keep co-composed decisions. Summaries of general findings were made available to the families. The three families participated. The implementation of a participatory work and the triangulation of the different field text sources ensured that the (re)told narrative researchers reflected the multiplicity of possible meanings and pinpointed the dilemma and constraints of a relationship where multiple voices are heard and words written. Pinnegar & Daynes (2007), suggest “[w]hat distinguishes narrative inquiries is their desire to understand rather than control and predict the human world” (p. 30).

### **The Silva Family (pseudonym)**

Migrated from April 2009 to April 2011. For Silva’s family mother migration came up at the age of thirty-two. She works in the Human Resources department of a company in Oporto, in the field of work psychology. She lived and studied in Oporto, having graduated in Psychology from University of Porto. The father, then thirty-seven years old, attended a bachelor in management and took time-out from his professional activity as a coordinator in a tennis school and went with the family to the United State. They have emigrated, since March 2015, for one year, to Qatar. The Silvas’ boy is nine years old, but was three at the time of migration. The fact of having been in transit originated the school trajectory represented in Table 1.

<b>Migrated from April 2009 to 2011</b>			
<b>Country</b>	<b>Educational Levels</b>	<b>System</b>	<b>Age</b>
Portugal	Day Care Center	Private System	1 – 3
United States	Day Care Center	Public System	4
	Kindergarten-Elementary School	Public System	5
Portugal	Day Care Center	Private System	6
	Elementary School	Public System	6
	1 <sup>o</sup> Grade		7
	2 <sup>o</sup> Grade		8
	3 <sup>o</sup> Grade		9

Table 1- The Silva’s son educational path

### **The Mota Family (pseudonym)**

Migrated from August 2010 to 2013. The father was fifty-four years old, has an industrial course and works as a general team leader. The mother lived and studied in the Oporto region, and attended the High School. At the age of forty-seven, interrupted the professional occupation to accompany her family to the United States. The son, twenty-seven, who completed the High School and attended School of Industrial Studies and Management, stayed in Portugal, having visited the family, once a year, during summer holidays. He works in the

same company as his father. The daughter, five years old at the time of migration, is currently nine. Her educational path is shown in Table 2.

Migrated from August 2010 to 2013			
Country	Educational Levels	System	Age
Portugal	Day Care Center	Private System	1 – 4
United States	Kindergarten-Elementary School	Public System	5
	1 <sup>o</sup> Grade	Public System	6
	2 <sup>o</sup> Grade		7
	3 <sup>o</sup> Grade		8
Portugal	Elementary School	Public System	
	3 <sup>o</sup> Grade		8
	4 <sup>o</sup> Grade		9

Table 2 - The Mota's daughter educational path

### The Lopes Family (pseudonym)

Migrated from September 2009 to July of 2014. The Father was thirty-six having graduated in Electric Engineering from the University of Oporto and works as an engineer department manager in a factory in Oporto. The mother was thirty-nine having graduated in Chemistry from the University of Oporto and worked in Portugal as a teacher and in the U.S.A. as a laboratory technician. The daughter (table 3), nine months old at time of migration, is currently five. The son (table 4) was born in U.S.A. and when they came back to Portugal he was three years and a half.

Migrated from September 2009 to 2014			
Country	Educational Levels	System	Age
Portugal	Day Care Center	Private System	5 – 9 months
United States	Day Care Center	Public System	9 months– 5 years
Portugal	Day Care Center	Private System	5

Table 3 – The Lopes's daughter educational path

Migrated from August 2009 to 2014			
Country	Educational Levels	System	Age
United States	Day Care Center	Public System	5 months –3 years
Portugal	Day Care Center	Private System	3

Table 4 - The Lopes's son educational path



### Intertwines of words and voices of individual family stories

We have stories to tell and they become real when we voiced them. They live within us, between us and silent alongside others. The stories about migration and everydayness family life bound with school were filled not only by the sound of voices and written words but also with smiles or laughter, pauses or silences, fragrances, moods, colors and with expressions of an inherited historical and cultural legacy. Pierre Bourdieu noted that “understanding is, in the first place, to understand the field in which we are active and against which we are active” (2005, p.15). Stories are, therefore, subjective by nature and an invitation to an exercise of self-reflexivity. Through the narration, researchers were allowed to enter their individual experiences, which were contextualized in an interactional space that is simultaneously personal and social and by remembering, relating and implying new possible experiences, families place a continuity in time to the subject-matter, unveiling a window to the individual dynamic understanding of the world (figure 1).

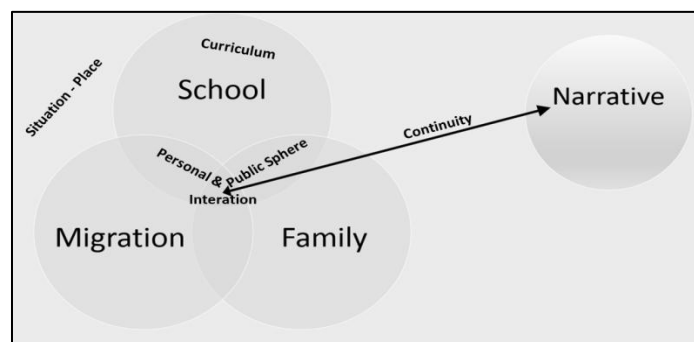


Figure 1 – Narrative unbounded space of inquiry (Developed and inspired from the three dimensional inquiry space proposed by Clandinin & Connelly (2000))

Families are not unitary settings (Jokai et al, 2013) they foster intimate relationships, share a path and significant life events. They make choices and decisions that may cause in each individual differential amounts of stress and tensions. As researchers, we intertwine their words and voices and found that the key component that induced change in these families, was the decision to migrate. Focusing in the school theme, researchers uncover that the (class)rooms or the playgrounds they dwell reveal intricate connections with the migratory process. The stories become the milieu for parents and their children/students to (un)wrap their curriculum place. We share Doll (2000) point of view “to have no stories, to lack memory, to have a mouth but no words is to keep oneself in a constant state of hunger” (p. xvii).

### Parents (Con)text about Migration and School everydayness

The system of communication in an Elementary school between teacher and parent or educational carers in Portugal is similar to the one in the United States. The Silva's family father describes in the diary that this interaction takes place through meetings, in the case of a general information (beginning of the school year), or private meetings as far as student assessment is concerned. There is still the possibility for the parents, to schedule meetings with the class director within a time frame. In both countries, the Silva's family father wrote, there are also student booklets that allow written communication/information between school and parents. In the United States schools proximities, there are

policemen to control the speed of cars and allow children to crosswalk with security. The yellow school buses bring a distinctively color to mornings. In the diaries, the Silva and Mota families referred to the morning lessons ritual: silence in the school milieu and everyone sings the American anthem. This practice demands punctuality and delays imply fines or volunteer service by the parents. In the Silva family, some personal notes referred that in their son's class in order to facilitate the parents' daily logistics it was established that all students should monthly take the lunch snacks for classmates. The Silva's family father wrote (family diary, 7/5/2014):

It would be interesting to think about the effect that this measure had to 'force' every family or every student to think about the 'other', teaching habits of planning and respecting the monthly schedule of snacks.

Since the American school website got no information regarding this practice, and it was not mentioned by the other families, the researchers contacted telephonically the Silva's mother family, who said they did not remember whether it was a pedagogical strategy implemented by the teacher or if it was defined by the school board. Despite not knowing who implemented the pedagogical strategy, they think it is a practice that can be applied in both societies because thinking about the "other" implies observation, understanding and belonging. Habits of planning the monthly schedule of school snacks implies the reinforcement of one's sense of belonging. The reflection upon a practice made within (home)places allowed the family to feel grounded within a course of action of integrating their Portuguese culture in the process of living between curriculums. "One can make use of the richness of the original culture as one set of experiences, among many in everyday life, leading to an intercultural self" (Vieira & Trindade, p. 36).

For the Lopes family in search of a nursery school (excerpt from the family interview, 10/10/2015):

It was a shock [referring to the USA]. It was a shock. [...] They had no dishes for the children to eat, so the food was on a board, from which they ate with their hands. They slept with the shoes in case of a possible fire, children would not be unprotected.

Speaking about the Portuguese nursery they said it was full of rules. They even joked about the Portuguese playground area that to fulfill the security regulation the tree garden has been substituted by a plastic one. For them the difficulty now is where are the boundaries to allow the children to express themselves freely. Suddenly, shades of danger emerge as an inherent part of the curriculum. In the "hybrid" society that they dwell and call "home" to be exposed or vulnerable is a constant shade in a pursuit to not lose oneself in the journey of self-discovery.

The Silva and Mota families shared that their students, both aged nine, experienced difficulties in the interpretation and in the production of written texts in the Portuguese school. The Lopes family daughter, aged six experienced the same problem. This observation allows a bridge to the questioning of Spring (2009):

[f]or foreign-born immigrant children, a major issue is the possible differences between the educational systems in the country of origin and the host countries. Is it easy for the school-age child to make the transition into the school system of the

new country? Is there a similarity in the curricula between the two nations? Has the child received an education in several other countries before arriving in the new host country? What are the language issues for the new immigrant child? Does the host country have educational provisions for helping immigrant children learn the language used in local schools? (p.183).

The twist here is that these children are no longer migrants but Portuguese citizens, living in Portugal, who have experienced the phenomenon of mobility and because of that Portuguese has become their second language (Amthor, 2013). Although the families expressed their concerns directly to the director and teachers, and measures were implemented, families had to complement it by After School Programs and Speech Language Therapy to help their children overcome their difficulties. Families were proactive and creative in finding new solutions to increase the academic success of their children. The mother of the Mota family wrote: *"Anyway, this is the country we are"*. We the people. We the country. The families have adapted by listening to each other and by choosing not one or the other culture but by synthesizing together both worlds. The transition between places brings a particular experience into focus amid a particular (back)ground. Therefore, this place specificity is a "curriculum landscape" (Whitcholck, 2007, p.46) where the families can see themselves as subjects in an endless conversation between the inner self and outside world.

### **P(r)ose of the Children**

#### Drawings

The children of the Silva and Mota, through drawings and notes, revealed that in the United States the school facilities were bigger in size and that in Portugal they had more recess time. They wrote that this allowed them to play and rest more. This inference is consistent with the parents' opinion that the educational system in the United States had more rules. *"I really liked that school [the Mota's family mother reference to the U.S.A], their organization and caring towards the children, but with lots of discipline"*. When the researches look up photos of both schools, the children's drawings were a reconstruction of the facades. As for the Portuguese school the Family Silva's son drew a traditional classroom in Portugal and entitled it "My School". He represented the desks in brown and the chalkboard in yellow. The Mota's family daughter, for the Portuguese school, drew and painted a brown facade with a big round door but did not paint the sun. She drew but did not paint, for the United States school, the mascot, the hoisted flag and a female figure that awaited them. Yet the sun is in yellow. The Silva's family son made a drawing of the condominium pool entitled *"My school in the United States"*. It's a big blue pool and he ended his writing about school life affirming: *"In the afternoon, I went with my parents to the pool"*. In an email exchange, the Silva's family mother explained that he really appreciated the time spent playing in the pool. It is encrypted in his United States memories. The Lopes's family daughter drawing highlighted the American teacher wearing a colorful dress and behind her a small school building. She loved the *"summer days"* where they could play. She drew the Portuguese school twice. The first one was a small pink house with a smokey chimney. The second one an oversized grey school with little drawing inside. She describes: *"In the*

*room [for children aged five] I have two small fish, the moon and the star and every day a child shall be in charge of the room."*

### **Choice of Colors**

The children used colors to express their experience about the school milieu. The Silva's family choice of colors was all about his favorite Portuguese soccer team. Blue represents the primary color of the team player's cloth, so he attributed to the Portuguese school. The second colors, lilac or white, went to the United States school. The Mota's family daughter choice was brown for the cold weather she encountered in the Portuguese winter time. The white represents the good weather that allowed her to do lots of outside activities in the United States. For the Lopes's family daughter *"colors do not count."* She experiments with them all in order to paint the teacher's dress. A personal choice engaged with emotions and belonging, an excellent metaphor of a democratic vision for education.

### **(Un)wrapping the families (con)text and the p(r)ose**

The choice of colors, the drawings and the diaries reveal a deeper understanding of the experience of migration and school. Referring to the United States school, the Mota's family daughter wrote: *"In school everything was different"*. The student population comes from different countries and to foster respect for all its different cultural customs and to inform about the national flags of each country, the Elementary School, in 2012, with each class, participated in the "Parade of Nations". In this parade, each participant carried a flag and in the end, presented a tribute to their country, in the form of a dance. The Mota's family daughter was the first Portuguese ever to carry a Portuguese flag in that school. The Silva's family son wrote: *"When I arrived to the United States, I went to school. We presented ourselves and when I said my name, my classmates were made aware that I wasn't American."* As Fraiser (2010), points out historically "[a]ll of these [migrant] groups had to engage with schools in one way or another" (p. 180). The child, also, voiced his geographical place of birth – Portugal - and the Portuguese language were the dimensions that distinguished him from all other students. These children expressed the general tendency to homogenize all people of a particular gender, sex, ethnicity, race, skin color or language (Banks & Banks, 2010). An example of adaptation to a new community was in the United States, when they gathered with the other Portuguese children, and they chose to speak in English because with the adults they were "obliged" to speak Portuguese, as a way of exercising the homeland language. As Gjokaj, Zinn and Nawyn (2013) singled out "[w]ithin particular social contexts and constraints, they create a new family tradition" (p. 287).

The families used to visit Portugal three times a year maintaining strong bounds with their country of origin. This flow of back-and-forth movement made possible for the families to negotiate more multifaceted social patterns in the country of immigration. As Banks & Banks (2010) explains "[i]mmigrants are both significantly changing the social context of new communities while shaping the social realities in their home countries" (p.287). When the Silva family arrived in Portugal, they decided to enroll their son in an English school for about one or two hours on Saturday mornings. It was intended with this strategy that the child

remained bilingual but what happened was that he resisted to speak English, in Portugal, when asked to.

Father Silva (F.S): As soon he put a foot in Portugal he started: "Here I only speak Portuguese. I don't speak English."

[...]

F.S: ... Funny, isn't it?

[...]

Mother Silva (M.S): I talk with him and ask him: "Son speak with me in English. Let's exercise a little." And he would say: "Not now. Now, I am in Portugal. I want to speak Portuguese and not English." He had this kind of reactions.

[...]

M.S.: Yes, I had that expectation [referring to bilingual] perhaps if he stayed there for a longer period of time ... if it is a question of time ... until today I don't know if it is a question of personality, rejection, insufficient permanency time or if it was a questioning of being well followed. Something must have happened because now he isn't bilingual. Now he isn't! Not at all! Will he speak perfectly the two languages in the future?...

[...]

M.S.: No, Not yet. I, sincerely ... what happened was the opposite, since, he began to have difficulties in the Portuguese language. I, then.... [smiles] said: "Stay still" Let's take care now of the Portuguese language.

F.S: Yes!

M.S: Otherwise neither one nor the other... (family interview, 2/03/2014)

Another example about language is the one given by the Lopes family. They discover that in a couple of month the two children stop speaking in English (even taking English classes at school). The Lopes's family son, when asked to speak in English, shoulder shrug and said: "*I cannot speak and I don't want to.*" From the parents point of view he discovered the Portuguese language, for him a way for his peers to perceive him and does not want to talk English again. Their son vocabulary and sentence construction have been developed quickly but gradually. However, every now and then in a Portuguese sentence an English word appears out of the blue. These are words he has not yet found a substitute for in the Portuguese vocabulary. His sibling has already forgotten a few words in English, but does not refuse to speak English. She speaks preferably in Portuguese but has a limited vocabulary. In her discourse she uses preferentially small sentences and has some difficulty in retelling a story and personal experiences. It seems that once again the child is adapting to the "new" community affirming that the new tradition now is to speak Portuguese. The metamorphosis of being a Portuguese citizen who has fluency in speaking, and wrote his first sentence in English but made a personal choice of belonging. The capability for migrants to adapt involves issues of emotions and belonging. As Escobar (2001) wrote:

we are, in short, placelings. [...] This means recognizing that place, body, and environment integrate with each other; that places gather things, thoughts, and memories in particular configurations; and that place, more an event than a thing, is characterized by openness rather than by a unitary self-identity (p.143).

## Final Reflections

The families narrative allowed to grasp an understating of how they make sense of the lived experience about migration. Place provides the (con)text to initiate the transformative conversation about migration and school. So, what does it mean to exist within (home)places? The families positive approach to

place may be one of "stay still." To stay still does not mean to be passive but reflect proactively about solutions to return home including school. For families, the sharing of a common place means to stop, observe and respect the boundaries. They have chosen to take care of what is meaningful for their family members respecting, for example, their children's Portuguese feeling of belonging expressed in the choice to speak Portuguese. Another approach to place could be "everything was different". Place is characterized by openness so, for them, it was the possibility to interact with each other and others. Families seem to have not reached to an agreement about rules and discipline. The Silva and Mota families share the same opinion that the school in the U.S.A. had more discipline than the Portuguese one, on the other hand, the Lopes family disagrees, affirming that it is the Portuguese school who has more rules. Openness broadens the horizon, although they could feel the shades of danger, their choice was to listen to, observe and integrate new ways of doing things and synthesize, as a family, both worlds. The mode of being "colors do not count" expressed by the Lopes's family daughter of five years old recall us of the democratic way how people of any age should encode the world and enter place(s) fostering new social, cultural and historical nuances. Children with their families build memories of a challenging, diversified world but, hopefully, a more equitable and fair world.

### Notes

1. This paper, "What does it mean to exist within (home)places?" - migration and everydayness family life bound with curriculum and schooling is an outcome of a selection made from a communication submitted to the II European Conference on Curriculum Studies entitled: Immigrants' families in the United States with school-age children returned to Portugal and is available in an e-book: <http://www.fpce.up.pt/eccs2015/>. Within this framework we proceeded to a broader and thorough review that advances in argumentative text and includes a figure (Narrative unbounded space of inquiry) developed to be published in the journal.

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