Motherhood in migration: a focus on family language planning

Introduction

The rise in international female migrants and the gendered aspect of migration became the foci of research in the mid-80s (Takeda, 2012). It was around the same time that Brazil, traditionally a host country to international migration, started to produce a significant number of emigrants due to its population’s search for work opportunities abroad. According to the Brazilian 2010 census, 54% of their nationals living abroad were women (IBGE, 2011a). Since then, a number of studies on gender have been conducted with this group (e.g. de Oliveira Assis, 2014; Colleagues and author, 2013).

Many of these studies on Brazilian female international migrants have focused on issues of race and the labour market. This article contributes to the discussions on gender, and in particular motherhood, by adding a sociolinguistic perspective on the experiences of these migrants. It aims to explore the links between identity (i.e. the positions occupied by individuals in social contexts) and language planning (i.e. the choices made about language use, such as which language is to be used with whom, where and when) from the perspective of a group of Brazilian mothers who are raising their children in London. It draws on data from my doctoral study and addresses the implications of migratory flows for mothering1 by asking the following questions: How are the linguistic and cultural identities of a group of Brazilian mothers affected by migration to the UK? What is the impact of these mothers’ sense of identity on their family language planning?

---

1 Please note that “mothering” and “motherhood” are interchangeably used in this article to mean the individual practices and experiences of being a mother. These terms have, however, been used to differentiate between one’s experiences (mothering) and one’s state (motherhood), see e.g. O’Reilly (2004).
Social psychology and poststructuralism constitute the theoretical background to this article, which is presented in two parts. Firstly, the linguistic and the cultural identities of the participant mothers are examined. Secondly, links are made between these identities and the participants’ language planning. The analysis is situated within the family domain and centres on issues of motherhood and family language planning (i.e. the choices made by parents in relation to what language to use, when and to whom in raising their children). To conclude, I argue that language choice seems to be essential to these mothers in maintaining their sense of group identity as much as in having a positive sense of motherhood. Therefore, the importance of research on the intergenerational transmission of language to ensure that migrant mothers have positive feelings of motherhood is highlighted, as is the relevance of acknowledging the fathers’ role in family language planning and practices.

**Literature Review:**

*Language as an identity marker*

The concept of identity adopted here reflects a combination of contributions from both social psychology and poststructuralism. Tajfel’s (1978) Theory of Social Identity argues that members of different minority groups relate to the host society in three possible ways: by trying to assume characteristics of the local norms, by rejecting the local norms or by retaining some of their own characteristics and acquiring some of the local group. Despite being criticized for presenting a static and fixed view of identity (Rudmin, 2003), the Theory of Social Identity is relevant to the data being considered in this article for two reasons. Firstly, it highlights the effect that coming into contact with the “other” has on identities. It is by meeting the “other” that individuals make
comparisons between their groups and those of others, which results in awareness of their differences and similarities, leading to the construction of their own social identities (Tajfel, 1978). Secondly, the Theory of Social Identity emphasizes the emotional significance of identity to individuals. In fact, Tajfel (1981) presents social identity as being the result of the knowledge of membership together with the emotional significance linked to this membership. Ethnicity (i.e. group cultural characteristics, Hutchinson & Smith, 1996), gender and language are among the aspects that may be considered fundamental to defining the identity of a group. However, the significance of the different aspects may vary from group to group.

Language, for example, has been reported to be highly important in maintaining a sense of identity for some groups, but may not be central for others. The possible (lack of) link between language and identity has been further explored by poststructuralist researchers, such as Bonny Norton. Norton (2000) researched second language acquisition with a group of immigrant women in Canada and observed that high levels of motivation were not readily translated into good levels of language learning. This observation led her to develop the concept of “investment”, i.e. a notion which assumes that individuals are motivated to learn a language because it will enable them to have more symbolic and material resources, and thus, more cultural capital to negotiate their identities in society. Furthermore, investment is a construct that conceives of the speaker, in this case a language learner, as having a complex identity which changes across time and space and which is reproduced in social interaction. In this way, a person’s identity must always be understood in relational terms, i.e. individuals have more or less power of negotiation depending on the situation in which they find themselves and on the people with whom they interact (Norton, 2013). In sum, identity, from a poststructuralist perspective, is a process of negotiating social relations in specific social contexts, and thus, relates to socially constructed categories.
In cultural studies, Ang (2001) points out that the redefinition of one’s social identity is a process commonly faced by migrants in consequence of having entered a new social context. This position reflects both the social psychological view that identities become salient when one encounters the “other” and the poststructuralist view that identities are always in the making. An illustration of this is the description that one of the mothers, Durvalina, gives of her experience of migration as the feeling of being a replanted tree whose roots were once in Brazil. A similar metaphor was used by Tu Wei-ming (1994 in Ang, 2001:45) in his collection *The Living Tree: The Changing Meaning of Being Chinese Today*. However, Ang (2001) considers the metaphor of the living tree naïve in describing the decentralization of cultural China from geopolitical China. In her view, the metaphor reinforces the dependency of the “new branches of the tree” (cultural China) on its “roots” (geopolitical China), which is contradictory to the idea of decentralization.

The metaphor used by Durvalina, however, differs slightly from the one used by Tu Wei-ming (op.cit.). Here she refers to a tree which grew and formed its solid trunk through roots which were fed and made strong in Brazil. The tree, together with its roots, has been replanted in England. It is in England that it changes and develops new branches. Clearly there is a dependence of the periphery on the centre. However, the centre is not *there* (the place of origin) anymore. The centre is a result of the interaction between the roots which were made strong *there* and the soil *here* (the hosting place) that enables the tree to stay alive and continue to grow. In other words, the metaphor of a “replanted tree” refers to the notion of “hybridity”, i.e. the appearance of new identities which result from the mix of other identities (Bhabha, 1994).

This interaction between *there* and *here* is experienced by all the Brazilian mothers being reported. Therefore, this article explores the *there-here* interaction that leads these Brazilian mothers to develop a sense of being “replanted trees” and examines how this new sense of identity impacts on the language planning they adopt for their families.
Family language planning

Family is one of the domains in which language management and negotiation take place, a recognition which has led to family language policy (FLP) as a new area of research within language planning and policy (LPP) (Li Wei, 2012). FLP is situated within a micro perspective of LPP and has been defined as “a deliberate attempt at practising a particular language use pattern and particular literacy practices within home domains and among family members” (Curdts-Christiansen, 2009: 352). Many of the studies on FLP, however, focus primarily on mothers: an example being King and Fogle’s (2006) study on how decisions about language use with children are made. Although the participants in this study are generally referred to as families and parents, 87.5% of them are mothers. In other words, mothers appear here as the parent who tends to take the responsibility for their children’s acquisition of language, as generally assumed and expected by society. In fact, King and Fogle argue that social pressure plays an important role in decisions about FLP. In their study of families in the USA who are trying to raise their children in two languages (i.e. English and Spanish), both public discourse and personal networks are considered sources of social pressure on FLP. In addition, the analysis shows that, before decisions are made about FLP, these two sources are considered against personal experiences of language learning, be it a second language (i.e. the official language of a country which is learned by migrants), a foreign language (i.e. the official language of a country which is learned by individuals who live in another country) or a heritage language (i.e. passed down by parents of migrant backgrounds and also commonly referred to as community language). In the case of the Brazilian mothers discussed in the present article, both public discourses and personal networks are mentioned as being influential in their FLP. However, their own language learning experiences are only mentioned by those who learned Portuguese as a heritage language. This seems to indicate that the
use of different languages is an issue that becomes relevant to these mothers only upon their experiences of starting a family in the context of migration.

For the Luxembourgish mothers studied by Kirsch (2012), multilingualism is experienced in their country of origin, where most residents are trilingual in Luxembourgish, German and French. As a consequence, these mothers consider multilingualism to be a key characteristic of being Luxembourgers. Nevertheless, they strongly identify with Luxembourgish as being their emotional and national language. It means that, when living in England, these mothers explicitly plan their language use in order to ensure that their children grow up as bilinguals in Luxembourgish and English. These mothers’ beliefs in the benefits of bilingualism, however, clash with the monolingual setting they encounter in England. With a view to socializing their children into British cultural practices, English is used in a wider range of contexts than they had planned. In other words, the Luxembourgish mothers’ explicit FLP is negatively affected by the monolingual view of language use which prevails in British society. In contrast, the FLP of the Brazilian mothers reported in this article is not so planned nor so explicit. Their FLP, instead, appears to be a reaction to their experiences of migration and is negotiated in response to specific situations as and when they occur. It is the monolingual pressures of British society that lead the Brazilian mothers to introduce practices in order to maintain the use of Portuguese among their children, in spite of perceiving the social and economic advantages of speaking English.

The benefits of bi/multilingualism are in fact acknowledged by Brazilian mothers, as illustrated here by Lindalva: “Speaking more than one language is an advantage in the modern world.”1 This belief is shared by the mothers of Pakistani origin in Mills’ (2004) study in the UK, which focuses “on what makes someone identify with a mother tongue and what that reveals of

1 All quotations by the Brazilian mothers were originally in Portuguese and are my translations.
their sense of self” (p.162). To the group of Pakistani women, being a mother meant fostering the
use of their mother tongue with and by their children as much as fostering the values of their
religion and other ethnic markers, as well as promoting English for educational purposes.
Maintaining the use of their mother tongue signalled their attachment to their heritage group, their
cultural and religious values. Furthermore, these women believed that these values and identity
would be acquired by their children by the mere fact of speaking their mother tongue. This is the
reason why they considered it important to pass on their language to their children. In other words,
language is an essential part of these women’s identity as individuals as much as mothers. It is
crucial for these mothers that their language is passed on to their children. This same link between
language choices, notions of mothering and sense of identity can be seen among the Brazilian
mothers and is explored below.

Methodology

A group of Brazilian mothers

The UK is one of the main destinations for Brazilians in Europe and over six per cent of all
Brazilian emigrants are in England (IBGE, 2011b), with their highest concentration being in
London. It is also in London where the first Brazilian Portuguese language school started its
activity in the late 90s and where the largest number of these schools can be found now (Author
and colleague, 2014). It is within the context of one of these schools (henceforth referred to as
CLS, i.e. community language school) that the data discussed were collected.

Except for two, all the families taking their children to the CLS in question were made up of
Brazilian mothers and fathers of other nationalities. In other words, in most of these families the
Brazilian parent was the mother. In order to reflect this characteristic of the families in this
context, a total of nine Brazilian mothers, three in each of the three classes run by the school at the
time of my doctoral study, were invited to participate.

4 Individual and group interviews

The mothers were interviewed at two stages, first in individual semi-structured interviews and
then in group interviews. The semi-structured interviews served the purpose of drawing a profile
of the mothers in relation to their socio-economic, educational and linguistic backgrounds. With
this in mind, an interview schedule was designed and used to record individual interviews which
lasted about one hour each.

Focus group interviews were then used with the intention of obtaining insights into the reasons
behind the opinions the mothers expressed in the first set of interviews. More specifically, these
two-hour interviews aimed at gaining an insider’s view about the mothers’ sense of ethnicity, their
collective goals in relation to the host society, their language attitudes and use.

Ethical issues were carefully considered in the design and conduct of these interviews.
Informed consent was obtained from the mothers, who were assured of my commitment to their
rights to confidentiality. The names used in this article are pseudonyms. Additionally, the mothers
themselves were asked to keep any information shared during the discussions confidential. In this
way we shared responsibility for the ethical issues involved in the group interviews. I also pointed
out to the mothers the importance of respecting each other’s opinions during the focus interviews,
due to the emotional weight of the discussion of issues relating to identity. It also meant I had to
be careful about the probing used in order to find a balance between eliciting useful information
and not causing emotional harm to the participants.

Moreover, it is important to highlight that I am a Brazilian female migrant in London and all
the mothers knew me from my volunteer work at the CLS as a teaching assistant. In order to
reduce the possible biases my position could impose on the research, I openly dealt with these
issues. At the start of the individual interviews, I acknowledged my migrant and teaching
backgrounds and emphasised the importance of the mothers’ individual contributions to the
questions being explored. For the group interviews, I absented myself from the discussions, and
instead, I merely facilitated the interactions between the mothers. This attitude also applied to the
exploration of concepts (e.g. ethnicity and hybridity) and the participants were asked to present
their own interpretations and understandings of their meanings. All in all, my aim was to
understand the perspectives and the experiences of the participating mothers.

Constructing profiles and creating composite files

The data provided by each participant in the semi-structured interviews were initially recorded
individually in the interview schedule. In general terms, the mothers were aged between 30 and 50
and had been living in the UK for at least 10 years. They represented small families with an
average of two children, from 10 months to 12 years old. The mothers’ level of education varied
from having only completed primary school to holding a university degree. Their occupations also
varied from being unemployed to holding highly skilled professional jobs.

A profile was written for each of the mothers and covered how they think of themselves in
relation to the majority society, how important their ethnic identity is to them and the importance
of the different components of their social identities. This profile was then added to the analysis of
the semi-structured interviews described above and a composite file was produced for each
mother.

How the mothers’ linguistic and cultural identities are affected upon migration to the UK and
how these identities affect their family language planning are discussed in detail in the results
section of this article.
Results

Mothers’ linguistic and cultural identities

The way in which the Brazilian mothers refer to their linguistic and cultural identities is multiple and changeable according to context. Nevertheless, their social profiles appear to generally refer to the three types of Tajfel’s (1978) inter-group interaction. I match these types of interaction to the terminology used by Hannerz (2000): (1) going “native” (i.e. individuals who expect to be able to assimilate into the majority group), (2) remaining “tourists” (i.e. the ones who are against assimilation and therefore maintain superficial contacts with the local culture) or, (3) becoming “cosmopolitans” (i.e. the members who manage to participate in the majority group without being readily identified as not belonging due to their involvement with a plurality of different cultures). Furthermore, Block (2002)’s subdivision of cosmopolitans into “early cosmopolitans” (who immigrate as children) and “expatriate cosmopolitans” (adults who spend a long period of time abroad) are also applied. I place the four types of identification in an identity continuum. This means that I select a general term to refer to these mothers based on the social profiles they provided in the semi-structured and in the focus interviews, despite being aware that their identities might vary according to social contexts.

Dorotéa, Durvalina and Aparecida are the mothers whose children attended the CLS for the longest period of time. Dorotéa appears to relate to British society in a way which tends to lie at the “tourist” extreme of the continuum. In other words, she does not participate in the local society except for issues related to her daughter. Her social and economic links are with the Brazilian community and she self-identifies as being Brazilian.
Durvalina also self-identifies as Brazilian but relates to the local society in a different way to Dorotéa. In her interviews, Durvalina selects characteristics which she considers positive from both the minority and the majority societies, which places her towards the “expatriate cosmopolitan” type in the identity continuum.

Aparecida, on the other hand, has stronger emotional links to British society than Dorotéa and Durvalina. In contrast to the other two mothers, Aparecida grew up in England and experienced life in the UK from a young age, which places her towards the “early cosmopolitan” type in the identity continuum. Like Durvalina, Aparecida has a “hybrid” identity; however, the boundaries between her Brazilian and her English identities are more blurred, especially emotionally speaking.

The other six mothers whose children attended the CLS lessons for a period of time in their lives can be analysed by drawing on the same categorization of inter-group interaction. Carmélia, like Dorotéa, tends towards the “tourist” type in the identity continuum in the sense that she does not make an effort to be involved in British society. Notwithstanding, Carmélia has links with the host society through her work as a childminder, her children’s school and her housing association. Her involvement with the Brazilian community takes place through the CLS and she believes she expresses herself better in Portuguese.

Efigênia, Lindalva and Rogéria self-identify in a similar way to Durvalina, towards the “expatriate cosmopolitan” type along the identity continuum. Efigênia is one of the few participants who reports making an effort to be involved with the Brazilian community in London. She consciously made this decision because she realized her son started to lose his Portuguese when he entered school. In spite of her involvement with the Brazilian community, Efigênia also considers it important to be part of British society and does not avoid being influenced by it.

Lindalva is another mother who believes that it is possible to integrate into British society
while continuing to be Brazilian. She describes integration as “being able to experience your daily life without attrition with the culture where you live and yet preserve your own culture”. However, Lindalva had difficulties pinpointing markers of her Brazilian ethnicity, an illustration of the fact that ethnicity is an unconscious process, which is, therefore, difficult to bring to the surface. Further to feeling Brazilian, Lindalva refers to behavioural issues as markers of her ethnicity. She mentions kissing people on the cheek when greeting them, having close family links as well as connections with Brazil and the role food plays in Brazilian social life.

Rogéria also mentions behavioural characteristics, such as being tactile, cuddling her children a lot and routinely being joined by friends and their children for meals at home, as markers of her Brazilian ethnicity. Rogéria recognizes it is difficult not to be influenced by the local community and states that there is a need to be aware of how the majority group behaves in order to carry out your daily tasks. She reports that speaking Portuguese is part of who she is.

Raimunda and Túlia, two mothers whose self-identity tends towards the “early cosmopolitan” type in the identity continuum, had different experiences in growing up in a foreign country and the way they relate to the Portuguese language. Raimunda grew up in a bilingual environment where she would speak Portuguese to her family and another language to the other people in her social network. She reports having kept her Brazilian ethnicity due to her mother’s efforts to pass it on to her. Raimunda refers to being born in Brazil and speaking Portuguese as markers of her ethnicity. She refers to the way she sees the world as well as the way she behaves and her identification with the Brazilian culture as inheritances from her mother.

Túlia also refers to the importance of her mother in relation to her links with Brazilian culture. Like Raimunda, when describing her “Brazilianess”, she mentions her experiences in Brazil during her childhood as well as the closeness between the family members and the family’s presence in her daily life. However, Túlia’s experiences in the majority society have led her to
value being able to speak “proper” English in order to be accepted. Túlia’s learning of English seems to be full of emotional baggage. She met her husband when she first arrived in England and learned English as their relationship developed.

All in all, the nine Brazilian women in this article have acquired some characteristics from the majority society but they still feel as if they are and behave as Brazilians. In other words, being born in Brazil (Y1) and speaking Brazilian Portuguese as their first language (Y2) allows the mothers to see themselves as Brazilians. This identity is then affected in different degrees when they move to England (X1) and learn to speak English (X2). This new identity, which results from the interaction between their experiences of growing up in Brazil and speaking Portuguese (Y) and their experiences in England and speaking English (X), is what I call, borrowing my participant’s image, “replanted tree” identity (Y+), as illustrated in Figure 1 below.

![Figure 1 – Replanted Tree Identity](image)

Having examined issues of identity from the perspective of a group of Brazilian mothers, I now turn to how these issues impact on their family language planning.

**Identities and family language planning**
The data collected indicate that the varied ways in which the Brazilian mothers refer to their linguistic and cultural identities have implications on the way languages are used in their homes. Dorotéa, one of the “tourist” mothers, never studied English formally and admitted not making efforts to improve her language skills. According to her, “speaking Portuguese is important because it is [her] language”. Despite being proud of her daughter’s bilingual skills, Dorotéa claims to only speak Portuguese to her. Dorotéa’s family domain is conducive to the use of Portuguese also because her niece, who does not speak English, is her lodger. It means that the use of English would prevent communication in the household and creates an environment where the use of Portuguese is not only desirable but also necessary. In addition, the use of Portuguese is validated by Dorotéa’s husband, who is also a speaker of Portuguese.

Carmélia, the other “tourist” mother, did not learn English formally and states that she expresses herself better in Portuguese. Her husband, however, does not speak Portuguese. Besides communicating with her in English only, he stopped her speaking Portuguese to their children until they were four years old. This imposed FLP has now been negotiated and the children were allowed to attend the CLS at an older age. It means that, in spite of her wishes, Carmélia’s use of Portuguese with her children has been limited and seems to have been restricted to the giving of instructions.

The use of languages in the household of the three “expatriate cosmopolitans” appears to be more varied. Durvalina, for example, claims to speak both Portuguese and English with her son. The use of Portuguese in her household is possible for two reasons. Firstly, Durvalina rents out rooms to other Brazilians and they communicate with each other in Portuguese. Secondly, Durvalina’s husband understands Portuguese well, which allows for the use of both languages without any conflict. Portuguese is used between Durvalina, her Brazilian lodgers and her son. English is used between Durvalina’s husband, the lodgers and her son. Furthermore, Durvalina has
made a conscious decision to formally educate her son in both Portuguese and English. The boy
attends lessons in an English mainstream school as well as in the Brazilian CLS.

Efigênia, the second “expatriate” mother, clearly identified the mother-child relationship as a
reason for her investment in her son’s ability to speak Portuguese. She has always spoken to him
in Portuguese, a choice supported by her husband who is non-Brazilian but can speak the
language. Efigênia’s son interacted with her in Portuguese but started to lose his ability to use it
when he joined an English mainstream school. Efigênia explains that the fact that her son no
longer spoke Portuguese made her feel distant from him, so she became involved in the Brazilian
community and the CLS, in order to offer him more opportunities to learn her first language.

The other two “expatriate” mothers present a very similar context to Efigênia’s. They are both
married to English-speaking fathers who are open to Brazilian culture and have positive attitudes
to the Portuguese language. As a consequence, both Portuguese and English are used in their
households. Nevertheless, the monolingual pressures of British society negatively affect their
children’s use of Portuguese. In order to counter these pressures, both mothers enrolled their
children in the Brazilian CLS. After all, from Lindalva’s perspective, “[y]ou are not Brazilian if
you can’t speak Portuguese. It doesn’t make sense for the mother to speak Portuguese and the
children not”. An opinion reinforced by Rogéria:

“Portuguese is my language. And my children are half-Brazilian. So, I find it terrible when I hear
someone say ’My mother is Brazilian’ but they can’t say a single word in Portuguese. It reflects
on me. I feel so embarrassed!”

In the case of the “early expatriate” mothers, the decision to take their children to the CLS is a
measure used to counter the negative pressures of British society on bilingualism as much as to
counter their feelings of having failed as mothers for being unable to adopt a FLP which is
supportive of their children’s use of Portuguese with them. Aparecida is married to an English
speaker who is also fluent in Portuguese. In spite of Aparecida’s husband’s competence in Portuguese and positive attitudes to both Brazilian culture and the Portuguese language, English is the only language used in their household. Aparecida explains her involvement with the CLS to compensate for her FLP in the following quote: “I want my children to be able to speak Portuguese, but I don’t manage (to communicate with them in Portuguese). I think that’s why I got involved (with the complementary school)”. Aparecida’s difficulty with using Portuguese to communicate with her children comes from her experience of growing up in a family that had many emotional issues.

The second “early expatriate” mother, Túlia, also refers to her emotional links to the English language. In her case, however, these links resulted from learning English as a teenager at the same time that her relationship with her now husband developed. It means that they only speak English to each other and to their children. Nevertheless, the children are exposed to Brazilian culture through music and art. According to Túlia, her mother is the one who contributes to the presence of Brazilian culture and the Portuguese language in her home:

“My mother has a great influence in my life. I speak to her on the phone everyday and we see each other once a week. She is the one who has led me to enrol my children in Portuguese lessons and the one who makes an effort to speak to them in Portuguese.”

Raimunda, the third “early expatriate” mother, also refers to the influence of her mother in her life. She states that the way she sees the world, the way she behaves, her identification with Brazilian culture and the Portuguese language are inherited from her mother. Raimunda’s adopted FLP reflects her own positive linguistic and cultural experiences. It means that Portuguese is used between Raimunda and her children, while her husband uses English with her and their children.

In addition, the children are developing their English in the mainstream school and their
Portuguese in the Brazilian CLS. The children are also reported to use both English and
Portuguese among themselves.

All in all, the discussions in this section make it clear that migrant mothers address their
linguistic emotional needs and educational views by deliberately taking action to manage the
pattern of language use in the micro contexts of their homes and social networks.

Discussion and conclusions

Albeit to different degrees, the results presented in this article have shown that the Brazilian
mothers connect their ethnic identity to the use of Portuguese, which makes relevant the
transmission of this language to their children. In Efigênia’s own words: “I am Brazilian, I was not
born here. My culture is Brazilian. So, Portuguese is important for my child to understand all of
these.” As a consequence, the geographical distance from Brazil, and therefore from relatives, has
led mothers to develop activities through which their children can socialize among themselves and
with other adults through the use of Brazilian Portuguese in England. Complementary school
attendance is one example of these activities. The schools not only support the children’s language
development but also reduce the guilt that some of these mothers may feel in relation to not
exposing the children enough to Portuguese in their homes.

It is undeniable that terms such as “first-language” and “mother-tongue” show an assumption
that one’s first language is learned from one’s mother, which highlights the role of one parent in
language acquisition (Mills, 2004). This role seems to be associated with motherhood in the same
way as mothers tend to be allocated the role of primary caregivers. Indeed, mothers appear to take
on this responsibility for themselves. It is therefore crucial to explore and offer insights into the
experiences of migrant mothers in relation to language transmission, as this article does. It is also
a necessary contribution to making women more visible in migration studies.
However, there is a risk that, when trying to create a space for women in academic studies, men’s experiences are wrongly diminished (Boyd & Grieco, 2003). In my own study, I acknowledge that, not having involved the fathers directly in the investigation, can be seen as a limitation. Yet, although the fathers were not interviewed, their “shadows” were made present throughout the project by the mothers and the children. There were distinct signs that the fathers did play a role in the amount of Portuguese being used at home as well as the amount of exposure the children had to Brazilian culture. Raimunda’s husband, for example, understood Portuguese, and was happy for it to be used by his wife and daughters among themselves and to him, although he would reply to them in his mother-tongue. Another positive example is provided by Durvalina’s husband, who has travelled to Brazil with the family on many occasions, showing acceptance of the Brazilian culture and enabling his son to be exposed to it. This situation ensured that their son has positive attitudes towards both the Portuguese and the English languages.

There were also indications that the fathers emotionally influenced the children’s language attitudes. In the case of Dorotéa, her husband supported their daughter’s bilingualism and was the one who drove her to and from the CLS. In addition, as reported by Dorotéa, he was also openly proud of their daughter’s language skills. In other words, this father demonstrates positive language attitudes and thus contributes positively to Dorotéa’s FLP.

The role played by fathers\(^3\), however, may be a restrictive one, as Carmélia’s child suggests: “Dad does not like it when we speak like this”. Nevertheless, fathers unquestionably participate in family language planning, even if their involvement is not always explicit. In other words, both parents influence children’s language maintenance, albeit in different ways. Luo & Wiseman’s

---

\(^3\) The importance of fathers’ role in language maintenance has also been acknowledged by studies on Koreans in New Zealand. In Korean families, children are expected to follow what the fathers set out (Johri, 1998 and Park, 2000 in Kim & Starks, 2010).
1 (2000) study on Chinese migrants in the US, for example, shows that fathers’ attitudes influence
2 language use whereas mothers influence children’s level of language proficiency.
3 In sum, this article uses narrative data to consider aspects of sociolinguistics, more specifically
4 issues of language and identity, to reflect on motherhood in migration. The discussions are based
5 on data collected with a group of Brazilian mothers, a recent group of migrants to the UK. This
6 case study of mothers in intermarriage makes an interesting contribution to the new field of
7 Family Language Policy and ultimately argues that both fathers and mothers should participate
8 equally in the conscious planning of language use. With the aim of better supporting positive
9 experiences of motherhood in migration, further research on FLP should explore the language
10 perspectives of both parents as well as how they negotiate the use of different languages in their
11 household and the transmission of language to their children.

References

Block, David (2002). ‘Destabilized identities and cosmopolitanism across language and cultural
borders: two case studies’ in Hong Kong Journal of Applied Linguistics, 7(2), 1-11.
Boyd, Monica & Grieco, Elizabeth (2003). Women and Migration: Incorporating Gender into
http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/women-and-migration-incorporating-gender-international-
migration-theory/ [Accessed on 30th April 2014]
Curdt-Christiansen, Xiao Lan (2009). Invisible and visible language planning: Ideological factors in
the family language policy of Chinese immigrant families in Quebec. Language Policy, 8, 351-
375.
Oliveira Assis, Gláucia (2014). Gender and migration from invisibility to agency: The routes of
Brazilian women from transnational towns to the United States, Women's Studies International
Forum. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2014.01.003
(Eds.), Ethnicity (pp. 3-14). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
IBGE (2011a) Censo 2010: mais da metade dos emigrantes brasileiros são mulheres. Instituto
Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística.
http://saladeimprensa.ibge.gov.br/noticias?view=noticia&id=1&busca=1&idnoticia=2017
[Accessed on 30th April 2014]
IBGE (2011b) Censo Demográfico 2010 – Características da população e dos domicílios, Resultados


