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PARENTAL AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS: PERCEPTIONS OF YOUNG BRAZILIAN AND PORTUGUESE PEOPLE FROM UNDERPRIVILEGED CONTEXTS

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ABSTRACT

An understanding of young people's schooling processes and life projects requires a recognition of the broad social perspective that encompasses them. Families are clearly included in that perspective. The growing recognition that schools do not educate alone has led to a call for institutional efforts to involve parents and families in compulsory schooling in more inclusive ways. This article debates the complexity of parental and family involvement in schools from peripheral contexts, based on a study conducted in Brazil and Portugal. It aims at understanding how young people comprehend the school-family dynamics in their educational trajectories. Twenty-one biographical interviews were conducted with young people attending public secondary schools. A content analysis of the interviews led to the organization of parental/family involvement in schools according to three family rationales: (a) anchor families, defined by their coercive nature; (b) haven families, defined as safe spaces; and (c) windmill families, characterized by a rather close relationship with school.

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Introduction

The implementation of compulsory education made it possible for all social groups in society to access the public education system. This changed school life and modified the educational landscape (Barbosa, 2007; Sacristán, 2003). The young people attending school have become more heterogeneous, and consequently the institution has become more diverse. One issue that continues to be central in public and academic debates on school concerns the school's inability to recognize and respond to the plurality of subjects that are continually brought into its space (Dayrell, 2007; Freires & Pereira, 2018). Such plurality challenges the school's goals and engenders a crisis of roles, i.e., the institution's own understanding of its mission toward society. In fact, it is not possible to think of the world of school life as a universe apart from society in general.

The recognition that the world of school life is shaped through the mobilization and dialogue of various actors that make up its field (Dubet, 1994; Habermas, 2002) allows the understanding that the meanings that school assumes and produces depend intrinsically on the intertwining of the different sources that make up the identity and history of the subjects who participate in it. To a large extent, this is based on the figures of the students' parents and families (Freires, 2019; Hasnat, 2016).

Research in education shows that the role of families and their influence on educational processes are heterogeneous and complex, contradicting the common-sense idea that families have resigned their educational role. It is necessary to understand, though, that the relationships that develop among young people, parents, extended family, and teachers are diverse in nature, with different levels of proximity and impact on young people's history (Charlot, 2009; Freires et al., 2016).

The growing awareness that schools cannot educate students on their own has resulted in efforts to include parents more fully in the schooling experiences of their children (Myers, 2015). Gadsden and Dixon- Román (2017) stated that families contribute to or mediate student experiences in school; families are allocated within, alongside, or in opposition to these experiences, depending on issues of class, race, education, access, and equality and equity. When these features conflict with the school culture, spheres clash and discourses of blame emerge from both sides. The elaboration of strategies to deal with difficulties in schooling in underprivileged environments, for example, usually produces documents that guide change and justify low student achievement from the perspective of social deficits. To some extent, the families are blamed (Canário et al., 2001), producing a partial and unprofitable perspective (Paseka & Killus, 2020).

In this article, we problematize the place of parents and family in the development of youth educational trajectories, reading their attitudes as supporters, actors, partners, and/or consumers in learning and educational processes based on the perceptions held by young people. We discuss how educational plans are influenced by the family sphere, which encompasses parents and the extended family. These influences are embedded in different ways of belonging to and understanding the school experience and promoting paths and life histories. We present a theoretical approach focused on the engagement of families with schools, describe the methodological design of the study presented here, and then move to the results and conclusions of the research.

Bridging the gap between families and school – what do we know?

Various theoretical approaches concerning the relationship between family and school have been explored (e.g., Epstein, 2002; Paseka & Killus, 2020). Together, these studies have focused on the fact that the active involvement of parents and families in the educational processes of youth is significant, such that family involvement in education tends to enhance the academic development of students and their identity (Fan & Williams, 2010; Gadsden & Dixon-Román, 2017; Schlee et al., 2009; Wilder, 2014). As Lahire (1997) highlighted, families can be considered as networks structured by social relationships. School failure or success can thus be understood as the result of a greater or lesser disagreement, of a higher or lesser degree of dissonance or consonance of the forms of social relationships from one network to another. For Barbosa (2007), children from the most disadvantaged fringes of the population are disadvantaged in terms of formal education because children from the middle and upper classes, from a very early age, go through socialization processes in school-oriented environments.

The literature suggests that explanations for the variability of youth trajectories and the differences regarding school achievement may be the result of the association of private dynamics with public dynamics emerging in the school context (Fan & Williams, 2010; Lahire, 1997). In any case, it has been widely recognized that the disposition of young people toward schooling is intrinsically related to the socializations experienced within the family sphere (Charlot, 2009; Singly, 2011), and these might be discrepant. This fact leads to a plurality of educational paths and confirms the importance of resocializations that take place along the school trajectory (Barbosa, 2007).

It is crucial to understand that a dynamic of inheritance cannot be spoken of in the sense of a cultural (re)production of school success. Lahire (1997) demonstrated that the transmission of inheritance is not a mechanical process. He stated that parents with cultural capital and/or cultural dispositions that are compatible with the requirements of school are not always in a position to effectively transmit them to their children. Following Charlot (2009), school success is connected with work and mobilization, attitudes that cannot be passed from one generation to another, although they can eventually be potentialized by the family.

Research on the relationship between family and school requires the understanding that we live in a time when families exist in several forms (Schlee et al., 2009), characterized by fluidity (Rabušicová et al., 2016; Singly, 2011). Thus, reflecting on the contribution and/or influence of the family in the schooling processes requires overcoming the dichotomous identification of positive and negative features within the family structure (Paseka & Killus, 2020). In this sense, it has been argued that the cultural capital of a family is not only conveyed by parents, but also by various people living close to the children (Barbosa, 2007; Rabušicová et al., 2016).

Research has indicated that in vulnerable socioeconomic contexts, economic investments have proven less relevant than the emotional support offered by the extended family in building an educational project (Freires et al., 2016). Acknowledging that research over the past two decades has suggested that family income has a substantial effect on school outcomes, Gadsden and Dixon-Román (2017) emphasized that parents with a low family income differ from those with a middle or high income in terms of social adjustment, enthusiasm, dependence, academic skills, and motivation. Such emotional and social differences may be more relevant than income issues in explaining differences in children's school outcomes.

The perceptions that young people have about their educational processes, as well as the ways they relate to school, are directly influenced by how their parents and family deal with educational institutions. School can be interpreted in several ways along young people's trajectories (Charlot, 2009). That is notable, since individuals are born into a specific family that is responsible for how they will develop competences for the social performance that will be required of them (Magalhães, 1994). Against this backdrop, in the following section, we explain the design of our research and shed light on the data presented in this article.

1 Research questions and methodology

In this article, we draw on qualitative research from a project designed as a multiple case study (Stake, 2007) with a focus on the educational trajectories of young people attending schools in disadvantaged neighborhoods (Freires, 2019). In particular, we address the issue of parental and family influences on schooling processes, seeking to identify forms of participation as perceived by young people themselves. Therefore, the central research question in focus is: How do young people understand parental and family involvement in their educational trajectories? This implies two sub questions: (*a*) What experiences mediate parental/family involvement in education? and (*b*) What sort of dynamics emerge from parents/families (non)interaction with school and related activities?

1.1 Sample and data collection

To answer these questions, we draw on data from 21 biographical interviews with students aged 16 to 21 years old who were attending secondary education. The interviews aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of how different dimensions (personal, institutional, societal, etc.) affect and shape meaning in schooling trajectories. In line with the biographical approach, the interviews were based on a series of themes rather than questions: general perceptions about the first school years (pre-school and grades 1 to 4), personal development during elementary school (grades 5 to 9), transition to and experience of secondary school (grades 10 to 12), tensions between school life and youth cultures, the general impact of schooling, extracurricular activities, community life, family life, and expectations for the future. The study was conducted in Brazil and Portugal, in partnership with secondary schools from each country. All interviews were conducted by the same researcher and took place in the schools. They were carried out in Portuguese and later transcribed integrally for analysis. The researchers translated the quotations in this article.

Secondary education lasts for three school years in both Brazil and Portugal. In Brazil, students have a general curriculum that is the same for everyone except students attending vocational schools, which was not the case for our participants. In Portugal, students choose a focus for secondary education from a range of options, including the science and humanities courses attended by our participants (see Table 1 for participant profiles). Students were chosen randomly with the support of schoolteachers, and some participants were named by their schoolmates. Participation was based on free will, and ethical steps were taken to guarantee student awareness and agreement with the research procedures. Informed consent forms were signed by students, their legal guardian, and school representatives.

Table 1
Profile of the participants

Pseudonym (Sex)	School grade	Age	Parents' jobs	
			Father	Mother
Portugal (PT)				
André (M)	10th Sciences and Technologies	16	Carpenter	Salesperson
Patrícia (F)	11th Visual Arts	17	Factory worker	Factory worker (on medical leave)
Henrique (M)	11th Sciences and Technologies	16	Carpenter	School employee
Gustavo (M)	11th Sciences and Technologies	16	Farmer	Homemaker
José (M)	11th Sciences and Technologies	16	Woodworker	Homemaker
Hugo (M)	12th Visual Arts	18	Woodworker	Seamstress
Violeta (F)	12th Visual Arts	18	Deceased	Seamstress
Joana (F)	12th Socioeconomics	18	Woodworker	Seamstress
Oscar (M)	12th Languages and Humanities	17	Contractor	Unemployed (travel agent)
Judy (F)	12th Languages and Humanities	17	Glazier	Seamstress
Lúcia (F)	12th Languages and Humanities	17	Truck driver	Salesperson
Brazil (BR)				
Júlia (F)	10th	18	Electrician	Homemaker
Juliana (F)	10th	15	Courier (stepfather)	Student (social service)
Angel (F)	10th	16	Unemployed (electrician)	Cook
Luiz (M)	11th	17	Computer technician	Homemaker
Maria (F)	11th	16	Deceased	Unemployed (elderly caregiver)
Pedro (M)	11th	16	Security guard	Unemployed (cleaning staff)
Lindsay (F)	12th	21	Manual turner	Homemaker
Adam (M)	12th	17	Market vendor	Homemaker
Andy (M)	12th	16	Minister (stepfather)	Missionary
Luna (F)	12th	17	Freelancer (courier)	Homemaker

In Brazil, the participating school was situated in an urban area of a major city (a state capital in the northeast). In Portugal, the participating school was surrounded by villages, with a more rural character. The Brazilian neighborhood was a well-known favela, with visible fragilities at the social level; the Portuguese town was regionally recognized as the national "furniture capital" due to the high presence of this industry. The furniture industry was seriously affected by the 2008 financial crisis and many local businesses went bankrupt. Both contexts were selected for this study because of the vulnerable social background and their status as socioeconomic peripheries (Freires & Pereira, 2018).

The biographical interviews were analyzed using two different processes. First, they were individually approached; after successive readings, the transcripts were reorganized as biographical narratives (Clandinin, 2000). These narratives encompass all the idiosyncrasies of the participants' histories (Goodson, 2013) and make it possible to understand their trajectories as a whole. Then, as a second step, all biographical interviews were analyzed according to content analysis techniques (Bardin, 1977; Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). This means that we read the interviews systematically and codified their content into themes, guided by semantic criteria. This approach privileged emergent categories, i.e., the categories were developed inductively; hence, the results emerge from the data analysis rather than being a straight transposition of the interviews' main dimensions.

The analytical model built from the data included six broad categories: *Schooling trajectories*, *Youth experiences*, *Family*, *Community*, *Identity*, and *Future projects*. Each category had several subcategories. In this article, we focus on the category *Family* and five subcategories (environment; household features; parental relationships; meaningful moments and people; relationships with school) (see Table 2), organizing the data in terms of how parents and families relate to the young people's schooling trajectories.

Table 2

Detail of the "Family" analytical category

Category	
Family	Reference to parents or extended family concerning different dimensions of relationships and experiences.
Subcategories	
Environment	Reference to general atmosphere concerning time spent with parents and family.
Coding ex.	We are very distant as a family, we are not very united, we are very individualistic. We live as if we were strangers to each other, despite sharing the same house. (Júlia, BR)
Household features	Reference to general household features, including people who cohabitate and their profiles, and living conditions.
Coding ex.	Oh, I live with so many people! There are a lot of people in the same house because it is divided into various rooms. It is as if it were a big hostel, not exactly a hostel, not a shelter either, how can I say it? It is a big house! (Adam, BR)
Parental relationships	Reference to young people's experiences and feelings about their parents.
Coding ex.	I stayed with my mother for three years (following my parents' divorce) and then I started to live with my father because there was a time when, I cannot explain, but I felt like my mom despised me. Of the three children, it was like I was neglected, I felt inferior to my sisters. (André, PT)
Meaningful moments and people	Reference to meaningful, important, and special people and moments throughout life.
Coding ex.	The eighth grade was the best year. My niece came to my school and we were grouped in the same class. We know each other well, we are very close, we are "sisters," so it was wonderful to study together. She used to sit right next to my desk. (Maria, BR)
Relationships with school	Reference to parents and extended family involvement in schools and related dynamics.
Coding ex.	My mother follows my school life very closely and whenever there is a meeting she goes. My father is more relaxed. Actually, he is more demanding with my brother. (Joana, PT)

2 Findings and discussion

Consistent with our research questions, the results are organized to first address the issues of experiences that mediate parental/family involvement in education (sub question *a*) and later to discuss the dynamics that characterize the interaction between parents/families and school and related activities (sub question *b*), according to the young people's views and in regard to each context (Portugal and Brazil). In the final stage, we provide a more holistic view of the data, addressing our main research question, which orbits around how young people understand parental and family involvement in their educational trajectories.

2.1 The young peoples' perspectives in Portugal
2.1.1 Family experiences in Portugal: Structure, environments, and relationships

For the young Portuguese people participating in the research, family life directly affects their mood and well-being, impacting the way they are later predisposed towards school activities. Family dynamics and the way they influence the relationship with school are more visible when significant events take place, such as a divorce or death. These events can prompt aversion to school and promote attitudes of youthful rebellion, but they can also reshape school as a neutral space where life is lived in a more "relaxed" way.

> It was really bad [when my parents broke up]. It was one of the worst years ever. So, that period when they were splitting up, I felt bad, and then I was not very available to study and my grades went down a lot. (Oscar, PT)

Situations of loss, estrangement, or family frailties associated with illness require young people to take on household duties associated with adulthood such as managing the housework and taking care of meals. For those coming from rural areas, extra activities were mentioned, such as harvesting corn or producing firewood, which incidentally constituted positive moments of family coexistence. Reflection on these rituals, however, implies the recognition, for some young people, that their lives are different:

> Sometimes, I would say 'Oh, Mom, this is very unfair, my friends are all going to travel, they are going to the Algarve [beach area]' and she would say 'Yeah, but their life is not the same as ours. I only have two, three weeks of vacation.' She [and my family] would enjoy the time when everyone was on vacation to cut down some eucalyptus trees to make the firewood (…). (Violeta, PT)

Moments of loss and the reorganizations of family environments imply new relationships with people that add other meanings to family life (Freires et al., 2016). There were notable references to grandparents who, in one case, even took custody of a boy whose parents got divorced. For the participants, it was not unusual in childhood to be under the care of their grandparents at home or to be assisted by them when they went to kindergarten. Other relevant relatives referred to were uncles and cousins. The youngest cousins, in general, had a close position, bridging the gap of non-existent siblings. Five out of the eleven participants in the narratives were single children. These family members leave marks on the way young people develop their trajectories, tastes, and ways of seeing life (Rabušicová et al., 2016).

In terms of the parental relationship, the results suggest that young Portuguese people value their family structure, and sometimes face complex issues in this sphere. Violeta (PT), whose father died when she was younger, believed it was necessary to invest in the relationship with her mother, spending all her free time with her. Similarly, being concerned with her parents' illness, Patrícia (PT), who was a single child, was distressed by the possibility of becoming alone in the near future. Divorces rarely engendered negative feelings toward parents.

The family environments of the participants were mostly positive with no evidence of grave conflicts. Parental conflicts revolved around the negotiation of rules and their degree of imposition, which was sometimes understood by the young people as a generational disagreement – some young people judged their parents as being too conservative and as having outdated ways of thinking:

> [Mom] is not that old-fashioned a person; my father is a bit old-fashioned. My mother is not. She is more open minded about the events that happen in the world and deals more easily with novelty than my father. (Hugo, PT)

Tensions in the parental relationship expanded when the young people lived with their grandparents. They experienced various difficulties that also related to ways of organizing the world. André (PT), for example, ended up under the legal guardianship of his grandparents after his parents' divorce and described restrictions about coming home.

> It's just different [living with grandparents] because we cannot always have what we want; we cannot go out until later. For example, in my house, I have to be at home around seven o'clock, and then I can no longer go out at night. (…) when I go to my mother's place, I feel like someone else there. I can say that I feel free.

2.1.2 School–family dynamics in Portugal: silence as a sign of positivity

When school was at the center of the debate, the results support a key conclusion – no family neglected the importance of school education (Singly, 2011), even if active involvement in educational processes was restricted to participation in meetings and keeping track of grades. The young Portuguese people reported that from their parents' perspective, school represented an engine for life improvement. For them, school was linked to the future, it was about enabling further opportunities in personal and professional life. In terms of school monitoring, the Portuguese students affirmed that their parents, in general, had no time to participate actively:

> They have never had much time for that. They often leave work very late and, psychologically, they do not have the capacity to keep track of us. They come home exhausted, so if they still had to check on school activities, I think it would be a bit complicated for them. (Hugo, PT)

School-family communication is organized by the element of silence which, interestingly, is exactly what determines that things are going well. Breaking that silence is the breaking of an order that is implied as a constant. As such, young people are alerted:

> My mother always said 'If they call me from school because you are not learning, this is one thing; I do not mind. Now, if I get called because you misbehave, that is another matter,' so I was very scared. (Judy, PT)

Family life in Portugal was not characterized by an abundance of resources, but family efforts and school support seemed to be sufficient to ensure a sense of encouragement (Gadsden & Dixon-Román, 2017). These efforts were recognized in the young people's narratives since they depicted the family as the driver of their desire to build a successful path. Where this support was perceived, students felt pressured to respond with good results – and they were actually happy when they did. The communication was harder when the parental expectations did not correspond to the wishes of children:

> [Mom] wants me to go to college, she always says the same 'If you want to be someone in life, you have to study. You have to study, Joana' and that is it, but I do not want to. (Joana, PT)

Disagreements, in general, were resolved with dialogue, but family pressure sometimes left explicit marks on the trajectories. Patrícia (PT), for example, enrolled in science in secondary school for one year, before following arts, the course she preferred. Regarding family pressures and influences in the educational sphere, it is essential to highlight the desire for rupture that the young Portuguese people felt in relation to their family histories, encompassing

a dimension of achievement based on personal desire (Charlot, 2009; Sacristán, 2003). The young people believed that their parental reality was characterized by hard work and little compensation, a scenario they intended to escape:

> I do not consider my parents' work to be a good job. Now, for example, being a teacher, or working in a bank, being a psychologist, yeah, that is something that I would like to do, or being a cop. For me, yes, these are good jobs. Now, what my parents do, I do not consider good jobs (...) because I think they work a lot and get paid little. That is what I think. (Joana, PT)

2.2 The young peoples' perspectives in Brazil
2.2.1 Family experiences in Brazil: structure, environments,
and relationships

For the Brazilian participants, hints of a desire to leave their existing circumstances were not as explicit as in Portugal. There was a feeling that such a rupture would be more complex and difficult, and perhaps that is why it was seldom pursued. The difficulty of ascending socially, as perceived by the Brazilian youth, revealed a perspective grounded in the logics of social reproduction (Bourdieu, 1970). In the urban periphery of a large Latin American city, breaking away from family dynamics that are reproduced generation after generation is like "puncturing the bubble" (Andy, BR), a process that is hard to achieve and sometimes not even understood as a necessity:

> (...) and it is kind of that life, the father married someone when young, then the child also grows, and moves in with someone at an early age, their children see that situation, they do not have a higher life expectation, they marry someone early and so it turns into that big snowball, until someone gets rid of it and does it differently. (Andy, BR)

The different types of family organization described by the young Brazilians seemed to be rather complex. Nuclear structures were less rigid and the family underwent constant reorganization (Singly, 2011). Only one Brazilian participant had parents who were married. Relational climates are affected more frequently by this more permeable type of relationship, with the replacement of key figures in the composition of households breaking with the more nuclear vision of the family (Rabušicová et al., 2016). From this constant transformation of family socialization, the production of plural family cultures emerges (Barbosa, 2007). In contrast to the Portuguese participants, the relationship with the father for the Brazilian participants was adversely less permanent.

In this regard, several studies (Rogers et al., 2009; Ross & Mirowsky, 2011) have suggested that the absence of the father in daily educational life tends to promote processes of disconnection with school. This situation, however,

was observed in our work in specific episodes, those significant moments composed of divorce events, for example. In addition, it is important to note that, despite the predominance of divorced parents in the histories that made up the research, the results also show paternal relationships that did not fade away.

In the Brazilian context, there was a significant narrative of violence in family episodes. Sometimes they referred to physical aggression, at other times they related to abominable crimes that clearly affected the young people's ways of being and relating to school. Violence, which has decreased in recent years in the local context where the research was carried out, was not restricted to the community, but invaded the homes of the young people. For Júlia (BR), the most dramatic moments at school were the consequences of the loss of two brothers, both murdered:

> When I was in elementary school, I lost my younger brother and in high school I lost one of my elder brothers, so I was feeling bad, really bad. When we are feeling bad at home, we cannot concentrate at school (…). I feel my life really froze in the 10th grade because of my personal problems (…). I would sit in the room and I would wonder what I was doing there, why I was alive. (Júlia, BR)

Relational climates were somewhat troubled in Brazil, as most of the young Brazilians identified incoherencies in their family life and challenged the associated opinions. They questioned the notion of respect for their parents, which was defined as silence, and they problematized moral and religious values. The current results suggest that the greatest specificity and difficulty in family climates in Brazil derived from issues of religion. A series of conflicts originated in the assertion of certain behaviors that were linked to the religious affiliations of parents, reflecting the process of religious transformation in Brazil, where large number of people were switching from Catholicism to Protestantism (Alves et al., 2017) – characterized by more conservative moral standards.

2.2.2 School-family dynamics in Brazil: The tension between school achievement and early entry to the labor market

In the Brazilian context, the family/parental relationship was marked by a tension in the sense of youth gaining autonomy and building a story of their own, freeing themselves from their parents' personal projects of continuity (Sacristán, 2003). The relationship with school was then marked by the tension between dreams – personal desires (Charlot, 2009) – and demands – above all, family pressures (Barbosa, 2007). School monitoring on the parents' side suggested a disconnection in terms of educational routines. It was essential to get good grades; these represented the communication thermometer, similarly to what occurred in Portugal:

> They keep track [of my school life]. I mean, my mom more than my dad. He goes like this 'And the grades, were they good?', I say 'Yes,' and he goes 'Oh, okay. You should continue like this.' (Luna, BR)

From the perspectives of the young people interviewed, their parents associated school with a better future and there was sometimes subtle pressure on the children to emphasize their studies, but expectations were not always high. Some narratives offered an account of conformism "My mom does not require me to go to college because she knows I do not have that interest" (Lindsay, BR) and others pointed to a logic of early insertion in the labor market, "You are 17 and still do not have a job [mom says]" (Adam, BR).

At the other end, there were families who pursued more ambitious life projects for their children. Lacking economic resources, these families relied on emotional investment, *i.e.*, favoring projects through conditions of enthusiasm and motivation (Freires et al., 2016). Therefore, projects were undertaken through a closer monitoring of learning, the reaffirmation of support to meet any school shortages, and the projection of more prestigious careers, following the logic of private utility linked to degrees. In other words, the families who planned such life projects for their children believed that degrees had the power to promote social mobility (Dubet, 2008).

The fragility of the reported strategies becomes visible, to a certain extent, in the degree of abstraction of the desired achievements. Rather than being able to design a concrete path for their children, some families focused solely on the final result, ignoring the means and resources necessary to achieve it – "(…) my mother just wants me to have a 'Dr.' in front of my name, you know, Doctor, 'Doctor Júlia'! Yeah, she really wanted that" (Júlia, BR). As Júlia (BR) explained, the motivation to consider certain careers and, possibly, the pressure for early entry into the labor market, was connected to the idea that:

> (…) we are very frustrated with this thing of making money because we, who live in favelas, we grow up with this goal in our head 'make money,' so we leave a lot behind, a lot of dreams, a lot of goals that we wanted to achieve.

2.2.3 How do young people understand parental and family involvement in their educational trajectories? An interpretation of school–family relationships

Regardless of the approaches, conceptions, or interpretations that parents and families in general apply to education, it is certain that this sphere is fundamentally linked to the way young people enter school and how they pass it. On the one hand, care must be taken not to make the mistake of drawing shallow conclusions such as associating or blaming parents and families for certain student behaviors and achievements. As observed by Paseka and Killus (2020), parents do not constitute a homogeneous group.

Moreover, when it comes to good learning results, differences can be identified within the same social class (Paseka & Killus, 2020). On the other hand, it is crucial to recognize that family conditions and attitudes have consequences in the educational process and, therefore, one must know their circumstances. The reason for this is not to justify possible deficiencies, but rather, to respond to them, promoting new meanings in a formal education context to the experiences students bring from their home situation. In fact, school, as an institution, cannot escape the family dimension:

> We absorb many family problems. A mother that undergoes difficulties, parents, family that struggles economically. This is very common. (Maria, BR)

Based on the biographical interviews and related content analysis, namely of data associated with the *Family* theme, as discussed in the previous subsections, we established three ideal types (Weber, 2011) of families, organizing young people's views on how their parents and/or extended family impact their educational trajectories. An ideal type is constituted by an explicit relation to values selected by the researcher; hence, the ideal type organizes information and makes it meaningful by integrating it into a constellation of which it is the unifying principle (Bruyne et al., 1991). This implies that the elaboration of an ideal type synthetizes a certain number of features specific to a phenomenon, not aiming to list all the determinations of a phenomenon (in our case, the family/parental relationship with school and associated impacts on young people's educational trajectories), but with the goal of making its existence intelligible (Weber, 2011; Bruyne et al., 1991). The three ideal types of families we elaborated are: anchors, havens, and windmills.

Table 3
Three ideal types of families

Ideal type	Description
Anchor	The anchor metaphor stands for the idea of immobility. Families of this type constitute an obstacle to establishing a good relationship with school because they challenge their children's emotional and economic stability.
Haven	The haven metaphor conveys a sense of safety and support. Families who fall into this category invest in their children's schooling trajectories emotionally and financially if resources are available.
Windmill	The windmill metaphor refers to an attitude of empowerment. Similar to the haven families, the windmill families are spaces of safety and support as well, but they assume a greater effort concerning the monitoring and participation in the school life of their children. Families of this type invest heavily in their children's schooling because they believe in the transformative power of school.

Anchor families are those whose circumstances interfere negatively in the development of educational paths. They are defined by a lack of interest in school activities and hardly monitor them; they allow children to regulate and organize their school activities by themselves, and it is not part of their practices to reward or punish behavior. Families who fall into this category resemble passive consumers in learning and educational processes. In sum: anchor families have no expectations for their children's future.

> I have never had any kind of demands [on my parents' side]. It was always on me. If I wanted to succeed and pass the school year, I would do so. If I did not want to, that would be it. (Luiz, BR)

> Honestly, my grandparents [who I live with] do not care much about how I am doing at school. For them, it is like, 'You go because you have to.' I think they do not worry much about it because they know I do not value it. What I really want is to pursue a Mechanics course. (André, PT)

Haven families do not always have enough resources to promote their children's academic future, and therefore they invest in providing moral and emotional support to their children. These families have an average control of school activities, despite participating in meetings and being attentive to school grades; they tend to face socioeconomic challenges; and although they might face significant negative moments, they continue to work as spaces of safety. Parents and relatives who make up such families play an active part in learning and educational processes, so they can be considered relevant supporters of educational trajectories.

> My mom usually says, 'You have to do whatever instructed, you cannot do only what you want, otherwise you will not become anyone in life.' So, considering what I have gone through with my father [deceased due to alcohol issues], I think 'Well, life is short, so I cannot do only what I like.' (…) 'you have to do what you like and what you do not, because what matters is to get a good final grade' my mom says, so, I am how I am because of the education I have at home. (Violeta, PT)

> My father finished the ninth grade and my mom the fifth. They track me closely at school. They are demanding. As I said, the first time I failed a test, my father was really angry, actually, sad. My mom requires me to have good results. They track all my activities. When they cannot attend the parent-teacher meetings, they always send someone to sign my school report, they always track everything I do. (Pedro, BR)

Finally, *windmill families* are characterized by a close dedication to school. They participate in occasional events at school, communicate with teachers

and monitor activities; they may have more resources, but even if they do not, they concentrate all their efforts on ensuring the good academic progress of their children. These families are made up of people who take on partnership roles in learning and educational processes. They tend to promote joint efforts with the school sphere to assist children in pursuing their goals. Windmill families insist on the relevance of school and want their children to succeed academically.

> (…) for example, many times, my primary school held auctions to raise money for study visits for us, and my mother always helped, she always offered them things to sell, she always helped to organize the activities, whatever necessary. (…) [my parents] want me to go ahead, to keep studying to have a better future. They always ask me not to stop studying and to make an effort to keep up with good grades. (José, PT)

> I think the biggest conflict [with my parents] has to do with my need to have more space, to be and do things alone. They are too close all the time, I feel suffocated, but mostly I am grateful for having parents who care about me. I see a lot of people whose parents do not care at all. My parents see it [school] as something important, it is something necessary for us to live [well]. They track [my activities] – my mom more often than my dad. He cares about the grades (…), she does her best to make sure I have everything I need. (Luna, BR)

It is crucial to highlight that the three ideal types of families we present here are not intended to classify the participating families (Weber, 2011). On the contrary, they emerged from the analysis of the perceptions that the young people had about their parents/families' relationships with school, configuring rational frameworks that are objectively possible (Weber, 2011). In this sense, the ideal types help map trends while recognizing that the borders between one and another are not rigid. The relationship between family and school is dynamic, such that over the years, families may move between different conceptions, for varied reasons, ranging from significant events in the domestic context to the specific organizational culture of the schools in which the children are enrolled.

3 Conclusions

The consideration that the family and the school, together with the community, are two of the major contexts in which students learn and grow (Epstein, 2002) leads to the assumption that successful learning trajectories depend to a great extent on the possible joint actions carried out within these spheres.

In this sense, partnerships are envisioned as a shared commitment deriving from mutual understanding that aims at nurturing children's life projects.

When it comes to the place of family cultures and their relationship with the school, we argue that the mandate of modern education cannot advance without a dialogue among the specificities of the diverse family experiences and related dynamics. Recognizing that parents (and families) do not constitute a homogeneous group (Paseka & Killus, 2020) seems to be a crucial step for implementing joint practices that integrate both schools and families. An integrative dimension of the school–family relationship imposes a break with prejudices for both parties, an arduous task that, when taken seriously, increases the achievements in the development of educational trajectories. This means an eventual culture of *windmill* families can only emerge as the result of a collaborative construct among all actors involved in the educational trajectories of young people; it is unlikely to grow spontaneously.

The results of our research reinforce the idea that positive schooling trajectories take place amidst different influences that go beyond the socioeconomic dimension. Attitudes of encouragement and partnership like those displayed by haven and windmill families illustrate some of the elements to consider when reflecting upon drivers for successful educational projects. Although families do not neglect the value of formal education, some of them are less inclined to truly pursue it. Local context plays an important part in this regard. The violence depicted by the young Brazilian people in relation to their domestic life, for example, reflects dynamics that go beyond their household. Programs of school and family partnerships cannot advance while ignoring the landscape of the community and its influences.

Regarding the geographical contexts covered in our study, a few differences were observed in terms of the family dynamics and experiences of the young Portuguese and Brazilian people. In Portugal, the family households tended to be more stable, with most children living with their married parents. Among our Portuguese participants, most of them were single children. In Brazil, on the other hand, the majority of the young people lived with a single parent and, sometimes, their partner. Families tended to have more children, and many households had other relatives living together – uncles, aunts, cousins, and grandmothers. This is an important aspect since these relatives influence educational trajectories as well. They can play a part as partners or opponents to a positive school-family relationship. In terms of school monitoring and tracking, there were notable differences within families from the same context. This is why the ideal types proposal is relevant. It organizes information on family dynamics and experiences, as perceived by young people, into a constellation of meanings that transcends the bias of structural conditions.

The perspectives presented in this article are limited to how young people themselves see the relationship of their families with school. Although this presentation is original, the decision to limit the research to only one perspective might have hindered some other aspects about this relationship. Further research that also includes parents' voices could enrich this topic.

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