

Professional and educational experiences among Young Calon people from the gypsy community of Sousa-PB

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Abstract: As nomadism declined, significant changes occurred in the lives of Calon gypsies residing in Sousa, PB. One of the main factors contributing to these changes is the evolving sociability between gypsies and non-gypsies. In the past, interactions largely occurred for economic reasons; however, today they encompass many other aspects, such as friendships, marriages, and educational experiences. Younger members of the gypsy community are increasingly prioritizing their studies to better prepare for the job market. Despite this, they still face prejudice and discrimination when seeking employment in the local private sector. Thus, this article addresses some of the cultural changes and their effects on the younger generation's pursuit of education in the city. The present article includes insights from interviews conducted with young gypsies from Sousa, analyzing their statements and reflecting on their daily lives as they navigate the intersections of educational opportunities and job prospects in the local private sector.

Keywords: gypsies; Calon; education; work.

1 Introduction

Gypsies were a part of the Brazilian population since the colonial period, as several scholars on the subject point out (Moonen, 2013; Goldfarb, 2013). They reside in many states of the northeast region of the country, such as Paraíba, Ceará, Pernambuco, Rio Grande do Norte, Sergipe, Maranhão, and Bahia. According to Toyank (2019, p. 15):

Gypsies constitute a diverse ethnic community of Indian origin, which migrated to the Western world approximately a thousand years ago. Divided into several groups and subgroups - having their unique cultural characteristics and perceptions regarding their identity - the gypsies are influenced by historical and cultural contexts generated by the political, social, and economic constructions of the countries where they live and the society's attitudes towards them. The multiple impacts of more vast



societies contribute to shaping the multidimensional structure of Gypsy identities in distinct and irregular ways.

A member of a gypsy Calon group certainly hears many stories told by their older family members, and the core of these narratives are constant persecutions and processes of social exclusions suffered by them in the northeast region, which has for many times resulted in injustices and real crimes against these people. As Magano points out (2012, p.259) when questioning:

“who the gypsies are,” an old question frequently accompanied by a relation involving social boundaries between gypsies and non-gypsies. “Gypsies are usually contested by the societies they live in, having negative attributions pointed at them (...) being accused of adopting a social and personal identity different from “normal”, with associations to aspects interpreted as off-course behaviors (that they “do not work”, “are dirty”, “are violent and aggressive”, among others.)

It is known in the international scene that, like the Jews, the gypsies were sentenced to death in gas chambers during the Nazi Holocaust, causing the death of thousands and thousands of people. Hancock (2019) mentions how the two most significant events that shaped the history of the gypsies in Europe – O Rrovija (the slavery) and the Porrajmos (the genocide of the gypsies by the Nazis) –, both connected to complex social situations that the gypsies had to face, and still have to until this day when it comes to prejudices historically institutionalized in the whole world.

The retraction caused by the constant persecution of gypsies was probably the cause of the nomadic behavior of these groups over the centuries. Stories of fierce persecution are sustained and shared among the various gypsy groups in Europe, which shows that nomadism was a choice made based on the lack of options and the survival needs of these people. Traveling between cities and villages, the gypsies followed true-life journeys.

On the other hand, it was the permanent displacement, through time, that allowed gypsies to keep their cultures and, in this sense, develop or conserve their own languages as part of their traditions. With the settling of gypsies in the city of Sousa in the 1980s, many transformations happened in the lives of the Calon people, causing the necessity of constant exchange between them and the non-gypsy population, a fact already stated by Goldfarb (2013). Consequently, professionalization requirements for entry into the formal job market arose, with schools being the proponent institutions for such training.

In this paper, we analyze the problem of job acquisition faced by young gypsies in the gypsy community of Sousa and its local private market, addressing how the shock caused by the cultural differences - between gypsies and the surrounding society - rebounds in the forms of ethnic prejudices, especially in the labor market and employment sectors. Because of this known

and experienced reality, young Calon individuals seek to minimize the effects of these prejudices within formal education through schools and educational training processes in the city.

The article is constructed from different insertions experienced by the authors. We rely on the direct experience of a young gypsy and a researcher qualified in the practice of anthropology - consisting of a text that deals directly with oral history, lived experience, and the reflection provided by qualitative research carried out in 2019 in the community of Sousa, Paraíba. Qualitative research is essential to understand the complexity and subjectivity of social phenomena. By using direct experience, it is possible to provide valuable insights and a deeper understanding of the researchers regarding their object of study - schooling as a tool of qualification for the job market - and the challenges faced by the projection of the surrounding society towards gypsies, who are framed based on stigmas. On the other hand, it helps to deal with the changing processes in the construction and maintenance of gypsy identity. We proposed to investigate the world of work among gypsies living in Sousa, considering the direct experience and the bibliography's support, which allows us to recover the history and experiences built by them. We conducted semi-structured interviews with 10 young Calon men. The interviews followed a set of questions and had a cell phone for audio recording. We defined the target audience based on two criteria: participants had to be male and still young. The interviews were done primarily with gypsies between 17 and 25 years of age. The questions addressed two central themes: schooling and its relationship with the labor market.

2 Discussing ethnic problems

Prejudices are usually linked to forms of social discrimination. Since the beginning of the construction of Brazil in the colonial period, we have created a situation where Indigenous, Black, and Gypsy people, for example, were seen as inferior human beings, carrying socio-historical marks that hang on in the ethnic-racial issue of our country. Therefore, considering that racism is grounded in the belief of racial differences, in which some groups are considered inferior, we can relate this concept to what happens with gypsies. According to Marques (1995), racism is linked to the hierarchization of people and social groups, which legitimizes social inequalities. Thus, race "is a key that provides intelligibility to diversity, legitimacy to domination, and grounds to destruction" (Marques, 1995, p.45).

When it comes to gypsies, this phenomenon reflects itself repeatedly in the media, literature, music, and others. The word "gypsy" tends to be used to describe a suspicious individual or group of people with a propensity to commit crimes. In the situation of Sousa, the inequality of social opportunities between gypsies and non-gypsies is visible, being manifested in all spheres of society, such as in health, education, prison system, housing, basic sanitation, and employment. By observing Figure 1, we are confronted with precarious

housing conditions such as the absence of garbage collection, reinforcing the lack of opportunities for a dignified life.

Figure 1 – Absence of garbage collection in the gypsy community.



Source: Goldfarb, 2023.

The vast majority of gypsies continue to suffer various forms of racial discrimination in the city, as they are often perceived as an inferior race and are vilified on a daily basis. The survey conducted for this article demonstrated many difficulties experienced by young Calon, mainly because they are not very well absorbed in the job market of Sousa. This lack of acceptance stems from their identity as gypsies and, of course, the social images generated of non-gypsy employers.

A lot of these cases are reported in Sousa's daily life. Among many, we bring cases B. and P.A¹, which are among the most emblematic examples we could mention, representing the tenor of the numerous stories of prejudice suffered by many young gypsies looking for work in the private sector. The first individual, after successfully completing a selection process alongside other candidates for a job at a local grocery store, was awarded the position. However, while already employed, the individual was identified as a gypsy by a customer and was subsequently fired the next day under the pretext of a misunderstanding regard-

¹ Here, we have used only the initials of the collaborator's name.

ing the availability of vacancies. That same week, the young gypsy returned to the grocery store and saw that someone else had occupied his former position². P.A.'s case is also emblematic: possessing a noticeable CV, including higher education, he got rejected by all the companies that had openings for his position. Ultimately, only the last company he applied to, the largest one in the region, decided to hire him - even knowing his ethnic belonging.

In the first case, the presence of ethnic prejudice becomes evident. The second case, however, raises doubts due to a lack of objective evidence, which we could observe in the first case. However, for gypsies, already accustomed to historical (and still current) manifestations of prejudice, the experiences of job pursuit tend to generate an inevitable previous discouragement once they feel that - behind the negative allegations they face - there are always camouflaged or unspoken prejudices, very much in the style of Brazilian society. In addition to the cases of B. and P.A., in the intragroup social life of gypsies, it is common to share such situations that so many gypsies go through, whether in Sousa or nearby cities.

As Marques (1995) states, racism and ethnic prejudice promote fundamental inequalities of opportunities in the lives of many gypsies, because they are gypsies and because they are poor. Marushiakova and Popov (2019, p. 43) point out that gypsies should be viewed as part of the social structure and that, in the foreground, we should acknowledge the problems of their marginalization, which are connected mainly to the social and economic aspects surrounding them. Therefore, the authors highlight the importance of observing the cultural context and its social dimensions, which tend to construct effective exoticizations of gypsies.

Goldfarb (2013) points out that gypsies are ethnic groups, once they construct forms of differentiation in relation to the jurans³. Under the terminology "gypsies" are classified the ethnic groups that hold similarities among themselves, such as a common origin; social organization focused on family preservation; strong artistic propensities (with emphasis on music and dance), work activities focused on business/commerce and fortune-telling (palmistry); preference for ethnic self-preservation through endogamy; a nomadic past (still a current reality for a few groups); among other characteristics selected as ethnic elements or formative elements of ethnicity.

Historically, the ethnic prejudices attributed to gypsies in many parts of the world are those of cheaters, wanderers, and dangerous people, which summarizes gypsies as people who are averse to work, settled housing, and good social life. Such prejudices are widely known by the gypsies of Sousa, who are daily victims of this mental and behavioral construction.

² The story of B. was featured in an interview for the program "O Povo Cigano no Brasil" (The Gypsy People of Brazil) on Rádio Senado, published on March 24, 2011, in Program 8: "A Terra Promessa: Os Ciganos de Sousa" (The Promised Land: The Gypsies of Sousa). This documentary, which won the Roquette-Pinto award, consists of 12 episodes, each lasting 30 minutes. The report is situated between 15:00min and 17:22min.

³ Term used by the gypsies of Sousa to refer to non-gypsies

With these identities assigned, imposed, and relegated, it was justifiable, it was thought, to implement policies (official or not) of punishments such as banishment and expulsion from territories through which they passed and in which they sought to settle. Perceived as vagabonds and thieves, gypsies were unable to stay in the same place for a long period and were constantly forced to travel and establish new relationships in each place they passed by, a fact that contributed to the development of nomadism and, along with it, a dynamic and performative identity, negotiating representations with the diversity of the non-gypsy universe (Shimura; Araújo, 2019, p. 105-106).

Refuting the prejudices and the image of eternal wanderers, in the case of the city of Sousa (Paraíba), the gypsies left the nomadic life over 40 years ago, splitting themselves into ranches⁴ in Jardim Sorrilândia III neighborhood: (1) Rancho de Baixo, composed of a group led by Chief Eládio (previously led by late Chief Vicente), an area that has now been subdivided into other housing sectors; and (2) Rancho de Cima, where members of the group led by late Chief Pedro Maia live, and who was replaced by his son and grandchildren in the leadership role. Between these two ranches lies Várzea das Almas, a mixed housing area for gypsies and non-gypsies. Together, these areas form the large Gypsy Community of Sousa, which is currently home to over 200 families and is seen by non-gypsies as the gypsy ranch.

These situations demonstrate that, despite the social changes that have occurred in the country, forms of discriminatory prejudice remain active, causing violence and multiple forms of social inequality.

In fact, what leads to discrimination and exclusion is not the situation of material deprivation itself but rather the prejudice towards people in need. This situation generates different ways to approach and treat individuals, translating the 'risk' of pollution that these people potentially represent. There is no doubt that, in this case, it is the prejudice the generator of inequality and discrimination that excludes the 'distinctive and formative' aspect of the moral ordering of Brazilian society, in a search that denies an 'ethic of equality' or reciprocity (Bandeira; Batista, 2002, p. 125).

We are talking here about ethnic prejudice as the discussion is about an ethnic group historically discriminated against in Brazil and much of the world, being excluded from the public and private spheres of our society, whose traditions, knowledge, and ways of life have always been portrayed as bizarre, primitive, scandalous or simply inferior.

Above all, it is within the demands of the workplace that we see the presence of these prejudices. Even when young gypsies present a good appearance, strong resumes, or a willingness to work, they are often rejected for positions in the city's private sector solely because they are identified as "gypsies". In relation to the public sector, they are also only accepted when public examinations classify them, and even then, we can spot cases in which they

⁴ How the sectors or groups of gypsies that form the Community are called.

are approved for certain positions but have to hold lower ones because they are gypsies. As Hasenbalg (1979, p. 167) says, the inequalities of opportunities manifest themselves in “social inequalities throughout racial lines,” through which the non-white population suffers discrimination, and the result of this is exclusion, especially in formal education and in the job market.

We understand the power of the problem addressed here, especially when it comes to the social future of young gypsies and, consequently, the economic sustainability of the community itself. It is possible to affirm that the lack of job opportunities affects the formation of new households in the community. In this sense, in 2008, the federal government built the Calon Center for Integral Development (CCDI), which would serve as a great ally of the gypsy community living in Sousa, as it was a cultural center that declared the purpose of promoting gypsy culture, in addition to producing means for generating employment and income. However, apart from one or two courses that took place in the CCDI space, which also served as a stage for political and institutional representatives to give speeches and make promises, nothing important has happened there since its founding. We have included here photographic records of the exterior and interior environment of the CCDI, taken in 2023, to indicate the precarious state of its construction and the absence of marks that could indicate the realization of activities.

Figures 2 e 3 – Current conditions of CCDI.



Source: Goldfarb, 2023.

In fact, the CCDI, originally established as a reference center for gypsy culture in Latin America, has effectively become a 'white elephant.'⁵ Over time, it has failed to implement meaningful actions to promote gypsy culture or contribute to any significant improvements in the lives of the gypsy community. On the contrary, as we can observe in photographs 2 and 3, it constitutes an unoccupied space in a degraded physical condition, which caused disagreements among the members of the community itself - once the control of the building was the responsibility of leaders who were associated with a gypsy family and ranch. Finally, ethnic prejudice is often subtle and widespread throughout society, interfering in labor relations - although in the city, no one admits having any "prejudice," given the practices of control, domination, and separation between gypsies and jurons.

3 Transformations with the settling of the city

Gypsy elders share stories about their past travels across northeastern states. With permanent housing, changes would inevitably occur, mainly because of the higher coexistence between gypsies and non-gypsies. In Sousa, there are gypsies attending schools, working as public and private employees, competing in local sports tournaments with great prominence, participating in artistic and cultural projects, playing or singing at parties held by non-gypsy social figures through contracts or friendships, getting involved in political campaigns, getting married or simply socializing with non-gypsies.

Indeed, contacts and exchanges between gypsies and jurons have been generating a large-scale increase in forms of sociability, an undoubtedly effective path in deconstructing negative stereotypes and valuing the essential aspects of these people. Although these advances do not yet represent the dominant tone of this relationship, they can be understood as a progress of interethnic coexistence resultant of 40 years of social interaction between the different cultures, although still far from the prospects of egalitarian coexistence between the parties (Siqueira, 2013, p. 61- 62).

Let us see that, in the analysis cited above, the amplification of ways of sociability with non-gypsies is at the center of many of the changes that gypsy traditions have been suffering. If before the ongoing phase of settled residences gypsies only interacted with non-gypsies predominantly to make business and commercial trades, today there are many forms of interactions, which have naturally caused changes. As Holanda et.al. (2022, p.11) emphasize:

⁵ The term "white elephant" is an idiomatic expression that refers to something that, despite being grandiose, causes losses due to its maintenance costs, for example. The origin of this expression is tied to the ancient Kingdom of Siam (now Thailand), where white elephants were regarded as sacred and could not be used for labor. When a king wanted to punish a subject, he would gift them a white elephant - considering that maintaining such an animal was expensive and, as a gift from the king, it could not be sold or given away.

From the process of house-settling that occurred with some gypsy people, they started to realize that they could no longer execute the remunerative activities they already knew to earn the sustenance of the community. Therefore, they realized that they should try to perform other forms of work they were not used to, but their previous knowledge and skills could no longer meet the expectations of their new way of life.

Regarding the changes we have observed, we point out some: (a) informal business no longer prospers as it used to; (b) today there is a lot of emotional and marital involvement between people of gypsy and non-gypsy origin; (c) many gypsies are more focused on their particular projection in the non-gypsy society than on the reproduction of gypsy traditions; and (d) the hierarchy – in which the elders had the higher level of authority, and the chiefs represented the authority of the older men – profoundly conducted the destinies of young gypsies, which changed a lot when these young people began to depend more on themselves to solve their lives, and less and less on the actions of gypsy representatives in the community.

These factors concern the educational processes that existed among the Calon, such as, for example, the art of negotiation. Negotiating or doing business is part of the life of the gypsy man. The gypsy child was always taught to play the role of a male provider when it was the case. In the same way, the female child was taught to play the role of the reproduction of domestic life. Even in his childhood, the father would take the boy to accompany the negotiations carried out by him, his brothers (the child's uncles), and other adults. This allowed the child to gradually absorb (learn) the ways of proceeding in a generally informal trade, based on the given word, practiced between gypsies and non-gypsies, which allowed gypsies to capitalize as a way to support their families.

But times have changed. The traditional exchanges that gypsies carried out and the sales of animals began to decline, especially after the process of expansion of industrialization in Brazil, which intensified in the 1980s. At least, whenever we make ourselves available to listen to reports about the processes of change, it is during this period that gypsies focus on describing the differences in the way of life of the oldest people; this is what they call "times from ago" (Goldfarb, 2013). Today, almost only the poorest population still uses horses sold by gypsies, which are used to carry water, firewood, or agricultural products, a situation that takes us back to the contexts in which people live without having access to basic sanitation, treated water supply, as well as the use of firewood as fuel for cooking food.

Another very relevant factor, which directly influences the change in the social context of the gypsies in this community, is the emotional and marital involvement between people of gypsy and non-gypsy origin. In the past, only men were allowed, though with many obstacles, to marry non-gypsy women; however, this permission was never given to women. Non-gypsy women who married gypsies still had to go through a long process in order to

adapt to the rules of gypsy society, and even then, there was a lot of prejudice against them, especially by gypsy women, due to the fact that they did not have gypsy blood. This signaled that, morally, they would not have the necessary elements to live with other gypsy women. Also, upon becoming a mother, they automatically would not have the necessary elements to raise a child in the native model, considered appropriate.

It is true that interethnic marriages still occur more frequently among gypsy men, and non-gypsy women are usually welcomed into the community. Although some calins (gypsy women) marry jurons (non-gypsy men), this number is lower. For gypsies, such changes are noticeable, but this does not mean that they are seen as indicators of a loss in the gypsy conditions, once traditions are being reworked in the context of modern life, when the processes of transmission of the dialect, for example, continue to have the main route of oral transmission, being taught by the elders to the new generations.

Finally, we can present changes in the field of internal hierarchy. In the past, the elders possessed more authority and a dominant voice in the group's functioning rules, which were carried in two pathways: a) through the composition of a council that oriented the group's direction, and b) through the prerogative of choosing the group's leader. Leaders represented wisdom and knowledge to deal with the community's internal problems and relationships with the external world. In this context, it is possible to describe the gypsy group as basically an extended family's constitution, where all members owed obedience to the elders and counted on them to resolve any problem. This system profoundly shaped the destinies of young gypsies, and it is in this dimension that we can indicate the occurrence of a significant change - considering that now the youngsters began to depend more on themselves to solve their lives and less on the actions of the community's representatives.

In the past, chiefs solved many of the community's issues, considering they were the highest authorities and represented the tradition's power. They were responsible for the necessary arrangements to achieve collective improvements. Today, there are still chiefs and leaders. However, the current difficulties are different from before, which has forced the gypsies to find other paths with more individualistic solutions to resolve family problems. With their settlement in the city, the resulting changes forced the gypsies to seek more independent solutions to their issues and to achieve their goals, regardless of a group-strengthening project (Siqueira, 2013). Hence, individualism gradually began to characterize the gypsy's behaviors within their groups, to the detriment of the solidarity that prevailed for centuries among the individual members of the community. As a result, they began to prioritize the interests of their nuclear families more and more, in contrast to what they had experienced as members of a collectivity that operated as a group unit. Nonetheless, traditional solidarity, although already significantly modified, still occurs among gypsies, but under a new guise.

4 School as a pathway to obtain necessary knowledge for the formation and the job market

Among the changes, we stress the fact that many young gypsies do attend schools in the city of Sousa, with some even completing higher education, something that could not be observed in the past. A large part of the new generations are fully literate, having completed at least elementary education. Many gypsy women, especially younger ones, are now able to attend schools and complete their studies, which was also not the case among older generations, as women dedicated themselves only to marriage and children.

There is a tendency among young gypsies to appreciate school and seek access to formal education, focusing primarily on personal projection with an emphasis on professional performance. We are not stating that the collective ceases to have significance among gypsies, something we still can see, as an example, in the importance that their family and relatives still represent. However, along with sedentarization came the search for a better quality of life, access to goods valued by society, and social acceptance. These ended up awakening more individualistic attitudes in the gypsies, when faced with the needs of social and symbolic competition in the city. As Elias (1994, p. 21) demonstrates: "The invisible order of this form of communal life, which cannot be directly perceived, offers the individual a more or less restricted range of functions and modes of possible behaviors".

Gypsies know that possessing an educational capital is extremely important and that without it, competition, already unequal, becomes impossible in the city of Sousa. As Bourdieu (1989) points out, educational capital, like other capitals, refers to a resource whose possession gives the subject advantages to the detriment of those who do not have it. In this case, for those lacking economic capital and other forms of distinction, the school presents itself to the gypsies as an institution propulsive of a certain social leveling. Even if, in practice, there are reproductions of ethnic and social prejudices within the school, the possession of this educational capital by the gypsies emerges, after sedentarization, as a path of no return in the search for the right to the city.

As nomads, gypsies mainly studied elementary school content, even though it was common for them to learn on ranches from their elders since they were constantly moving between cities and even states. Once they settled in the city, they began to fight for their right to attend school, which was not easy. It is important to underline that although the Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988 guarantees the right to education and access to school to all Brazilian gypsy children. Also, the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education (LDB), No. 9,394, of 1996, in its Article 3, provides education based on equal conditions of access and permanence in school, the enrollment of gypsy children in public schools is often a challenge, considering that they face several obstacles during their school path. We can

highlight that discrimination in schools and in society itself, as well as the financial difficulties suffered by gypsies, tend to function as factors that lead them to drop out of school. Therefore, we can affirm that, in Sousa, this social inclusion did not occur without struggles.

As Moonen (2011) points out, some leaders had to request assistance from the Public Prosecutor's Office and the State Government (of Paraíba) so that city schools would accept enrolling gypsy children and adolescents in the 1990s. It was only after these complaints that access to a public school in the city, located near the ranches, was granted. In 1994, anthropologist Frans Moonen, supported by the General Attorney of Paraíba, Luciano Mariz Maia, and gypsy leader Ronaldo Carlos – representing Gypsy Chief Vicente Vidal de Negreiros – informed the Paraíba's State Department of Education about the refusal and unwillingness of public schools' principals to allow the enrollment of gypsy students. From this meeting, they returned with an order from the Department to enroll all gypsies in the local schools. Thenceforth, until this day, gypsies have no longer been prevented from enrolling in state schools of Sousa (Moonen 2011, p. 30-32).

In fact, in 2023, the State Secretariat for Culture (Secult-PB)⁶ offered writing workshops aimed at preparing students for the National High School Exam (Enem), focusing on high school students from the gypsy community of Sousa, whose activities were scheduled to take place at the Celso Mariz School, that assists the gypsy communities in the city. The given explanation is that it is Secult's responsibility to reinforce the protagonism of traditional communities based in Paraíba.

Based on the conducted research, we can say that parents gradually began to understand that education would be the best path for their families' future and even for the future of the community, both to help break down prejudices and to ensure a better economic future for their children. If we compare those who choose not to study, looking instead for work in a city that is deeply prejudiced against the gypsy people – such as Sousa's society – with those who seek professional fulfillment through education, we can perceive that the latter form a new trend, which is becoming much more evident nowadays.

It is notorious that almost all gypsies enter primary school, and many manage to go to elementary school, although there is still a high rate of high school dropouts. Nevertheless, the number of gypsies who attend college has been increasing since they began to settle. It is important to stress that until this day, only one calin gypsy from Sousa's gypsy community has a master's degree. Another great achievement that formal education has provided (and continues to provide) to educated gypsies is the strengthening of their citizenship since, through their studies, they obtained various information, beginning to understand their rights

⁶ <https://paraiba.pb.gov.br/diretas/secretaria-da-cultura/noticias/comunidades-ciganas-terao-oficina-de-redacao-preparatoria-para-o-enem#:~:text=A%20a%C3%A7%C3%A3o%2C%20promovida%20pelo%20Governo,das%20maiores%20da%20Am%C3%A9rica%20Latina.>

more consciously - once their duties were always already remembered by the surrounding society. More than that, because, in the authorities' perceptions, they had to be impeccable in society - because the mistake of one gypsy could fall upon all, subjecting the entire community to severe punishments, whether by the public authorities or the police.

Figure 4 – Escola Estadual Celso Mariz (State School Celso Mariz) located in the community's surroundings.



Fonte: Goldfarb, 2023.

As mentioned before, in this research, we focused on young gypsy men because, through tradition, they are responsible for the provision of their families, while women are responsible for domestic organization. However, women also contribute significantly to the family's earnings through fortune-telling (palmistry) or manual work (such as the manufacture of clothes and jewelry), which are often the only source of income in times when men are unable to obtain satisfactory economic results, or, as many say, "do good business". As a society based on male authority, even to this day, despite all the cultural changes that have been taking place in the community, men are still expected to be the providers of the home.

Of those interviewed, two have completed high school, and two are currently studying. One dropped out of school in the eighth grade of elementary school and, during the interview, indicated personal plans to return to school. Another participant dropped out of high school because he had to choose between working or continuing to study. The others did not attend school but learned how to read and write through their gypsy group.

Regarding qualifications, four have not completed any capacitation courses. Three have finished an entire informatics course, while three have completed an introductory informatics course. The individual who stopped studying in the eighth grade of elementary school did so because he married at a young age and needed to take care of his young family. He is the only one who has taken more than one technical course. He has indicated a strong commitment to the school environment, as he completed three courses: one in recycling, another in shoemaking, and the last one in dressmaking and sewing. He managed to work for a month in the dressmaking field of work but was fired, according to him, when his employers discovered he was a gypsy.

In terms of work, the only one who has never looked for a job is the one who is finishing his first year of high school and is in the appropriate age/grade range. With the support of his parents, he seeks to focus on his studies and, therefore, does not divide his time with other activities - except those related to training and education. By prioritizing his studies instead of investing considerable time in learning the art of negotiation early on, he may be giving up on becoming an expert in a practice that, culturally, is one of the central pillars of culture when it comes to the role of men in gypsy society.

Among the others, all have already looked for work in the private sector and blame prejudice as the main reason for their inability to enter the world of employment. Except for one, all have worked in temporary services, popularly known as “bicos”, and only one has managed to secure a month-long position with a private company. Only one interviewee said he had never experienced prejudice when looking for work in the private sector. At the same time, another has not sought employment because he has focused on his studies and has not yet reached the age of majority. The others said they had already experienced prejudice against themselves or a friend in the community.

Apart from the individual solely studying, the rest of them have worked informal jobs, called “side jobs,” a common situation when finding employment is difficult. As we already know, only one worked for a month in the private sector, and two have worked in the public sector, both as security guards for the Sousa City Hall. Of these, only one managed to stay employed in this position for two years.

Regarding the prejudices felt when looking for a job, most people say they have heard the classic “maybe next time”. The use of discriminatory remarks in which people stated that they did not provide employment because “gypsies do not meet the job requirements” – and, in some cases, even implying that aesthetic standards were a factor - stood out. In other cases, individuals were told that the company was not absorbing new employees.

CRB reported an experience of discrimination at a company that manufactures stainless steel pieces. He left his resume, and the attendant told him that she could not accept it

because he was a gypsy. CRB allegedly asked, “Why? Are we different from you?”, to which she replied, “The owner does not accept it.” Then, CRB took the resume back and left.

JDVS, relating one of the moments he believes to have suffered prejudice, claims to have handed his resume to someone who refused to look him in the eye. Days later, he found out by phone that, because he was a gypsy, he could not apply for the job.

As an example of the many situations in which he claims to have suffered prejudice, MB claims to have introduced himself to two or three businesspeople in the city. Due to his political activity on behalf of the community, he asked them to help him by granting him a job. The request was immediately denied under the “polite” claim that if they hired a gypsy, other employees at the company would revolt since “no one would accept working with a gypsy”. In addition, CRB said: “I think the businessman did this because he did not want to open doors, considering that the businessman is in charge of his company and hires whoever he wants!”

PCB reported having worked for a month in a handbag factory but was allegedly fired when the businesswoman discovered he was a gypsy. An interesting factor is perceiving that, according to the youngsters interviewed, the most significant difficulties for gypsies in finding work were not limited to prejudice. Although they claim to have experienced rejections solely based on ethnicity, they also identified the lack of professional qualifications as another important barrier regarding the issue. This absence made it difficult to find jobs in the city’s private sector - since the issue was as much about skills and qualifications as it was about discrimination or ethnic prejudice in the city.

The scarcity of policies and actions taken by the federal, state, and municipal governments to promote income generation and job opportunities for gypsies has been emphasized. One interviewee pointed out a “lack of courage to insist” on these challenges. For the young Calons of Sousa, the necessity for school, universities, and qualification courses is fundamental for them to compete more competently in the job market, perhaps even because they understand that schooling is a way of minimizing old stigmas and a form of social inclusion that is still viable.

5 Final considerations

Throughout history, the gypsy people have experienced numerous forms of prejudice and, consequently, discriminatory practices that directly affected their daily lives, causing profound emotional and social problems. In the case of the gypsy community of Sousa-PB, both through the countless stories told by the elderly and through the daily experiences that - apart from infants carried in arms - all generations of gypsies perceive and feel as they undergo the acts of ethnic discrimination that have persisted in all situations of their

daily lives. Thus, along with the settlement of the gypsies in the city of Sousa-PB came an increase in sociability articulations with non- gypsies, which, on the one hand, changed the interactions between gypsies and non- gypsies, especially among younger generations, resulting in modifications concerning the connection paths between the oldest and youngest members of the community. In contrast, this interaction, above all through schools, has gradually allowed the reduction of prejudice on the part of non-gypsy society since closer coexistence and diversified forms of relationships have greatly served to reduce and, in some cases, even eliminate the mistaken ideas that were held by society regarding all gypsies. Those notions pictured them in the condition of thieves, deceivers, untrustworthy individuals, and so other negative portrayals, which the most ignorant and prejudiced minds have been nurturing over time.

Regarding the job market in the city of Sousa, we concluded that the gypsies interviewed, in an almost unanimous way, recognize that prejudice remains, which discourages them from seeking work in the city's private sector. This conclusion is due to the many cases of frustrating experiences when looking for a job in that area, in addition to the reports of prejudgements spread throughout all city's chit-chats, which builds the idea that there is no point in trying to work there, because, even if there is a job vacancy arises, as soon as it becomes clear that the candidate is gypsy, he or she will, in some way, be eliminated. Even so, there are many positive expectations surrounding school education, as studying is signaled as a path of approximation between educational and social capital needed for competitiveness within the job market. Formal education emerges for new generations as a way to overcome obstacles, as it is believed that a capable professional who meets a company's expectations for proper quality can be valued regardless of ethnicity.

Additionally, studying is also a way for gypsies to overcome these barriers on the grounds that education broadens their possibilities of working as professionals, whether in the private or public sector. Furthermore, we can also observe that, among young gypsies living in Sousa, studying represents a form of necessary preparation to defend their ethnic rights in a country that has historically undervalued its cultural diversity.

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Received in May 2024 | Approved in November 2024

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