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The 'Spirit' of Schooling: The relevance of the sense of a calling on the school experiences of secondary-school Roma/Ciganos students[1]

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Abstract

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (PE), Max Weber examines the ecological domination of instrumental rationality to the detriment of value-oriented action. The concept of the calling (*Beruf* in German) becomes a key one for interpreting the process of value rationalization. One can find Weberian value-rationality among the Portuguese Roma/Ciganos, who seek alternative livelihood strategies via schooling, although they are still characterized by a high rate of early school dropouts, with a very low number of students attending secondary education. The EDUCIG (School performance among Ciganos/Roma: action research and co-design) project was launched in 2019 to grasp the multiple factors involved in this social problem. The project interview-based analysis entailed the participation of 31 Roma/Ciganos students from the metropolitan areas of Lisbon and Porto. Results suggest that despite the social, cultural and economic constraints affecting their school pathways, the academic success of young Roma/Ciganos is facilitated by the influence of religion, specifically the Pentecostal Evangelical Church and its respective values. Moreover, we can recognize the emergence of a new 'spirit' in these young Roma/Ciganos, a 'spirit' that does not aim at instant gratification but represents an investment in the future and, simultaneously, a desire for integration.

Keywords: Roma/Ciganos; Max Weber; value-rationality; calling; spirit; schooling

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[1] In the text, the terms 'Ciganos', 'Gitano' and 'Roma' are used. The preferred term is 'Ciganos', as it conveys the respect with which members of this ethnic group recognize themselves and refer to each other in Portugal (emic sense). Similarly, the term 'Roma' is used when the reference to the ethnic group is contextualized within the European framework or in relation to Eastern Europe. For instance, the term 'Gitano' applies to ethnic members from Spain. The term 'Ciganos' is also used in the interviewees' quotes. Except for these cases, the term 'Roma/Ciganos' is used.

> A Dr. Chinnery, whom I met on one of my visits to America, told me of a gipsy horse-dealer for whose conversion he had been particularly anxious and with whom he had frequently talked. Said this gipsy, 'Can I be a Christian and sell horses?' Dr. Chinnery urged him to try and he did. The poor gipsy found the conjunction of callings very difficult, but he managed to make it work [...]. His Christianity did not in the least hinder, but rather helped his horse-dealing. (Gipsy Smith, 1903, pp. 23–24)

1 Introduction

The Roma are the largest ethnic minority in Europe, with a large majority living in conditions of widespread social exclusion. According to the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA, 2022, p. 25), Portugal has one of the highest rates of poverty and deprivation among ten countries in the European Union[2] that are home to more than 90 per cent of the Roma population in this geographical area (FRA, 2022, p. 6). It is not surprising, therefore, that Portugal from this group of countries has the smallest proportion (10 per cent) of Roma/Ciganos aged between 20 and 24 who have completed at least upper secondary education. Moreover, the European Union *Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020* (COM/2011/0173, 2011) recommended that all Member States should adopt active measures to engage young Roma in secondary education to guarantee their access to higher quality education, as well as to reduce school absenteeism at this level (COM/2011/0173, 2011). In addition, in the review process in 2018, the implementation of mechanisms to encourage the access and attendance of young Roma in secondary education was established as a measure to be adopted (RCM No. 154/2018). In fact, in 2016, the report of the European Commission on the implementation of National Roma Integration Strategies to the European Parliament and Council (COM/2019/406) stated that only 18 per cent of Roma students over the age of 16 had completed the upper secondary level, 38 per cent lower secondary, 29 per cent primary education, and 14 per cent had not completed primary education. According to this report, among the most common measures implemented by the states aimed at reducing the early school dropout rate among Roma students are support for and promotion of the completion of their studies at the secondary and higher education levels.

In the Portuguese case, and taking into account recent estimates that reveal that only about 3 per cent of Portuguese Ciganos complete levels of education equal to or higher than upper secondary, support for furthering their studies at higher levels of education is a particularly relevant goal. Within this scope, the EDUCIG action-research project 'School achievement among Roma/Ciganos: action-research and co-design project'[3] sought to identify the determining factors and understand the trajectories of Roma/Ciganos students attending secondary school in the metropolitan areas of Lisbon (LMA) and Porto (PMA), as well as their expectations regarding access to higher education. In this study, the heterogeneity associated with variation in the students' aspirations for upward mobility was clear, as were differentiations in the construction processes of in-between identities among the participants (Mendes, 2023). In fact, it is important to emphasise the nuances

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[2] Eight of these countries are members of the European Union (Croatia, Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Romania, and Spain), while two are accession countries (North Macedonia and Serbia).

[3] Developed within the framework of CIES-Iscte, reference: PTDC/CED-EDG/30175/2017.

and the cultural diversity and heterogeneity among the Roma/Ciganos, as well as the various forms of social and spatial incorporation that characterise their lives (Magano, 2010; Nicolau, 2010; Mendes, Magano & Candeias, 2014).

In the past two decades, Portugal has achieved a remarkable political triumph in its endeavour to significantly diminish the incidence of students who leave school early, particularly regarding the exceedingly high levels of failure in secondary education. As this rates continues to be consistently reduced, it has come to light that the Roma/Ciganos population stands out amongst all others due to their notable tendency to drop out of school and comparatively weaker educational attainment. In recent times, the Roma/Ciganos population has been awarded priority in Portuguese educational policies in a bid to curb early school dropout rates. Subsequently, a range of targeted educational actions have been implemented for this group; however, there is still no systematic and comprehensive approach towards these measures. Some examples of such measures include scholarship provisions for secondary education, the training of teachers and educators about Ciganos history and culture, and the promotion of intercultural teaching, among others. Additionally, the generalisation of inclusive educational practices and differentiated pedagogical approaches across all levels of the educational system are also being pursued as part of efforts to promote academic achievement among Roma/Ciganos people. The EDUCIG project represents one such initiative aimed at combating academic underachievement within this demographic group.

Nonetheless, the remarkable decline in the rate of school dropout across the nation is not paralleled by that of Roma/Ciganos individuals. Despite this group's unsuccessful attempts to complete education, the issue remains exceedingly urgent (Mendes, 2023). This predicament is not solely one of quantitative expansion; rather, it also pertains to qualitative aspects since a considerable portion of Roma/Ciganos' educational accomplishments are due to their being relegated to lower tiers of under-resourced and discredited education, with few students enrolled in regular schooling programs.

It is therefore important to broaden the scope of investigation into the educational failure of Roma/Ciganos. The extreme poverty of this group in Portugal is certainly one of the biggest obstacles, and it is in view of this economic factor that Weber's line of argument in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (PE) acquires relevance and is explored here. Consequently, it is imperative to expand the scope of inquiry into the academic underachievement of Roma/Ciganos individuals. Undeniably, one of the major hindrances for this group in Portugal is their dire poverty and that 'the effects of poverty are strongly conditioned by social attitudes' (UNESCO, 2009, p. 2). In light of this fact, Weber's thesis regarding the influence of cultural and religious factors on social and economic life in PE becomes pertinent and warrants further exploration.

In the initial pages of this oeuvre, Weber addresses the issue of the connection between work productivity and wage value. He asserts that an increase in efficiency is directly linked to the necessity of activity being 'performed as if it were an absolute end in itself, a calling. But such an attitude is by no means a product of nature. It cannot be evoked by low wages or high ones alone, but can only be the product of a long and arduous process of education' (Weber, 2005, p. 25). Weber endeavoured to illustrate that education, as a result of socialisation, was an outcome of the impact of religion on economic activity. We aim to delve into this argument with the intention of enhancing our understanding of the relationship between the Roma/Ciganos population and formal education.

This article highlights specific findings from our project, which is aimed at conducting an exploratory analysis of the hypothesis that there is a positive correlation between religion and the educational trajectory of Roma/Ciganos. Our primary objective is to investigate how a religious *ethos* can function as a motivating tool for rationalising the lives of young Ciganos by fostering a 'spirit of schooling'. Our attention here is not, therefore, devoted to the structural elements shaping the lives of these students, including the prevailing socio-political milieu or even the configuration and organisation of educational institutions that may facilitate or hinder Roma/Cigano education. Rather, we aim to address the 'upstream' of this issue by examining the attitudes and behaviour of younger Roma/Ciganos towards schooling, which are deeply ingrained in their beliefs and cultural practices.

In the still-incipient research undertaken in Portugal on the issue, the role of religion in promoting the education of Roma/Ciganos has not led to a consensus (Rodrigues, 2013; Mendes, Magano & Candeias, 2014). However, Gofka (2016), in a study of successful trajectories of Roma students in Greece, identifies religion, a community variable, as a factor promoting the continuity of school trajectories, either through the development of a sense of inner strength that helps students to overcome setbacks, along with ethical guidelines and principles, emotional support, and the increased literacy of the dominant culture, or through exposure to role models, mentoring, and the setting of high expectations regarding school.

Utilizing Weber's perspectives, our objective is not to ascertain a direct correlation between religion and education; instead, we strive to comprehend the role of religion (*ethos*) in rationalizing the lives of these young individuals while encouraging them to adopt more favourable attitudes towards learning and life. In PE, Weber makes two significant advancements in the field of social sciences that are relevant to our purpose. First, he portrays religion as a 'positive force' that motivates economic actors to adopt a distinct perspective on economic matters and labour (Agevall, 1999, p. 239) rather than an impediment in which religious sentiments and power are assumed to be essentially obstructive (Ola, 1999, p. 238). Second, he introduces the notion of vocation (*Beruf*) into sociological analysis. In parallel with Bourdieu's *habitus*, the concept of vocation enables us to examine the connection between action and structure by associating an internally ingrained ethical subjectivity (based on distinct values) with a directed approach towards economic activity and a specific relationship with the world (Kalberg, 2002, p. xvi). In PE, Weber evinces a profound interest in a particular form of behaviour (*Lebensführung*), which he believes to be suitable for modern capitalism. According to Weber (2002), this mode of conduct and perception concerning one's 'calling' may serve as a valuable heuristic instrument in comprehending the origins of modern Western capitalism from a historical perspective.

Drawing on Weber, who in PE states that 'we only wish to ascertain whether and to what extent religious forces have taken part in the qualitative formation and the quantitative expansion of that spirit over the world' (Weber, 2005, p. 49), we explore how religion qualitatively shapes the schooling trajectory of Roma/Ciganos. To sustain this hypothesis on the basis of a Weberian rationale, we develop our argument in three stages: in the first stage, we highlight a connection between the Roma/Ciganos and religion; in the second stage, we show the existence of a bond between religion and the schooling of Roma/Ciganos; and finally, in the third stage, we outline the 'spirit' of schooling of Portuguese Roma/Ciganos.

2 Ciganos and value-rationality

Throughout their history, the Roma early constituted themselves as pariahs in the Weberi-an sense of the expression. Indeed, as Weber (1978, p. 493) states in *The Sociology of Reli-gion*, albeit referring to Jews and Hindus: '"pariah people" denotes a distinctive hereditary social group lacking autonomous political organization and characterized by internal pro-hibitions against commensality and intermarriage originally founded upon magical, ta-booistic, and ritual injunctions'. In addition, the Roma maintain a relationship of 'political and social disprivilege' with regard to dominant groups, which Weber's definition also helps us to conceptualize: 'their pariah status also involves segregation from the outer world as a result of taboos, hereditary religious obligations in the conduct of life, and the association of salvation hopes with their pariah status' (Weber, 1978, p. 493). Weber's de-scription of the condition of a pariah group as a reflection of inter-group differentiation on the horizontal plane of coexistence, as far as Jews are concerned, can also extend to the Roma. According to Weber, the 'pariah' identity is nourished by the notion of 'chosen peo-ple' (Weber, 1978, p. 391) in the specific case of these rejected groups. This inspired idea contributes to reinforcing 'the belief of a common ethnicity' among its members so that 'ethnic repulsion may take hold of all conceivable differences among the notions of pro-priety and transform them into "ethnic conventions"' (Weber, 1978, p. 391). On an ethical level, 'as a pariah people, they retain [...] the double standard of morals which is charac-teristic of primordial economic practice in all communities: what is prohibited in relation to one's brothers is permitted in relation to strangers' (Weber, 1978, p. 614).

In Weber's terms (1978, p. 1200), we can say that among both Jews and Roma, intra-group solidarity results from direct obedience to the Law bound by blood ties and not from the internalization of civility-oriented rules. In fact, as Mendes (2005) states concern-ing the Ciganos, respect for '"Cigano law" overrides the respect for the national juridical order' to the extent that the *ethos* of the Ciganos is directed towards the 'defence of cultural values inherent to the ethnic group' (Mendes, 2005, p. 144), since their non-observance puts at stake the stability of the social structure of the group, as well as its cultural sur-vival. In this way, 'on the margin of the non-Ciganos legal system, an intra-group justice operates, which is established and (re)established by a kind of assembly familiar with the norms of the Cigano tradition' (Mendes, 2005, p. 149).

The parallel ethical and legal device represented by this kind of assembly is consti-tuted across the kinship system, another mainstay of group organization, the function of which is to avoid splits in the social body. It is in this context that the elders of the group play an important role as moral guardians of the conventions transmitted orally from gen-eration to generation. In particular, 'one values and respects the individual who has had a life characterized by honesty, seriousness, and understanding for the other' (Mendes, 2005, p. 147). With regard to intra-group relations, members tend to value substantive rationality 'as a manifestation of man's inherent capacity for value-rational action' (Kalberg, 1980, p. 1155).

In contrast, the relations between Ciganos and non-Ciganos rely on an attitude con-forming to practical rationality that 'indicates a diffuse tendency to calculate and to solve routine problems by means-end rational patterns of action in reference to pragmatic self-interests' (Kalberg, 1980, p. 1158); or, in Weber's terminology, with respect to the con-nection between Jews and non-Jews, there exists an 'ethical indifference' (Weber, 1978, p. 615).

A paradigmatic case of this ethical-moral framework is the duty of the Cigano woman obliged to assume her role 'as the "guardian" of traditions and guarantor of the cohesion of the group', playing a central part in 'inhibiting its disruption' (Mendes, 2005, p. 145). Thus, 'marriage to a non-Cigano is something that family groups try to avoid by all ways and means' (Mendes, 2005, p. 142), for 'having a son, but above all, a daughter married to a non-Cigano constitutes the "worst grief" that can befall a Cigano family: this situation immediately triggers processes of social downgrading and intra-group censure, leading to a loss of prestige and reputation' (Mendes, 2005, p. 143).

The concept of social honour, attached to the status of members of a lineage, sheds some light on this point of view. Resisting the inexorable acceleration of time (Rosa, 2013) and seeking to adapt to increasingly globalized processes and flows at this turn of the millennium, under the permanent threat of their dissolution and subsequent assimilation into the majority group, the substantive rationality (Weber, 1978, p. 87) of Ciganos enables them to continuously find the most convenient solutions to preserve the most determinant traits of their cultural uniqueness.

The relatively early marriage of Roma/Ciganos girls has been utilized as a mechanism for upholding the social status of the clan, traditions and social cohesion of the group, which, in conjunction with external pressures to initiate early familial unions and the corresponding urgency of generating income rapidly, fosters an environment conducive to the untimely withdrawal of Roma/Ciganos juveniles from educational institutions. The education of adolescents is therefore viewed as a trivial matter for numerous families belonging to this ethnic group. In this regard, the Roma/Cigano ethos can be deemed one of the most formidable impediments to young individuals' academic pursuits.

3 Methodology

The EDUCIG project aimed, amongst other objectives, to i) identify and describe the educational pathways of young Ciganos in secondary education; ii) uncover both inhibiting and enabling factors that affect the continuation of these educational pathways in secondary education; iii) comprehend the (in)congruity between valuing education and familial expectations, as well as those of young individuals and schools themselves; iv) gain insight into the lives of young Ciganos attending secondary school within their home environment and society at large; v) ascertain how parents and students perceive acculturation processes; and vi) evaluate limitations, potentialities, and impacts on social policies, measures, and projects concerning young Ciganos' academic trajectories.

This article is grounded in select findings from the project yet primarily serves as an exploratory analysis of the hypothesis of a favourable correlation between religion and the educational path of Roma/Ciganos.[4]

In the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA), a total of 16 young individuals were interviewed, consisting of 12 males and four females. The central topics that constituted the interview guide encompassed personal life chronicles (specifically, places of residence, relocation and establishment of one's own household and career); characterization and

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[4] Compulsory education in Portugal ends with upper secondary school (twelfth year)

lineage history (pertaining to education, professional vocations, and lifestyles); educational background (academic trajectory, encounters with prejudice), leisure time activities such as religious practices or participation in associations for sports, culture or recreation; and future prospects as well as perspectives on enhancing the circumstances of young Ciganos in academic settings. In the following analysis, we delve into the influence of religious customs on the academic trajectories of certain interviewees.

The majority of these interviewees reside in municipalities located on the outskirts of the city of Lisbon or along the southern bank of the river Tagus. Similarly, within the Porto Metropolitan Area (PMA), a group comprising 15 young people was also interviewed, including eight males and seven females. Of this cohort, eight individuals live within Porto's municipality, while the remainder are situated in neighbouring areas. It is noteworthy that these students have an average age of 18.2 years.

Seventeen youths were either enrolled in or had already completed their final year of secondary education. The majority of these individuals had academic achievements surpassing those of their parents. 22 of the individuals in question identified themselves as religious, with 17 specifying their affiliation with the Evangelical Church. Following this, exploratory interviews were conducted with three pastors from the same church located in LMA. The objective was to gain insight into how religion and participation in evangelical services/activities influence the educational journey of young Roma/Ciganos who attend secondary school. The present analysis focuses on the responses provided by a group of 17 students and three devout ministers.

Initially, the analysis of the collected data adhered to traditional content analysis (Bardin, 2011), focusing on the primary elements of the questionnaire. Additional categories and subcategories were defined through a process of code-mixing. Following this, the categories deemed most pertinent to the study's specific aim were carefully chosen and subjected to thorough thematic analysis (Clarke et al., 2019) in order to identify themes as well as sub-themes that best encapsulate the religious beliefs and practices of the interviewees. Data analysis was undertaken by two independent coders and subsequently discussed within the entire team. All data were analysed with the support of Maxqda software, which yielded crucial dimensions pertaining to the significance and influence of religion on the academic trajectories and network sociability of these young students.

4 Religion and Ciganos

According to Weber (1978, p. 325), 'from the sociological point of view [...] ethical validity is normally identical with validity "on religious grounds" or "by virtue of convention"' (Weber, 1978, p. 325). In this respect, the Pentecostal idea of predestination, whereby God has granted special grace to the Roma/Ciganos people and culture, has the effect of acting productively to consolidate their identity pride in contrast to the innumerable trials and concerns they have suffered over the centuries and in different national contexts. This idea operates in a quasi-religious manner through the belief in ethnic singularity, as the viewpoint of one of our respondents makes explicitly clear: 'because ethnicity itself is like a religion, [but] instead of having a God on top, it's the family and [Cigano] society' (Emília, 19 years old, LMA resident).

But this belief does not exclude the ways that, in the incessant search for forms of spirituality, 'both in the past and the present, the Roma community adopted the dominant religion of the host country' (Kozubik et al., 2022, p. 1), be this Catholicism, Protestantism or Islam. However, how they embraced the religiosity of the surrounding community should not be understood as passive adherence or unidirectional acculturation, as discourses of the Other about the Roma often assume. In the case of Ciganos, who have long self-identified with the religion established in Portugal, the Catholic evangelical movement was, from the point of view of the majority group, an essential instrument of assimilation of the Roma/Ciganos, often seen as barbarians, primitive, unable to be part of organized religion (Blanes, 2008, p. 75). Even though the Roma/Ciganos remained cautious in the face of all perceived threats of assimilation, despite their willingness to embrace the dominant religion, they have not refrained from conferring their own distinctive imprint on the predominant religious practices they adopt. For this very reason, for the Roma/Ciganos, 'integrating new elements to the existing religion is always welcomed and not seen as an innovation but as a "precautious mechanism" which enriches the religiosity of the Roma and reflects their openness when it comes to spirituality' (Marinov, 2019. p. 367).

4.1 The emergence and success of Pentecostalism in Portugal

This observation suggests that this phenomenon of evangelization must be seen as part of a relational process of intense cultural exchange in which the Roma/Ciganos take on the role of active contributors. It is not surprising, therefore, that mutual mistrust made it difficult for Ciganos to engage completely. Thus, from the mid-1970s on, the first conversions to Pentecostalism by Catholic Ciganos took place in Portugal, similar to in Spain and France. Adherence to the charismatic and Pentecostal movement of messianic theology as 'part of global Christianity' (Fosztó, 2019, p. 3) in a third wave of Protestant Reform movements did not weaken in Portugal either (Mendes, 2005; Blanes, 2008; Rodrigues, 2013), or in Spain (Cantón-Delgado, 2018), or, from the 1990s onwards, in several Eastern European countries that emerged from the collapse of the communist bloc (Voicu et al., 2009; Marinov, 2019; Gripenberg, 2022; Kozubik et al., 2022).

The emergence and success of Pentecostalism among the Roma, as Gripenberg (2022, p. 121) states referring to the Roma in Slovakia, are mainly due to the fact of the latter providing 'a set of religious and spiritual practices that feel familiar and therefore highly compatible with the traditional religious practices of Slovak Roma before conversion.' The same author, in her study on the 'interplay of Pentecostal spirituality and ethnic identity in the interactions between the Finnish and Estonian Roma during the process of missionising' (Gripenberg, 2022, p. 118), argues that 'the primary driving force to proselytise is found in Pentecostal spirituality, combined with teachings that urge parishioners to evangelise' (Gripenberg, 2022, p. 130). If the reasons for conversion may lie in the very characteristics of neo-Pentecostalism (conforming to a doctrine of salvation), ethnic identity constitutes a powerful vehicle for the propagation of conversions, as Cantón-Delgado (2018, p. 3) also observes in Spain: 'the "engagement" of the population is thus due to the intensity and extent of kinship ties, the main vehicle of transmission, as well as to the mediation of evangelical pastors in community conflicts'.

In Portugal, the Church of Philadelphia (CF) stands out among the branches of Neo-Pentecostalism, formerly called the Cigana Philadelphia Evangelical Church of Portugal, even though it is not an ethnic church (Blanes, 2008, p. 27). The rapid proliferation of its places of worship, especially from the 1990s onwards, in the suburban contexts of the social re-housing of Ciganos devastated by drug trafficking and addiction, allowed for the opening of 'new readings and possibilities of action to deal with this structural condition of marginality' (Blanes, 2008, p. 32). The growth and success of conversions resided in the actions of evangelical pastors, many of them Ciganos, but also in the fact that the 'CF incorporates in its structure a council of elders [...] who serve as spiritual leaders, with strategic advisory functions – in an explicit adaptation of the role traditionally assigned by Ciganos to seniors in their family and social relationships regarding the religious context' (Blanes, 2008, p. 33).

In a complex social context characterized by territories that have been torn apart and marginalized, the irruption of the CF, in the words of Cantón-Delgado (2018, p. 4), contributed both in Portugal and Spain to 'form[ing] a new pan-gitana moral community, with transnational networks and discrete millenarian and messianic elements, going beyond the ties of affiliation,' which 'gives priority to the spiritual experience, but also to the social role of conversions, more specifically to the negotiated processes of intra-community pacification.' To that extent, neo-Pentecostalism and other Protestant churches have proved decisive in how the Roma/Ciganos have been able to reinvent themselves through (re)imagining their identity associated with the values of Roma/Cigano tradition and religion. The shift in religious affiliation among Ciganos, who were largely Catholic, to Protestant evangelical Pentecostalism – specifically the Church of Philadelphia (CP) that originated in Brittany, France – has resulted in a decline of Catholicism. This trend is likely attributable to the fact that many evangelical pastors who conduct services within areas with high concentrations of Ciganos populations also share the Cigano heritage and have incorporated elements of their culture into Protestant rituals. The Church's success among Ciganos can be partly attributed to its less formal structure, simplified hierarchy, and more spontaneous worship practices. As a result, it has become an integral part of daily life for many Ciganos and fostered a sense of shared identity through participation in cults and the idea of being chosen as a people (Santos, 2001).

Thus, the identity processes underlying this social and moral (re)configuration of the group are close to the meaning of the Weberian concept of *Vergemeinschaftung* (Grossein, 2005, p. 687) or communalization.[5] This revival of the Roma/Cigano identity, which results from the cross-fertilization between tradition and religious motifs, between the social responsibility of the churches and the call to conversion arising from the former's belief in a cultural uniqueness, has significant effects on their socio-political organization. Thus,

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[5] According to Weber, there are two ideal types of social relations, depending on the orientation of social action: communal and associative relationships. 'A social relationship will be called "communal" (*Vergemeinschaftung*) if and so far as the orientation of social action-whether in the individual case, on the average, or in the pure type-is based on a subjective feeling of the parties, whether affectual or traditional, that they belong together.' 'A social relationship will be called "associative" (*Vergesellschaftung*) if and insofar as the orientation of social action within it rests on a rationally motivated adjustment of interests or a similarly motivated agreement, whether the basis of rational judgement be absolute values or reasons of expediency' (Weber, 1978, pp. 91–92).

'evangelical narratives reinforce what it is to be Roma and the value of kinship' (Cantón-Delgado, 2018, p. 9) while witnessing a decline in the power of tradition and the elders in favour of the emergence of the charismatic power of religious pastors. The Church influences the public consciousness of its members and extends into various spheres, from electoral activity to professional occupations, by forming a congregation of believers that overlaps with traditional family ties.

The same claim can be made concerning the transnationalization of the ethnic space of the congregation, now supported by a social network of churches which, as Fosztó (2019) points out in the case of Roma, but which also applies to Iberian Roma (Blanes, 2008; Rodrigues, 2013) in particular, 'serves as the incipient infrastructure for a religious public sphere where the circulation of information is not limited to religious topics' (Fosztó, 2019, p. 6).

Furthermore, Pentecostalism favours 'a universalist vision that, first and foremost, promotes a conservative behavioural ethic, in the sense that it invests rigorously in conduct committed to worship practice' (Blanes, 2008, p. 26). Within the frame of an ideology of salvation, a distinction is made between those converts who engage in these practices of individual responsibility – those who are 'saved' – and those who fail to renounce them – the 'lost' souls. For instance, one of the pastors who was interviewed believes the evangelical religion has completely transformed the way of life and the culture of Roma/Ciganos: 'Yes, it was the Word of God that had the greatest impact on the Cigano culture. What brought about the greatest change in mentality was having knowledge of the Word and wanting to be with Jesus Christ, their Lord and Savior. It completely changed the lifestyle of [every] person from the Cigano culture' (David, 43, LMA resident).

Similar to intra-group changes, religion also influences inter-group relations, positively favouring the social inclusion of Roma in the majority group (Kozubik et al., 2022, p. 1) by fostering 'the desire for integration' (Gripenberg, 2022, p. 127) and the building of various 'bridges' such as 'the possibility to enter professional and other networks within the dominant population' (Gripenberg, 2022, p. 127), or 'increas[ing] the potential of Roma to enter secondary and other kinds of networks within the mainstream society and allow[ing] them positive visibility at the mezzo-level of society' (Kozubik et al., 2022, p. 2). As Rodrigues (2013, p. 97) states about the role of the Church of Philadelphia in Portuguese society, 'in a way, being evangelical represents for them [Ciganos] a social promotion, that is, the official entry into the world of non-Roma institutions'.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that this desire for inclusion on the part of many Roma/Cigano believers is combined with a desire to preserve their ethnic identity. It is in this sense that Gripenberg (2022, p. 127) mentions that the evangelizing message prevalent in the 'Pentecostal Finnish Kale, within the framework of missionising amongst other Roma groups [...] stresses that, by converting, Roma do not stop being Roma, but become "better Roma"'.

5 The call to school: the relevance of school education

In the EDUCIG Project interview analysis, the influence of the religious context in the continuity of school pathways seems to take place either directly or indirectly – through the transmission of ethical principles, moral guidelines, and emotional support or exposure

to role models, whether they are other young people, other older attendees or even pastors. Another important factor seems to be the existence of youth groups within the church that, outside the context of church services, engage in various activities together, sometimes associated with school. The students are self-motivated and serve as role models for each other and the younger ones.

The three pastors who were interviewed regard education as a means of fostering integration and laying the foundation for a prosperous future, particularly in terms of professional development. In light of this perspective, the three pastors have made concerted efforts to promote academic pursuits among young Ciganos and their families. According to the respondents, these initiatives have been instrumental in bolstering enrolment rates among this demographic group.

One of the pastors is quite clear about the relationship he considers to exist between church and school, establishing a complementarity between the two: 'One of the things that we also encourage is Church work, for example, in the Church we need people who [...] have a good education so that also the Church, the body of Christ, can grow at the level of reaching other types of persons' (David, 43 years old, LMA resident). He adds that 'in another sense, it is also to make them see the reality of life – that if they don't have an education, if they don't go to school, then one day later [they] will regret it, because in life they will have greater difficulties in being accepted, in being able to have a job', and thus in living up to the promise that divine Grace is accessible to all humanity, without social or ethnic distinction. The pastor expounds on how the Church inspires and encourages young individuals to persevere in their academic pursuits: 'Religion counters this by emphasizing that attending school is not merely an obligation, but a necessity for securing a bright future. Education equips one with the necessary skills to become a knowledgeable individual who can provide for oneself and one's family' (David, 43 years old, LMA resident).

A student also illuminates the significance of religion in the educational development of Ciganos individuals: 'The church is one of the bases, for the little education that they have is based on the church. There are evangelical churches that forbid drinking, and the Ciganos, when they are drunk, do great damage. They forbid them to drink: you don't drink th[is] and that...' (Esmeralda, 19 years old, LMA resident). Through exposure to the teachings of the Church and guidance from pastors, young Ciganos are encouraged to pursue education as a means of securing their 'earthly salvation' and escaping reliance on traditional markets or salesmanship. This pursuit is grounded in a set of religious beliefs centred around ethical and moral principles. As the pastor interviewed above states, the best way to guarantee a better future is to invest in schooling.

The Weberian interpretation of the concept of calling (*Beruf*) is relevant in this context, wherein the '[...] conception of work as a calling and as the means best suited (and in the end often as the sole means) for the devout to become certain of their state of salvation' (Weber apud Kalberg, 2002, p. xxxvi). Similarly, a relative of the aforementioned pastor, a student, said: 'I don't think that just because I am of Cigano ethnicity [...] I have to stop studying because I can honour my tradition, honour my parents and continue to study. Everything comes from our education' (Ivone, 16 years old, LMA resident, Evangelical Church). She rejoices that, nowadays, 'there is already a different movement within the Cigano ethnic group... today we can already see its greater influence, there are more and more young people who don't want the fairs, but want to have a future, get a job.' Proudly,

she asserts: 'Today they see how young people want to have a future. Here, inside the church, we are recognized in that way, that we are the future'. In a similar vein, Ivone confesses: 'Since I was very young, I had this curiosity [about being] a psychologist. I wanted to understand people, to understand myself, and so, since I was a little girl, I wanted to follow… wanted this kind of education, I wanted to understand psychology.' She has been taking distance learning courses since she was 12 years old, just like her Ciganos female friends, although she says: 'My father would even let me, but he doesn't want our reputation as Ciganos to be bad, so to speak.' It was in this educational modality that she pursued her studies: 'I got my chance and… and I wanted to learn.' Ivone attributes this enchanted willingness to Christ: 'I think Christ is what makes me live; he is the reason why I wake up every morning because without him I wouldn't have anything that I have today. So, that's it, he is the one who makes me study, the one who makes me have hope and motivation, the one who gives me these hopes' (Ivone, 16 years old, LMA).

Ivone's testimony clearly belongs to an interpretative framework that highlights the importance of the concept of the 'religious calling', where it acquires a value that Blanes (2008, p. 69) defines as 'a determinism marked by predestination immanent to the idea of divine agency ("everything that happens is the work of God")'. This calling also entails a 'reconnection between discourses and visions' and an understanding of believers as endowed with reflexivity as members of a singular ethnic group who have submitted to a long process of schooling. Emília's case, quite different from Ivone's, shows the delicate compromise Cigano students have to make in reconciling the ethnic social expectations of them with their aspirations to experience a personal vocation. Emília, who left the Church and for whom ethnicity is like a religion, confided that 'my father always had the idea, "Ah, she did four years of schooling, she should leave school otherwise, she'll find someone who is not a Cigano, and she'll be lost to tradition"' (Emília, 19 years old, LMA, no longer attends worship). Nevertheless, as Emília told us: 'I have always had a liking for learning. That is, the more I learn, the more I want'. She also adds that '… in my class, there were always Ciganos, since the first year, but by the sixth year, they all started to stay behind. I always wanted to go into the area of accounting and… and, in this case, the course that most caught my attention was an accounting technician course. Considering that the possibility of studies, for me, was almost [zero], to have something that, in the future, would get me into the job market… I never thought I could reach university. So much so that it was the battle it was, so I clung to what I had. [My goal] was to succeed in going to secondary school [and] with great effort then I went to a vocational course to have [some] employment prospect[s] after the twelfth year, without having to go directly to university' (Emília, 19 years old, LMA). The school was not a priority for her parents – in her words, 'it was my priority', and because of that, 'I had to make sacrifices.' In this sense: 'I couldn't miss [part of the course] because the course is… there are time schedules, and it became a bit more complicated considering that I had to reconcile student life with ethnicity. That is, I had to attend social events…' Besides her duties as a student, she also had to fulfil her duties as a daughter: 'That is, I represent my family, and if I go to a party, to an event, I have to be there representing my family. So, if I want to study, it is my choice; I pull an all-nighter. That duty I have to fulfil. In other words… [for my parents] it was like a scales; it was the pride of seeing me getting good grades and also seeing me losing a little bit of tradition. Since the… It was… yes, my mother would take care of everything because of school, but there was always that reminder: "Oh, you have to get married!" And… and it

ended up with the scales getting a little off balance' (Emília, 19 years old, LMA). At a certain point, not being able to readjust the unbalanced scales, Emília had to leave home and 'run away' at the age of 18, taking refuge in a friend's house: 'Yes, I always had a friend – it was the friend that helped me to leave home – who always encouraged me to study. That is, I ended up thinking of giving up, too, because of the pressure from my parents, but she [my friend] always said: "You can do it; you'll make it very far." I was like: "Oh, I'm going to make it"' (Emília, 19 years old, LMA).

Ivone and Emília demonstrated a profound commitment to their calling in striving to harmonize the demands of tradition with those of school. Nevertheless, while Ivone's pursuit appears relatively straightforward, Emília had to contend with a host of challenges in her academic pursuits. Ivone enjoyed a positive religious milieu facilitated by a cohort of over twenty young congregants who convened at her premises every week. This youthful cohort, endorsed by the pastor and united by shared goals, was instrumental in Ivone's mission, and she attested to its significance unequivocally: 'It was something that really motivated me, it was having this group of young people, because we [could], in other words, cover things more. For example, going to the streets, we have… I have my cousins to interact with; it's different. Like, it gave us more opportunities.' Ivone had no doubts: 'Yes, within the church, we value this [community] a lot, and we fight for it.'

Beyond the importance of ethical principles, exposure to role models, and the activities of youth groups, the great strength of evangelical spirituality seems to be rooted in its transformative power to generate identity synergies and, at the same time, to be able to transpose the embrace of the calling into the work of self-awareness and reliance on the certainty of having a focus and even a sense of vocation. Danilo's words are illustrative in this regard: 'I think that… I think that… I think that my religion comes before the… – it even seems to be bad to say this, but it is a reality that may hurt many, but no matter whom it hurts, it doesn't hurt me – that my religion influences my life more than my… my ethnicity, because religion, [while] it helps me to accept differences better and… and all that, it also teaches me to… to change' (Danilo, 16 years old, LMA, Evangelical Church). Openness to change and the ability to listen to oneself and the Other are also highlighted by one of Danilo's friends, who is also a Roma/Cigano student: 'Complementing what he said, religion has taught the Ciganos a lot. It came to teach [us] how to live with people, to be more accepting of certain things, and maybe not to listen so much to racism because we should love our neighbour as we love ourselves. I think it came to improve the Ciganos, our religion' (Leoni, 17 years old, LMA resident, Evangelical Church).

6 Roma/Ciganos and the 'spirit' of schooling

Drawing on the narratives put forward by Roma/Ciganos students, which unveil their apprehensions and ambitions in pursuit of a bright future, we can discern the significance of the religious impact on these pupils, which involves not only adopting a broad worldview but also discipline and the rationalization of conduct based on ethical values. This ethical and religious spirit is indispensable for a successful academic education and is visible in Ivone's 'readiness to fight', Emília's 'sacrifices', and Danilo's and Leoni's 'ability to change'. Religion thus contributes to the opening up of the Roma/Ciganos to majority society and

the consequent unravelling of their lives in pragmatic terms. In sum, according to Pascal Gruson (2005, p. 735), religion seems to function, in his interpretation of PE, as 'the theological operator, between mindset and action.'

Adopting a Weberian approach, our inquiry into the motives revealed in these narratives seemed to confirm that the evangelical religion, owing to its affinity with the beliefs and practices of Roma/Ciganos heritage, constitutes a potent impetus for advancing the educational pursuits of these youths. This motivating force helps to foster the development of a rational attitude towards life among young Cigano individuals centred around the notion of 'calling'. The resulting pragmatic outlook shapes the 'spirit of schooling', embodying an 'ethical way of life' conducive to academic success. The rational approach entails adopting a mode of conduct that embodies a subtle balance between the customs and beliefs of the Roma/Ciganos and meeting academic/ethical standards, with the aim of upholding tradition while creating financial security and a better future. Faced with the seemingly practical conflict between the ethics of tradition and education, almost all of the respondents highlight, drawing on their experience, the 'elective affinity' between education and the values promoted in the religious context in which they are embedded. Among the latter, one can highlight the sense of responsibility, humanization, and the rationalization of conduct.

Regarding the first, as Merton (1968, p. 632) rightly observed about the relationship between science and Puritanism, responsibility cannot be understood as casuistic but framed in a social context that promotes individual responsibility and the autonomy of convictions. The practice of worship appears to create this context. Concerning humanization, it is worth remembering, as Partyga (2016, p. 421) rightly emphasized when commenting on Simmel's critique of Nietzsche, that 'the Christian concept of an after-life involves religious differentiation, rather than conformity.' Partyga goes even further, stating that 'what is at stake in Simmel's reworking of the Nietzschean and Christian doctrines [is] a new theory of value [that] envisage[s] a sovereign mode of individuality' (Partyga, 2016, p. 422). Similarly, as young Roma/Ciganos become humanized by religion (more tolerant) but also individualized (playing across the entire spectrum, maintaining a balance between Roma/Ciganos and non-Roma/Ciganos), they also become better prepared for the ascetic ethic demanded by religion (acquisition of a method and a sense of vocation). In parallel, the rationalization of conduct according to the ultimate goal of academic success at school, 'associated with proper assessment of the social conditions under which one would have to operate' (Mommsen, 1980, p. 161), is facilitated by adherence to abstract, rational norms and principles, as Weber (1978, p. 1209) emphasized. Religious asceticism contributes to this rationalization, even though the effects of spiritual discipline vary in intensity and direction according to the individual logic of each believer (Kalberg, 2001, p. 52). This also enables Roma/Cigano students to combine different callings, that of tradition and that of schooling, as these words of Ivone suggest: 'To keep on studying… I don't think that just because I am of Cigano ethnicity [that] I have to stop studying because I can honour my tradition, honour my parents and continue to study. Everything comes from our education' (Ivone, 16 years old, LMA resident).

Adhering to tradition and identifying as a member of the Roma/Ciganos community, and practicing a religion while maintaining a successful academic record are not mutually exclusive endeavours. Indeed, the trajectories of these young students often exhibit conti-

nuity and success while simultaneously fostering strong connections with their kinfolk, peers, and broader society. These individuals reject any notion of opposition between Roma/Cigano culture and formal education; they embrace evangelical faith while engaging in an active renegotiation of the relationship between schooling, ethnicity, tradition, and religion.

However, while these dimensions are not inherently incompatible, there is evidence of a persistent tension between ethnicity and dedication to education. This becomes particularly challenging when social control is heightened, as both ethical and educational obligations can become overwhelming to manage, as was the case with Emília. In this regard, Thomas Kemple's notion of the 'bifocal' character of vocation may be applicable here; that is, the cultural callings of modernity are organized in such a way that they embody an institutionalized tension between demands for conformity and the yearning for autonomy (Kemple, 2014, p. 101). For our interviewees, their calling is centred on satisfying their familial and cultural responsibilities and obligations in keeping with their societal standing within the community, as well as their academic commitments.

Underlying the accounts of the Roma/Cigano students is an emerging 'spirit of schooling' that reinforces the belief in the importance and obligation of studying despite all the constraints they face. Given that the methodical conduct of their studies (at home and school) is based on a motivation that is centred on a set of specific ethical values and the Roma/Cigano students' progressing to higher levels of education, the students feel like chosen ones, pioneers, increasingly assured of 'witnessing in action' while observing the fruits of their labour and believing in their vocation. These are the ones who are 'saved' compared to the others who are 'condemned' (those who leave their studies). In this sense, our interviewees revealed what working with a calling means and how the religious following can be the herald of a new spirit that leads to abolishing the barriers to the schooling of the Roma/Ciganos, a desire for integration into the majority society, freedom understood as stability and not as mobility, and the idea of vocation as self-transformation and self-improvement.

7 Conclusions

From the identity narratives of the Roma/Cigano students, resulting from discursive identity negotiation, we were able to reconstruct the different elements that contribute to shaping the life courses of individual Roma/Ciganos through the main aspects of socialization, namely, tradition, religion, and school. In this sense, we sought to explore the intertwined dynamics of their experience of tradition, religious conversion, and school experience. Therefore, based on their testimonies and in accessing their reflexivity, we observed that Roma/Cigano students seek to reconcile several callings – namely, the calling to schooling, the calling of tradition, and the calling of religion. Underlying the balance between the wish to preserve some of the elements of tradition and simultaneously to be included in the majority society in search of a less uncertain and more stable way of life, we can recognize the emergence of a new 'spirit' among these young Roma/Ciganos. This 'spirit' does not aim at instant gratification but represents an investment in the future and, simultaneously, a desire for integration.

According to the young people we interviewed, the usual constraints responsible for the segregation of Roma/Ciganos from the majority group are largely relativized and conceptually solved in favour of a new practical rationality, which recognizes the need for the schooling of young people and their effective integration into the global labour market. Thus, the sensitive issues of honour and endogamy, which justified the segregation of Roma/Ciganos, are now reinterpreted as a matter of mutual trust, whereas the incompatibility between school and the Roma/Cigano way of life is unravelled as an aporia, manifesting itself as a question of education. Young Roma/Ciganos seek a life different from that of their parents, striving for more stability in life, which they ascribe to school and the world of work. Their concerns are driven toward equal opportunities and removing barriers to entering these structures. Instead of leaving school in search of resources through street trading, family recognition, and intragroup marriage, a characteristic phenomenon among males in the transition from adolescence to youth is that they are currently more predisposed to make the necessary investment to 'earn' a future, as well as the consequent rationalization of their conduct. Similarly, Roma/Cigano girls living in an environment of constant pressure to marry early tend to invest more and more in their education. However, neither the boys nor girls intend to renounce their Roma/Cigano identity. On the contrary, they seek to reconfigure it.

The legitimacy of their position stems from the strength of their conviction in wanting to improve their condition and that of other Roma/Ciganos, which in turn stimulates the reconciliation of the various callings. The students' identity narratives about their schooling process are a strong indicator of the emergence of a new practical rationality, which includes the subjective feeling of common ethnic belonging, renewed and transfigured by adherence to a religious belief and the desire for inclusion in the majority society. Just as Weber observed at the end of PE when referring to the Puritans that they 'wanted to work in a calling; we are forced to do so' (Weber, 2005, p. 123), so do these enchanted Roma/Cigano students yearn to study in a calling, while those belonging to the majority group frequently have to study at school in a disheartened way.

In the foreseeable future, as the number of Roma/Ciganos students in secondary education continues to rise, it is plausible that evangelical religion will no longer play such a dominant role in their education. To be sure, one of the constraints of this study pertains to the limited quantity of cases we scrutinize. However, it is important to persist in examining and delving into the interplay between religion, pastors, and family, as these relationships may prove pivotal in instigating behaviours most conducive to academic success.

Acknowledgements

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