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"If it's already tough, imagine for me…"

A Qualitative Perspective on Youth Out of School and Out of Work in Brazil

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Abstract

Drawing on in-depth interviews with young women and men in rural and urban Brazil, this qualitative research explores gender dimensions in the causes and consequences of being "out of work and out of school." A key conclusion from this research is that this term (or the Portuguese: "nem-nem") does not translate well the complex realities of this highly heterogeneous group. The paper develops inductively from the data a typology of these youth, who face different barriers along their trajectories: a) barriers to building aspirations and internal motivation to return to school or work, b) barriers to action, and c) external barriers. Participants' position along this spectrum is shaped by social context and gender norms that frame youth's trajectories and envisioned futures. These observed patterns are particularly strong in rural areas, where youth perceive fewer quality economic opportunities and stronger division of gender roles within the household and in farming activities, which keeps young women in lower paid or unpaid roles. Participants who have successful trajectories to technical schools, universities, or formal work demonstrate strong resilience, which seems to be built on their relationships with their families, peers, partners, and role models.

"If it's already tough, imagine for me…"

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Acronyms

CLT   Consolidation of the Labor Laws (*Consolidacao das Leis Trabalhistas*)

EJA   Education for Youth and Adults (*Educação de Jovens e Adultos*)

ENEM   National High School Exam *(Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio)*

FIC   Initial and Continuing Training Programs (*Formação Inicial e Continuada*)

FIES   Financing of Higher Education Students *(Fundo de Financiamento ao Estudante do Ensino Superior)*

MTE   Ministry of Labor and Employment (*Ministério do Trabalho e Emprego*)

NGO   Non-Governmental Organizations

PD   Positive Deviance

PNAD   National Sample Survey of Households (*Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicílios*)

PRONAF   National Program for the Strengthening of Family Farming (*Programa Nacional de Fortalecimento da Agricultura Familiar*)

PRONATEC   National Program for Access to Technical Education and Employment (*Programa Nacional de Acesso ao Ensino Técnico e Emprego*)

PROUNI   University for All Program *(Programa Universidade para Todos)*

TEC   Long-Duration Technical Education

TVET   Technical Vocational Education and Training

Contents

1 Introduction and Motivation

"*Se já é difícil, imagina para mim...*" ("If it is already tough, imagine for me"). The title of this paper is based on a quotation from a young woman who does not study or work and lives in a poor urban community in Pernambuco, northeastern Brazil.

In Brazil, 23.5 percent of the cohort of young people (15-29 years) is neither in school nor at work (PNAD 2015). In the Latin America region, the "*nem nem*" [2] phenomenon has proven to be very persistent.[3] There is increasing awareness among policy makers of the need to tackle the issue and a body of literature around the topic has been forming in recent years. Existing debates can be organized along three major themes: the individual and systemic factors associated to the individuals' "*nem-nem*" status; the direct and indirect consequences for individuals and society; and propositions of policy options to tackle the issue.

The literature points to three major categories of factors that increase the likelihood of becoming a "*nem-nem*" for youth: socioeconomic; educational system-related; and labor market-related. Women are the majority of "*nem-nems*" in Brazil – both in relative and absolute terms[4] (Costa and Ulyssea 2014; Camarano et al 2006, Simões et al 2013, Tilmann and Comim 2014). At the same time, the overall number of males increased from 1.5 million in 1992 to 2.4 million in 2013 (PNAD 2013). Young Brazilian women who have a baby and are poor are more likely to not be working or studying compared to those who have a baby but are not poor (Monteiro 2013; Simões et al 2013). At the same time, young men who are married or have children are more likely to be working (Camarano et al 2006). Teenage marriage is also closely linked to the abandonment of studies and non-participation in the labor market (for Latin America: De Hoyos et al, 2016; for Brazil: Camarano et al 2006; Tillmann and Comim 2014). Other factors that seem to increase the likelihood of an individual becoming a "*nem-nem*" are: being afro-descendant[5] (Simões et al, 2013); having some form of physical disability (for Brazil: Camarano et Al, 2006; and for LAC: ECLAC, 2014; Trucco

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[2] The term refers to the expression "*nem estudam, nem trabalham*" and is analogous to "nini" and "NEET" used in Latin America and English-speaking countries, respectively. Upon revising the literature about "*ninis*" in Brazil and Latin America, the lack of a consensus regarding the definition of the terms is clear. Among the studies analyzed, that there is no standard in the definition of nem-nem, with significant differences between them. The main differences are related to the consideration of the unemployed (i.e., job seekers) or PEA - Economically Active Population, versus only the inactive unemployed (who do not look for work), as well as the adoption of different age groups, ranging from 15-29 years. In addition, some studies incorporate unpaid household occupations such as childcare, family and housework, and others do not.

[3] Despite economic growth and reductions in poverty and inequality in the region during the 2000s, the proportion of "*nem-nems*" fell only marginally (De Hoyos et al 2016).

[4] Neither studying nor looking for work, nor doing household chores, nor having physical disabilities or special needs. However, only 10 percent of the women in the region are completely inactive, while among men this share is 30 percent (ECLAC 2014).

[5] According to Simões et al (2013), controlling for household income, Brazilian young female afro-descendants are more likely to be out of work and out of school in comparison to other ethnic groups and in comparison to afro-descendant men.

and Ulmann, 2015); living in a rural area (for Brazil: Costa and Ulyssea, 2014; Camarano et al, 2006; Tillman and Comim, 2014; for LAC: Hoyos et al, 2016); living in the north or northeast of Brazil (Costa and Ulyssea, 2014); residing in a household whose head has low income and schooling (Camarano et al, 2006); having incomplete secondary school (Hoyos et al, 2016; Costa and Ulyssea, 2014); and not receiving benefits or social assistance transfers (Simões et al, 2013).

Factors related to the educational system and labor market pointed out in the literature include: the high cost of studying (monetary and non-monetary) such as transportation, time, school material, clothing, etc.; the disconnection between the topics addressed in school and youth's lives (for LAC: Hoyos et al, 2016); uncertainty and lack of information about the future returns of education (for LAC: Hoyos et al, 2016; Trucco and Ullmann, 2015); scarcity of educational and work opportunities in rural Brazil (Costa and Ulyssea, 2014); difficulties in accessing higher education, especially among the poorest[6] (Monteiro, 2013); confinement to temporary, unstable, high-informality and low-paid jobs (for Brazil: Monteiro, 2013; for LAC: Hoyos et Al, 2016); an increase in the transition time between school and work (Menezes et al, 2013); discrimination against women (particularly young and afro-descendant women) in the labor market (Simões et al, 2013), among others.

Studies from other LAC countries suggest that youth who drop out of school may have access to poorer job prospects, lower wages and fewer opportunities for their entire working lives (De Hoyos, Gutiérrez, and Vargas 2016). In addition, Székely and Karver (2015) show that there are long-term societal labor market effects: generations with higher incidence of "*nem-nems*" experience long-lasting negative productivity effects, hampering overall economic growth. The phenomenon may also contribute to crime, addiction, disruptive behavior and social disintegration (Chioda 2015; Bussolo et al 2014; Hoyos et al 2016). A high share of *"nem-nems"* among the poor and vulnerable may also intensify existing inequalities and constrain social mobility and poverty reduction in the long term (Ferreira et al. 2013; Vakis, Rigolini, and Lucchetti 2016). Finally, as 66 percent of *"nem-nems"* in the region are women, the issue also contributes to an intergenerational transmission of gender inequality (De Hoyos et al 2016). Three types of interventions are proposed to tackle the issue: education-based, labor market-based and strategies dealing with teenage pregnancy and unions (Hoyos et al, 2016; Simões et al, 2013; Monteiro, 2013; Tillman and Comim, 2014).

Although literature specific to Latin America and Brazil is expanding, it still has limitations. Lack of consensus on what should be characterized as *"nem-nem"* leads most studies to not problematize the distinction between inactivity, unemployment and informality. Most existing studies are quantitative in nature and focus on characterizing the profile of the "*nem-nem*" population, with very few references to qualitative information based on direct interviews with young people. For example, it is not clear in most studies whether young people are in the condition of not studying or working

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[6] Nevertheless, many studies have highlighted the growth in the proportion of young people who finish high school in Brazil, which increased 48% in 10 years, jumping from 5.16 million in 2001 to 7.63 million in 2011 (Monteiro, 2013).

by choice or lack of options. There is also a lack of specific data for rural populations and very few studies offer a dedicated gender analysis. Research that delves deeper into these issues can help deepen the understanding of the problem, the different groups affected and individuals' own attitudes and behaviors.

What are young individuals' motivations for not participating in work or school? The young woman quoted above refers to the general difficulty of searching for a job; and reflects throughout her interview how her (socio-economic) background and lack of qualifications make her an undesirable candidate for a good job opportunity. At the same time, the resignation she shares is built on her reiterated experiences of failure in finding a job or finishing school within a context of limited opportunities, leading to her perceived inability to affect change in her own life. She lacks the support systems to facilitate access to these opportunities and – as a woman – feels she faces an additional set of disadvantages to do so.

Drawing on qualitative data from Pernambuco, northeastern Brazil, this research explores gender dimensions in causes and consequences of being out of work and out of school for poor youth. The paper is based on 108 in-depth interviews with key informants and young males and females (18-25 years)[7] in rural and urban Pernambuco, Brazil. Interviews explored a range of themes including: family and community contexts; experiences and perceptions about work and education; aspirations, plans for the future and perceived barriers to implement them; and knowledge about public policies.

This research adds value to the existing literature in two main ways. First, the use of qualitative methods provides additional insights on the topic since most of the available literature relies on quantitative methodologies. Open-ended questions enable participants to express their views in their own words and to invoke themes that are most relevant to them. This allows researchers to explore new perspectives on the issue; and helps unpack subjective and intangible factors such as meanings, attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of youth and how their family and community contexts may have shaped their behaviors and choices.

Second, the specific focus on gender-related issues enables an understanding of the different underlying causes and consequences faced by young women and men. Girls and boys may have different experiences and perceptions about their roles in society. Gendered social norms can shape girls' and boys' aspirations. Motivators to drop out of school and labor markets are likely to differ across genders. Understanding gender dimensions of the "*nem nem*" phenomenon helps identify strategies that may break the intergenerational persistence of gender inequalities – particularly among the vulnerable populations.

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[7] Adolescent males and females were not recruited because of ethical concerns and respective research procedures. For example, Brazilian regulations require that informed consent is obtained both from the minor and their guardian, which would make recruitment substantially harder.

A key conclusion from this research is that the terms "*nem-nem*" or "disengaged youth" - commonly used in the literature - do not translate well the complex reality of the youth to which the terms refer. First, the term obscures the fact that this group is highly heterogeneous. It is composed of young men and women of different backgrounds, family structure and age groups, with varying levels of participation in income generation activities. Their situation is spurred by a variety of reasons related to their social context; capacity to form aspirations related to work and school; access to opportunities; availability of financial resources and support systems, among others. Assuming homogeneity may lead to the design of policy measures that fail to address the different obstacles faced by these subgroups. Furthermore, by defining their situations negatively, the term embeds a normative notion that stigmatizes them as individuals who are to blame for not choosing the "regular track", while ignoring constraints that limit their access to opportunities throughout their individual journeys.

In addition, we derive four major findings from the data. First, the path towards participation in the labor market or the educational system seems to be divided in three dimensions: having aspirations related to work and school and the internal predisposition to act on them; taking sustained action to achieve these goals; and having the ability to surpass external barriers encountered (e.g., lack of local training centers). Participants' position along this path is strongly organized by gender. Second, we demonstrate how exposure to a context of deprivation and poverty, restrictive gender norms, and the lack of support systems diminish youth's agency (capacity to aspire and take sustained action) and access to economic and educational opportunities – particularly for young women. Third, these observed patterns are stronger in rural areas, where participants perceive fewer quality economic opportunities, especially for young women. Finally, urban youth from the same communities who were successful in entering the labor market or continuing formal education beyond secondary school (despite similar negative educational opportunities) demonstrate significantly different attitudes towards work and education. Their resilience seemed to be largely built upon their support systems: their relationships with families, peers and partners.

The structure of the paper is as follows. Section 2 outlines the objective, main questions and methodology of the paper. Section 3 presents the typology of youth out of work and out of school. Section 4 discusses the role of gender norms, the social context, the lack of support systems in shaping labor and educational outcomes and the risk of resignation among youth. Section 5 describes the patterns observed specifically in the rural sample. Section 6 outlines factors that contribute to resilience based on the "positive deviant" cases. Section 7 discusses the findings and presents the conclusions.

2 Methodology

This research explores the trajectories, attitudes and perceptions of youth out of school and out of work in Pernambuco, Brazil, focusing on the gendered dimensions of the causes and consequences of their situation. The following questions guided the research: i) What are the trajectories of youth out of work and out of school and which barriers did they experience to remaining active in work and/or the educational system? ii) What are their aspirations related to work and education, plans for the future and perceived barriers to implement them? iii) How may their different family, community, school and work experiences have shaped their mindsets and choices? iv) Do the answers to the above questions differ between male and females? If so, why?

The paper is based on 77 in-depth interviews with young men and women (18-25 years) out of work and out of school[8] in rural and urban Pernambuco. The interviews explored a range of themes, including family and community contexts; experiences and perceptions about work and education; aspirations, plans for the future and perceived barriers to implement them; and knowledge about public policies. In addition, a set of nine "positive deviance cases" (PD)[9] was collected from the same urban sites to serve as a benchmark, helping to investigate the factors and strategies that enabled some individuals to continue their education beyond high school and to successfully enter the job market, despite sharing the same community background. Finally, 18 key informant interviews were conducted with local community leaders, policy practitioners and academics in the areas of education and labor to inform the research design as well as to capture their perspectives on the issue (see annex 2 for extended methodology).

Certain themes and realities were not explored in-depth in this research, such as: participation in crime and violence; the situation of underage youth; and how sexuality, race and ethnicity might impact the situation of youth.[10] In addition, the sample is limited to low-income populations in certain locations of rural and urban Pernambuco who may face a reality different from that of youth in families with higher incomes or in other geographic locations.

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[8] Two different groups of youth out of work and out of school were recruited: 1) youth who self-reported as "not having studied or worked in the last year"; and 2) youth who "did not study but had informal temporary work (less than 20 hours) in the month prior to the interview".

[9] The PD cases were divided into two groups: 1) youth who were currently attending or had concluded a technical course or a university degree; and 2) youth who had concluded a technical course or a university degree and managed to secure a "trabalho fixo com carteira assinada" (formal fixed job) upon completion.

[10] The importance of analyzing overlapping constraints has been highlighted through the concept of intersectionality (see for instance: Tas, Reimao, and Orlando (2013)). The intersection of identities (gender, sexual identity and orientation, ethnicity, etc.) produces different experiences and relations when comparing different groups, which can significantly affect outcomes and lead to "cumulative disadvantages". Data already show that overlapping constraints also matter in this context: Black women in Brazil (when controlling for household wealth) have a higher probability to become a *nem-nem* compared to white women (Simoes et al 2013).

3 Towards a Typology[11] of Youth Out of School and Out of Work

In this section, we present a typology of youth out of work and out of school derived inductively from the data. The typology certainly does not - and is not intended to - paint an accurate picture of the multiple realities faced by youth, since individuals will not fit entirely into one of the types. Nevertheless, the typology simplifies the understanding of the range of issues interviewees face in sustaining their participation in the educational system and in the labor market.

We find that youth's path towards participation in the labor market or the educational system can be divided into three dimensions. First, an individual must have aspirations related to work or school and the internal predisposition to act on them. Second, consistent action must be taken with the objective of achieving these desired outcomes. These two dimensions we refer to as agency.[12] Finally, the individual's external structure must provide him or her with the minimal conditions to access these opportunities (e.g., the supply of local quality schools or the availability of economic opportunities).

We identify three types of individuals in the data - each type facing a different set of barriers to advancing along their path towards participation in school or work. The first type consists in individuals who expressed no aspirations related to work or school during interviews. The second type are individuals who express the desire to engage in school or work but admit not taking any action to make it happen. The third type are those who are motivated and demonstrate they keep trying to access opportunities but are limited by external factors.

Although these dimensions – internal motivation, action, external structure - are presented here in linear format to simplify the argument, we emphasize their mutually reinforcing relationship. In this sense, we follow Bourdieu's approach (1977), according to which individual agency and social outcomes shape each other mutually.[13] In other words, an individual exercises agency in a given social context with certain

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[11] Note that De Hoyos et al (2016) also suggest avoiding generalizing the phenomenon, highlighting the heterogeneity among ninis in the region.

[12] Amartya Sen (1985) defines agency as "what a person is free to do and achieve in pursuit of whatever goals or values he or she regards as important" (p. 203). An agent, according to Sen is "someone who acts and brings about change" (Sen 1999, p. 19). The relevance of the concept of agency to gender inequality has been highlighted in the World Development Report 2012. Here, agency figures as one of the three primary dimensions of gender equality and is understood as the process through which women and men can use their endowments - such as land, property, education, or health - and take advantage of opportunities to achieve their desired outcomes. As a prerequisite for achieving these desired outcomes, one must first take a decision and then consistently act upon that decision (World Bank 2012).

[13] The structure-agency debate is a prominent debate in sociological literature. The range of positions in the field includes those theorists who interpret social structure as determinant of one's possibilities and outcomes, making it thus often impossible to exercise "agency". Others emphasize the individual and his/her potential and see social structure as the result and consequence of individual actions.

conditions, power relations and predominant values. At the same time, the sum of individual actions results in changes to that structure or reproduction of the structure itself.

As with all typologies, differences are fluid and sometimes difficult to distinguish because our primary data are participants' own voices. Gender norms may shape the way individuals express themselves during interviews. For instance, the pressure to be a "breadwinner" may lead young men to speak with greater excitement regarding their future work lives in an attempt to fulfill social expectations before the researcher. On the other hand, we argue that having a narrative of motivation is a necessary condition for effectively pursuing these opportunities.[14] In the next subsections, we discuss the typology and the key patterns observed in each type.

Barriers to Internal Motivation: Participants Who Expressed No Aspirations or Internal Predisposition to Return to School or Work

This group was composed predominantly by young women with small children and in unions[15] and it was more present in rural areas. Those participants did not engage in any sort of income generation activity and were economically dependent on their partners or other family members. A section from the interview with a 21-year old rural woman exemplifies the lack of motivation, drive and aspirations related to work and education that is characteristic of this group. She married at age 16 and has a small daughter.

> *Quotation 1 (Q1)[16]: Interviewer (IR): If you could choose how your life would be in ten years from now, how would it look like?*
> *Participant (P): I think it would be the same. {Laughs}*
> *IR: What do you mean by "the same"?*
> *P: The same, always. Always... just living.*
> *IR: And... regarding work? Would you like to be working, not be working, or it doesn't matter for you?*
> *P: No, I like the way I am living now.*
> *IR: And do you think about going back to school?*
> *P: No.*
>
> <div align="right">*Woman, 21 years, Rural.*</div>

The aspirations of this group revolved around having financial security and happiness as a family. They demonstrated a tendency to see the family as their priority project and responsibility and attributed less meaning to their individual aspirations and projects.

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[14] We assume that an individual who bluntly expresses a lack of interest in entering the job market will be less likely to do so than an individual who feels compelled to correspond to social expectations.

[15] Throughout the report, we use the terms "in union" or "married" interchangeably to designate individuals in relationships living with their partner or those who are legally married.

[16] Quotations in the main body of the text are translations of literal transcriptions of participants' speech. The original transcriptions in Portuguese can be found in the annex according to their number. {} indicate noises, sounds and observations. ( ) indicate comments from the interlocutor in the middle of a person's speech. [ ] indicate the insertion of words by the authors to provide the context of the speech.

Their daily lives were focused on the domestic sphere and the needs of the family. Many of these young women dropped out of school after falling in love, having children or forming a union during their teenage years, without having gained substantial work experience. Others formed families later in life but gradually disconnected from work life after marriage to be able to focus on their families. Most participants spent their days performing household duties or taking care of their children and other family members, talking with pride about their dedication to their family and children. In most cases, they were responsible for the work within the household while older members (or male members) were "working outside" and had the role of economic providers.

Regarding their future, these young women referred to themselves more as recipients than as agents of change, which shows a normalization of their economic dependence. For most, the detachment from paid jobs was conveyed with a sense of relief as they referred to their predominantly negative experiences during their short work lives.[17] Additionally, the perceived limited set of opportunities[18] and burden associated with deviating from the expected domestic roles (e.g. conflicts at home, judgment from neighbors, and facing their own self-esteem issues), particularly in rural areas, shape women's meaning of work and their ability to envision self-actualization through that path. At the same time, some participants expressed discomfort with their economic dependence. Particularly in urban areas, women expressed shame and shared uncomfortable experiences about having to depend on others to be able to survive. Nevertheless, individuals in this group seemed resigned with their decision to not consider work or study as possible routes for their future.

> Q2: IR: Do you think that the fact that you are not working makes any difference in your life?
> P: It does. Because we all want to have our own money, isn't it? We don´t want to depend only on men. On nobody. [We want to] rely only on our money. Because for everything we depend on them. If I want to buy clothes, I have to ask if it's OK. To do anything one needs money…What if he doesn't have it? If I have it, then it's different.
>
> Woman, 20 years, from urban Caranguejo/Tabaiares.

Barriers to Action: Participants Who Express Motivation to Return to School or Work but Don't Take Consistent Actions Towards these Goals

This group was composed predominantly of single males and females - most of them living with their parents and depending economically on another family member. Although some of them - particularly men - engaged in informal work sporadically, they did not actively look for work.[19] These were largely individuals who completed high school but did not take consistent action to transition to higher education or work life and were particularly present among urban youth.

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[17] For example, having to deal with abusive bosses or colleagues and performing physically straining activities at very low salaries.

[18] Overall, women in Brazil have access to fewer and less quality economic opportunities than men (see Gukovas et al 2016).

[19] These informal jobs - commonly referred to as "*bicos*" in Portuguese - provide a source of income with which they minimally sustain themselves. These opportunities generally arise spontaneously, and some examples are: plumbing or handyman work, taking care of sales stands, carrying goods or, in the case of rural areas, doing informal daily jobs at surrounding farms.

These participants expressed the desire to have a good job or pursue specific careers they found interesting,[20] but admitted to have previously passed up opportunities to pursue these paths. For example, several interviewees had enrolled in the national exam for entering university[21] at least once but did not attend the actual exam. Other interviewees distributed their resumes to potential employers but did not show up for interviews when they were pre-selected. In justifying their behaviors, participants often demonstrated self-blaming or dismissive attitudes, for example, saying they "were simply too lazy" or "too spontaneous" to follow through.[22] The meritocratic belief that success depends only on their willpower becomes a source of shame and low self-esteem as they interpret their situation as their own personal failure, leading to further paralysis.

> Q3: I thought about Enem, but the day I went to enroll, the system was out and I decided not to do it anymore. I intend to go to college, have a public servant job and what I want is to graduate from a medical school. But, from what I'm seeing, to go to medical school one has to study a lot. I want medicine or nursing. I want to have a profession. And a public servant job. But I don't know if I have the patience to study. Taking a book and saying: "I am going to study today", I don't have this. I don't know, maybe my patience is already over.
>
> Woman, 20 years, from urban Caranguejo/Tabaiares.

The lack of role models, information and mentoring appeared to be important factors shaping the behavior of this group. Their parents and peers generally had low educational attainment and high participation in informal work. Parents and other family members were not able to actively participate in youth's decisions regarding work or school. Because they were not exposed to examples of individuals who had successfully pursued career paths they showed interest in, they did not see their aspirations as a realistic possibility and lacked the information on how to move forward. Schools also failed to support them in these endeavors. Hence, students who are motivated to study or work in areas that are less common in their social environment end up unable to make realistic plans, define concrete steps and cope with the emotional challenges associated to the pursuit of a long-term goal. Finally, because they were mostly single and economically dependent on older family members, these youth were able to be more selective with opportunities they pursued.

External Barriers that Limit even the Motivated Youth

The third group identified in the sample is composed of individuals who demonstrated consistent efforts to continue their education or return to work but were constrained by several external factors. Most of them had incomplete secondary

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[20] These included medicine, nursing, business administration and arts.

[21] The National High School Exam (Exame Nacional do Ensino Médio - ENEM) is Brazil's tertiary-level entrance exam at the end of high school. While general secondary education has a modern system of student assessment, national exams like Enem are not compulsory for all students completing upper-secondary education (Silva, Almeida, and Strokova 2015).

[22] This mismatch between intention and action serve as an example of what the World Development Report on Behavior, Mind, Society (World Bank 2015) refers to as "intention-action divide": the tendency to make decisions that favor the present over their future, even if individuals cognitively understand the implications of their action.

school, engaged in sporadic informal jobs but looked for more stable opportunities. A distinctive feature of this group in comparison to the other two is their supportive partners, peers or family members, who seemed to act as enablers for action (this will be explored further in the "positive deviance" cases). Males who were married and had children were the majority in this group.

Although they wanted to continue their education, most youth in this group saw finding a "*trabalho com carteira assinada*" ("formal fixed job") as a necessary first step to consider returning to school or enrolling in university. School materials, foregone wages, fees, the need to pay for private care support and transportation require resources they did not have, leading them to prioritize work over education. The financial constraint was particularly strong for young males, who were more reluctant to seek support from other family members as they saw financial dependence as a source of shame.

> *Q4: P: One time my brother told me "go to Senac, go to Senai, you have the ability to do many things. Choose a course that you want and I will pay for it". I even went there, but things there are very expensive and I got a little embarrassed to tell him. But sometimes he asks "So, did you go there?' And I tell him that I'm still going to go... I get a little uneasy with having to depend on him. That's why... Ok, I could do it, but for us men to depend on someone is hard. I know I live here in this house with my wife, depending on my mother, my brother and more people, but we feel uncomfortable with this. I don´t feel good about it....*
>
> *Man, 23 years, from urban Brasilit*

Participants with incomplete secondary schooling had very negative perceptions of adult education programs,[23] sharing their several failed attempts to enroll or complete them in the past. Key issues were the lack of vacancies and the inadequacy of curricula and teaching methodologies. Many perceive these programs as geared towards retired individuals; and found their structure did not take into consideration the physically demanding work many students completed before attending classes (paid jobs and taking care of small children). Hence, participants were only able to sustain the "double work-study" routine for a short amount of time, dropping out of programs after some time and continually trying to re-engage.

Although some participants demonstrated interest in attending technical schools,[24] they felt excluded from these opportunities. Enrollment criteria often required

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[23] In Brazil, adult education programs are available for people 18 years or older. These are a second-chance or adult education for youth and adults with low educational attainment for their age (an approach called *Educação de Jovens e Adultos* [EJA], also referred to as "Supplementary Education"). Because only individuals over 18 years of age were recruited for this study, completing secondary education necessarily means attending such programs. When someone turns 18 years old, they should be automatically forwarded to EJA classes instead of attending regular ones.

[24] PRONATEC is an umbrella program coordinating a variety of existing and new vocational education and training policies, including courses in two modalities: Technical Education (TEC) and Initial and Continuing Training Programs ("*Formação Inicial e Continuada*"- FIC). Technical vocational education and training (TVET) delivery in Brazil involves multiple providers. FIC are short-term vocational training programs usually directed at improving existing workers' qualifications and not tied to the formal education system. The Sistema S (S System) network of providers has a key role in the delivery of these courses and other providers include federal institutes, state and municipal

complete secondary education, leaving them ineligible to benefit. The small number of vacancies and high levels of competitiveness to enter marginalize participants with lower levels of educational attainment. The mismatch between the courses offered and their interests was another issue raised.

> *Q5: P: I think they could bring more, like, courses that would actually benefit us. Do some research to know what we really want to do, you know. Because usually when the local government offers a cooking course here, it is more for old ladies. I don't see young people attending, because they have no interest in this area. They should get to know what we really are interested in, in the community.*
>
> *Woman, 22 years, from urban Caranguejo-Tabaiares.*

Similarly, youth in this group who had completed their secondary education recognized the importance of governmental programs facilitating access to private and public universities,[25] but felt left out. One of the explanations given is that public schools do not prepare students well enough to compete in the national exam, leaving them unable to pass or benefit from quota systems[26] in public universities. As a result, their only realistic option was private universities, which were considered too expensive for this group. Even though Brazil has programs such as PROUNI[27] and FIES[28] to facilitate access to private higher education to those who cannot afford it, interviewees mentioned that payment installments are still prohibitively expensive and access to these opportunities is too competitive. These constraints reinforce their perception that they must have a stable job first to be able to invest in education.

Women with small children mentioned additional barriers related to education such as: inadequate times at which educational programs were offered; large distances and lack of safe transportation. Adult education programs are normally offered at night to allow the combination of study and a regular work schedule. Some female participants with small children considered the evening unviable because it is the time their children return from school. Others mentioned they could only find vacancies in night schools distant from their houses, which raised safety concerns. Women without

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school networks, and private providers (INEP 2013; Almeida, Amaral, and Felicio 2015; Brazil, Court of Accounts 2015). TEC courses are longer-term technical education programs that do form part of the formal education system. They are mostly offered at the secondary and postsecondary levels (Silva, Almeida, and Strokova, p. 69, 2015).

[25] In Brazil, public universities are tuition-free. However, there are limited places and entry is determined by highly competitive exams, thereby often excluding those who have not had a high-quality secondary education or attended an expensive preparatory course.

[26] Law 12.711/ 2012 or "*Lei de Cotas*" (Law of Quotas) established that federal universities must reserve 50 percent of their vacancies to students from public high schools until 2016, taking into consideration social and racial criteria. Regulated by Decree 7.824 / 2012, the law proposed the allocation of 25 percent of vacancies for students from public schools with family incomes equal to or less than 1.5 minimum salary, 25 percent for candidates with family incomes equal or higher to 1.5 minimum wages and a percentage for self-declared blacks, *pardos* (mixture of white Brazilian, Afro-Brazilian and Native Brazilian) and indigenous people.

[27] The University for All Program (PROUNI) is a federal program that provides scholarships to poorer students to study in private universities.

[28] Financing of Higher Education Students (FIES) is a federal program that provides financing to students who want to pursue a higher-education degree at a private university.

supportive partners or family members were more burdened because they lacked financial resources to cover schooling and care expenses and they did not have anyone to accompany them to school in the evening.

In terms of barriers to access labor markets, the economic crisis and a constrained demand for jobs was the key issue mentioned.[29] The combination of financial crisis and the greater pool of individuals with higher levels of qualification or experience applying to the same jobs put them particularly in disadvantage in accessing economic opportunities.

> *Q6: P: So, right now it is hard for everybody. The last time I went to a job agency it was so packed that when it was time for me to fill my application there were no more papers. And usually I've been handing all over my curriculum and, I did some job selection processes, but unfortunately, I didn't evolve. But I have not given up yet... I am making more CVs to leave at home to be ready in case an opportunity comes up. But it is very difficult. It is difficult for people with more experience than me, and for me with less experience it is even harder...*
>
> *Woman, 25 years, from urban Caranguejo-Tabaiares*

A few interviewees also referred to *Jovem Aprendiz*,[30] a program designed to facilitate access of inexperienced youth (14-24 years) to labor markets. The program aimed to provide youth with specific skills and experience that could help them start their professional careers. Although interviewees saw the program as positive, they highlighted that coverage was too low, only benefiting a small number of individuals in their communities.[31]

Another obstacle for women's access to jobs was the fact that most available opportunities involved long work hours and included night shifts. The lack of affordable care infrastructure makes it difficult for women to combine their working lives with their care responsibilities. Either women must face a strenuous double burden, or they will have to negotiate the allocation of household tasks at home.[32] As a result, many partners were unsupportive of their partner's plans to complete their

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[29] After growing around 4 percent between 2003 and 2010, Brazil's economy gradually lost steam in 2012−13, was stagnant in 2014 and went into recession in 2015. The economic slump took a toll on the labor market, as the unemployment rate gradually rose and payroll indicators pointed to job destruction (World Bank 2016).

[30] The Apprentice Law (2000) to facilitate development of programs for the inclusion of youth in the labor market. It requires all medium-size and large companies to hire youth between the ages 14 and 24 years while they undergo technical and professional training in a special employment contract of up to two years.

[31] This perception is in line with the analysis put forward by Marra et al (2015), indicating firm compliance to be overwhelmingly low. For example, in 2013, only 23 percent of potential apprentice slots were filled.

[32] Studies from Latin America and the OECD countries show that public provision of childcare results in high take-up, but not necessarily in higher maternal labor force participation rates. Rather, it leads to a substitution of existing arrangements (switching from informal to formal care) and improved quality of labor force participation (Chioda et al 2016). The report shows that demand for formal childcare appears to come from women who have already made the decision to participate in the labor market and who just readjust their existing childcare arrangements in favor of formal care.

education or to take on a job. Families ended up prioritizing men's work.[33] This arrangement is reinforced not only by men's socially expected role as providers, but also with participants' expectation that men will earn higher wages.[34] It shows that, even when women value having a paid job, power dynamics within households and negotiating the organization of domestic work is still a major barrier to equal participation in the work force.

Additionally, women with small children mentioned experiences of discrimination. Women reported being asked about whether they have a partner and small children during job interviews and not being considered for the positions after their positive responses. While it remains a speculation, the level of detail to which the interviewee, in the following quotation, was inquired about her childcare responsibilities suggests that discrimination based on gender and care responsibilities may account for some of young women's difficulties in accessing jobs.

> *Q7: P: I was interviewed last week and... I think I lost the opportunity, the owner told me he had really liked me and all, but I lost the opportunity when he asked who had children. Out of all the girls there, one had one and I was the only one who had two, with one still a baby. When he asked their age, I said one of them was one year and three months old. The first thing he asked me was if I had a structure or someone to look after my baby. I told him I did. He asked me if my son still breastfeeds. I told him yes. So I think it fell through because of this. Small kids ask for their mothers when they are sick, so I think he didn´t want someone missing work because of a kid that would be sick. It is not that he is constantly sick, but there is always the fear of hiring a person with kids. That would miss work to take to the doctor, to take a vaccine. I think it was because of this that he didn´t give me the position.*
>
> *Woman, 25 years, from urban Caranguejo-Tabaiares*

4 How Poverty, Gender Norms and Lack of Support Systems Can Limit Youth's Participation in the Educational Systems and Labor Market

In this section, we show how the combination of a social context of poverty and deprivation, a set of restrictive gender norms, and the lack of support systems may contribute to limit youths' outcomes related to work and school. However, it is important to point out that, although we are portraying major patterns, there were clearly deviations from those. The actual extent to which these patterns will determine individual outcomes can vary depending on the specific combination of contextual factors related to family, institutions and community as well as the individual's capacity to exercise agency.

Individuals' capacity to form aspirations[35] in relation to work or education is adaptive to their social contexts and framed within a context of reference and sense

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[33] Contrary to that, Chioda (2016) shows that highly educated women tend to see work more as a career than merely a source of income.

[34] The World Values Survey 2014 shows that in Brazil 16.8 percent of interviewees agree that when jobs are scarce, men should have more right to a job than women.

[35] See Appadurai's (2004) work on the "capacity to aspire".

of belonging.[36] As discussed by Duflo (2012), in contexts of poverty and social exclusion, hopelessness and the perceived lack of opportunity for life transformation may undermine one's willingness or ability to make choices, causing individuals to deliberately "hold back". Hope can fuel an exit from the poverty trap; and, conversely, the deficit of hope can create a poverty trap, hindering the development of other capabilities and limiting how much individuals can achieve.

A recurrent theme from the interviews is the demotivation participants felt after failing several times to access work or educational opportunities, and how these reiterated failures led them to slowly give up on a desired course of action. A significant share among these youths did aspire to return to work, school or to engage in tertiary education. Nevertheless, the constant failed attempts can generate frustration and resignation in a context where services are of bad quality or where opportunities are unavailable (frustration/ lack of opportunities effect). For example, a young woman who is motivated and keeps trying to find a good job may eventually give up. After failing several times to be selected for a job, she seems to have accepted her unemployment as insoluble and expresses having "*perdido as esperanças*" ("lost hope"). She begins perceiving her efforts as useless, causing her to stop trying to look for a job.

> Q8: IR: *What do you think that could be done to improve your situation? For you to get a job... what do you think that could help you to get a job?*
> P: *At the moment, I think nothing. Cause every time I try, nobody calls me. I´ve lost hope already.*
> IR: *Why did you lose hope?*
> P: *Because so many times I tried and nobody ever calls me. The only place where I can go even without curriculum is the animal game stand.[37] You go there, ask and they already put you in some spot.*

> Woman, 19 years, from urban Caranguejo-Tabaiares.

Gender norms also frame young men's and women's experiences and references of the trajectories that are possible and desirable for their future – including in the realm of work and education. As noted by the World Development Report 2015 Mind, Society and Behavior (World Bank 2015), rather than considering all possible costs and benefits from a self-interested perspective, people are malleable and emotional actors whose decision making is influenced by contextual cues, local social networks and social norms, and shared mental models. These play a role in determining what individuals perceive as desirable, possible, or even "thinkable" for their lives. Most women interviewed had female family members and peers who formed families during adolescence. This shapes their views of what is normal, acceptable and socially desirable. If young women perceive their roles as that of being wives, mothers, and not to be working for an income unless there is physical need for it, they will likely not aspire to do something different. The same issues were found in rural areas, but they

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[36] Sociological and anthropological literature has extensively shown how people's attitudes and beliefs are shaped by the social groups they feel they belong to (Bourdieu 1977; Kleinman 2006).
[37] Jogo do Bicho ("the animal game") is an illegal gambling game in Brazil. Very popular throughout the country, it is a lottery-type game organized on a regional basis and operationalized through *"bancas"* (stands) in the streets where people can place their bets.

seemed to be even more intense and result in barriers even more difficult to overcome (see figure 1).

Figure 1: The Path Towards Participation and the Impact of Poverty and Gender Norms
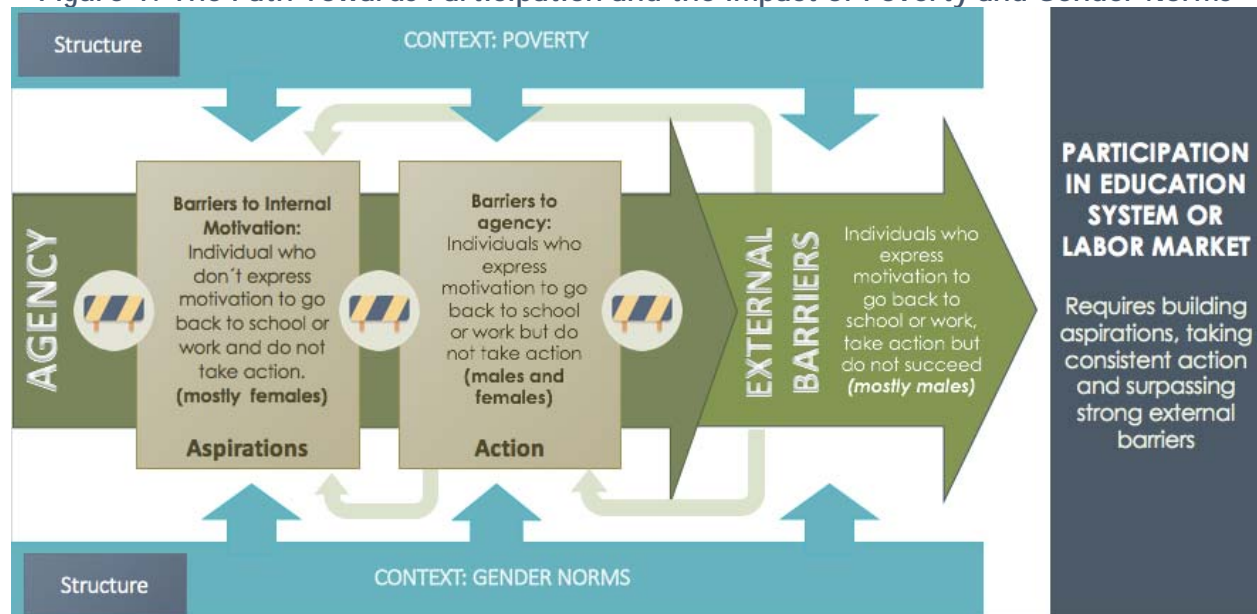
A Downward Spiral of Gradual Detachment from School

Participants, particularly in the urban sample, had negative perspectives on their school experiences, portraying school as spaces that felt demotivating, oppressive and chaotic. The often-mentioned description of schools as "an anarchy" referred to poor infrastructure, cancelled classes and absent teachers and the social environment among peers. There were several reports of bullying, drug use, trafficking and violence within school and its surroundings. Teachers and school staff were often described as dismissive or emotionally abusive, leading them to believe that school was not a place where their voice mattered.

> *Q9: P: The teachers treat us very badly, they treat the student very badly and also there are a lot of students who don't want anything in life and keep messing around in the corridors, shouting, and nobody does anything. Sometimes the principal comes and complains, but it doesn´t seem to work. And sometimes, when things happened, you went to the principal's office to complain and nobody gave you attention. The principal didn't listen to what you said.*
>
> *Man, 23 years, from urban Brasilit*

Most of the youth who were interviewed did not find school content and teaching methodologies engaging.[38] Many were unable to state their preferred subjects or the usefulness of school content to their lives. Those who were able to usually refer to

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[38] Näslund-Hadley and Binstock (2010) analyze the role of bad quality education in framing girls' life plans in Paraguay and Peru. Concretely, they find that school dropouts might result from the low quality of education offered, and generally low expectations of life.

teachers with whom they developed positive relationships or who inspired them to think for themselves, which shows how teachers' positive attitudes towards students seemed to play a vital role on how youth perceived the value and importance of their own education.

> *Q10: P: There were some teachers to whom giving a class meant to get into the room, write in the board and ask us to copy in our notebooks. This for me is not a class. For me, if I had to go to school to do that, I could do it at home and I don´t think that is good. But there were some teachers who actually gave classes, who actually explained. The history teacher would tell us things that were happening, not only what was in the book, he brought other things. There was one teacher who would sometimes use movies and we would debate after watching it. So, these were good teachers. But from all teachers, you would find two, sometimes three that were good. The rest of the disciplines, either did not have a teacher at all or had teachers who couldn't care less for the students or the class. Then we didn't feel like we wanted to be in the school.*
>
> *Man, 23 years, from urban Brasilit*

Due to economic pressure or gendered division of work at home, young men and women often had to combine their routines in school with other types of work, ending up with less energy to focus on school. The double shift of work and school can be burdensome and compromise the mental and physical resources youth can dedicate to learning.

> *Q11: P: Actually, I tried [to go back to school], last year. Because my work was taking all the time I had. I was working from two in the afternoon until three in the morning, and then having to go to Santa Rita dock, take the bus home. It takes around half an hour, 40 minutes to get to my house. And then I got home, had to eat something, take a shower and when I looked out it was already daylight. Then, I went to school and fell asleep, couldn´t keep myself woken up. I was not managing to study. Then I decided to really drop out. It was either school or the job.*
>
> *Man, 21 years, from urban Brasilit*

The perception that friends who had finished school are "in the same place in life" leads to an evaluation that efforts will not pay off, as good work prospects for them are limited anyways. Many participants pointed out how peers who had finished school were in the same place as them or even had a more difficult life. For example, one urban young woman explained her friend had finished school and secured a fixed job, but that this job was exhausting, with low pay, long hours and no leisure time.

> *Q12: P: She finished her studies, finished the nursing course... Even my mother-in-law, her mother, talks about it... to finish your studies and to keep killing yourself like that. Because she works at a kitchen. From Sunday to Sunday. It is like I was telling you, why is a person who has finished school killing herself in other people´s kitchen?*
>
> *Woman, 20 years, Urban, Caranguejo-Tabaiares.*

In a context of high burden, lack of support systems and low perceived incentives to continue, youth start skipping classes or repeating grades. Many youth come from mono-parental families with working parents who had little time to be very present in their daily lives. In addition, parents mostly did not have successful trajectories in school and may not feel prepared to support their children in their studies. As they progress in school, they watch their peers gradually dropping out, which leaves them questioning the rationale for staying. Hence, youth lacked parental figures or mentors who would support and monitor their school performance. As the school is often unable to fulfill that mentorship role, youth end up without the motivation to keep surpassing

the challenges they face. For example, a young individual struggling with school content and lacking the support to improve their learning capabilities may feel like they lack the capacity to continue in school. Repetition – even multiple repetitions – are very common among informants and an important source of shame and demotivation.[39]

> Q13: P: I´ve studied until the fourth grade and I repeated grades twice and that's why I got bored of school. I thought that if I was repeating grades, then I am not learning. From first grade until the fourth grade I didn't repeat. When I got to the fourth grade I started repeating. I studied three years in fourth grade and then I got bored ... Then I gave it a break... When I repeated the third time, I lost the will to study at all.
>
> Woman, 24 years, from urban Caranguejo-Tabaiares.

The final decision to drop out is usually taken in critical moments, such as the transition into high school or family shocks. When families move to other locations, youth may fail to enroll at the school at the new location. The sickness of family members may also force them to prioritize paid work or confine them in the role of caregivers. Parental separation or the introduction of step-parents can lead to conflicts over decision-making and division of work within their households, triggering a desire to become independent.

Critical moments may trigger youth's attempts to transition into adulthood, which are largely shaped by traditional gender roles reinforced early on at the family and community levels. For young men, the pressure to become financially independent leads them to assert their masculinity through their ability to navigate independently in the professional world and display symbols of financial success. As they see their peers start engaging in informal work while still in school, they may start doing the same. In some cases, the family exercises pressure for them to work, which creates conditions in which they feel they are unable to continue with both education and work.

> Q14: If I left my job to go to school, my mother would put me…I don´t know what she could do…she could put me out of the house. Because she already did this so many times. So, I chose to stay in my job and leave school. Not to create any conflict at home.
>
> Man, 23 years, from urban Brasilit

For young women, the transition is often expressed in their desire to form their own families, which may lead them to drop out after teenage unions and pregnancies.[40] Many young women interviewed had mothers and many peers who married or got pregnant at a very young age. Although focusing one's priority and efforts on family building and childrearing can be a source of fulfillment and accomplishment for women, it is important to note that this is a choice rather than an imposed path. For some women, this option must be understood in a context of a limited set of

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[39] See for instance Branson et al (2014) who show that overage students in South Africa are more likely to drop out because they started late or because they repeated.

[40] The idea that motherhood is the predominant way poor women in Brazil imagine their transition to adulthood is also emphasized in Heilborn and Cabral (2011). The authors argue that in a context of lack of female empowerment and lack of other opportunities, young women do not see other transitions to adulthood other than by becoming a mother. On the other hand, education levels are highly correlated with a woman's degree of sexual autonomy and with a delay in child bearing and marriage (World Bank 2012).

opportunities (economically and socially) for women, which must be problematized.[41]

> *Q15: P: I started dating him, then I went to live with him, then I left, I didn´t want to study anymore…I was twelve, thirteen...*
> *IR: How did you make the decision to not go anymore?*
> *P: Well, he also didn't want me to go. [He said] 'Don't go, don't go to school'. Then I started working also with farming daily jobs, so I didn't go anymore. Sometimes I went one week, then for two days I didn't go. I started skipping and skipping and then didn't go anymore.*
> *IR: And what about your family at the time, did they say anything?*
> *P: No.*
> *Woman, 22 years, rural*

After these transitions, young men and women are "left to make their own decisions". The following quotation sheds light on how parents withdraw their involvement from their children's life decisions after they enter unions or – as in the following case – after they get pregnant.[42]

> *Q16: P: No, I didn't talk to anyone about it. I only told mother that I didn't want to study anymore…*
> *IR: How about your mother, when you said you wouldn't study anymore, what did she tell you?*
> *P: She was upset, wanting me to go to school to study. But, I don´t know, I thought it wasn't possible anymore, I told her I couldn't do it anymore. Then I got pregnant and after that she didn´t care anymore, when I got pregnant she didn't care about anything anymore. Neither did I, and so there you go, I just stopped studying once and for all.*
> *Women, 19 years, from urban Caranguejo-Tabaiares*

Hence, on the one hand their immediate decision-making capacity may increase with these important life events (marriage, union, pregnancy) because they are associated with adulthood and not adolescence. At the same time, the decisions they may take at this point are often a product of short-term thinking, lack of thorough planning or consideration of the consequences they will face.

How Dropping out of School Contributes to Labor Market Outcomes

After dropping out, social norms around marriage and the pressure to fulfill the roles of the "good wife" and "good mother" will tend to shift women's focus towards their domestic and family lives while also implying economic dependence on a partner.[43] A common theme in the trajectories in married life for women is the

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[41] Attitudes and expectations about the future can influence the probability of teenage motherhood (Plotnick 1992, 1993, 2007). When young women are poor and face a lack of opportunities, teenage childbearing and motherhood can be perceived as a rational choice. In other cases, given the specific circumstances, the incentives to avoid a pregnancy may not be high enough (Azevedo et al. 2013; Cater and Coleman 2006).

[42] For the concrete case of Brazil, Heilborn and Cabral (2011) emphasize the differences in the perception of ways to transition to adulthood based on social class. The authors clearly link these observed differences to availability of opportunities or the absence thereof: "This ideal conception of passage to adult life (including the completion of an education and the building of a professional career) ignores that the availability of social opportunities is not offered in equal conditions for youth of different social classes" (pg. 42).

[43] This is in line with the findings in Muñoz Boudet et al (2012), who show that across their multi-country qualitative study sample, almost every participant described a "good husband" as the main authority in the household, main decision-maker and provider. Compared to that, the "good wife"

perceived need to give up on their independence and life projects for the good of building the family. This reflects how the "good wife" and "good mother" must be available for and attentive to the family and the needs of the partner. Marriage, union and childbearing (which often follows dropping out of school) deepens their lack of mobility even further, reducing their exposure to networks and finally perpetuating their status as economic dependents.[44]

> Q17: P: Like...for work, many times there has been an opportunity for me to work and he is like "no, don't go to work", these things...He said "I already work, you don't need to work and etc.", these things...
> IR: And how is that for you?
> P: It's bad. But I talk to him a lot and I believe he is changing...
>
> *Woman, 24 years, rural*

Family and community attitudes about women's mobility and work shape their meanings of work as a means for self-actualization. In most families, young girls were responsible for household chores either by themselves or sharing these responsibilities with another woman in their house. Particularly in urban areas, women tended to be more confined to the private space. While for young men, work becomes a way to confirm their status in the household and the community, this may be the opposite for women. Working may involve burdens such as having to deal with conflicts with jealous or unsupportive husbands, having to face the double burden of paid and unpaid work or facing judgement from members of their community about being a "good mother". For example, many young women perceived the public space as a threatening space or a space of social surveillance. In this context, women will tend to live more domestic lives and are less exposed to other women who may be pursuing less traditional paths involving careers.

> Q18: P: I don´t have any friends here. (Why?) I don´t have any friends here. I just stay inside the house.
> IR: And why you don´t have any friends here?
> P: I don´t like to be in the street. (Why?). Because people here they talk to you and in just a few minutes they are speaking behind your back. So I don´t want these friendships, I prefer to stay alone.
>
> *Woman, 19 years, from urban Caranguejo-Tabaiares*

On the other hand, after dropping out, because young males are expected to provide for themselves or for other members of the household, they are drawn into precarious work situations due to their low educational attainment. The "bicos" may have served well as a short-term strategy in a certain moment in their lives; but once

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was described quite uniformly as "an obedient, caring, and respectful mate to the good husband" (pg. 37), responsible for domestic chores and for caring for other family members.

[44] Heilborn and Cabral (2011) also document that girls who became mothers in adolescence had been more engaged in domestic work prior to having their baby. At the same time, the social isolation found prior to early childbearing in these women often becomes exacerbated after child birth. The same authors (Heilborn and Cabral 2011), summarizing the GRAVAD study in Brazil, state that young women become more confined to the house after giving birth. Importantly, they also show that this is not necessarily true for middle-class women who do go out more, receive more support for maintaining social relations, and do not experience confinement as radically as young women in the lower socioeconomic segment.

they become providers of a household, the instability of their work situation puts a strain on their emotional health and self-image. Given the low educational attainment, lack of experience and qualification, youth will mostly find opportunities in temporary, low stability and informal jobs with low salaries.[45]

5 Observed Patterns are Stronger in Rural Areas[46]

In this section, we explore more in-depth the data collected from rural sites. Rural sites consisted in "*agrovilas*"[47] located in the semiarid region of the state of Pernambuco. As we will demonstrate, rural youth perceived similar – albeit seemingly intensified - constraints to their participation in the educational system and labor markets as poor urban youth: more traditional gender norms and sexual division of labor; fewer opportunities; and more stringent external barriers.

Exclusion from Opportunities and Diminished Value of Education

According to the rural youth interviewed, unless one migrates or has access to private transportation they are unable to access educational opportunities and other economic opportunities outside of farming.[48] Most individuals made a living from agriculture by taking on small daily jobs – known as "*diárias*"[49] in larger farms, planting on their own family plots or both. In addition, a small number of families have small businesses such as bars, food stands or mini markets. Nevertheless, a*grovilas* are situated over 60 km (and connected by precarious unpaved roads) from the nearest urban hub and, from the late afternoon onwards, there is no public transportation available to these areas.[50]

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[45] This is consistent with findings in De Hoyos et al (2016) and Monteiro (2013).

[46] On average in the Latin America region, the share of youth out of work and out of school is higher in rural areas (21 percent of youth) than in urban areas (17 percent). At the same time, the absolute number of youth in such situation is higher in the cities given the high urbanization rate (De Hoyos 2016; Costa and Ulyssea 2014; Camarano et al. 2006; Tillman and Comim 2014). Additionally, the northern and northeastern regions of Brazil are identified as the regions with the highest proportion of youth out of school and out of work (Costa and Ulyssea 2014).

[47] Agrovilas are typically planned villages in which houses are grouped together in one area rather than on each farmer's parcel of land, which are located at further distance. This way of grouping houses is meant to facilitate the provision of basic services to households such as electricity and potable water (Zibechi 2007).

[48] A*grovilas* had access to irrigation systems, that function as key enablers of farming activities. Such systems are not commonly available to family farmers in other semiarid regions of Brazil, which can suffer from intense drought periods. Upon the formation of these *agrovilas*, families who were relocated there were each given a house, with access to water, a plot to plant with irrigation systems, and a living stipend.

[49] Informal daily work for women will generally involve laying seeds, removing fruits and vegetables from trees *("despencando o amendoim"),* cleaning and boxing them, while males will do the heavier work such as sowing the land and applying fertilizers and pesticides (*"evenenar"*).

[50] Costa and Ulyssea (2014) point to the lack of opportunities and distances as major obstacles for young people to enter the labor market and access education opportunities in rural areas in Brazil.

At the same time, migration was not seen as a viable or desirable option to the group interviewed. Important factors discouraging migration were: the perceived precarious nature of jobs available to them in cities; the fear of the "unknown" (particularly for girls); the need to "know someone" in the city to have a place to stay temporarily and to secure a good job; the desire to be close to their families or attachment to the community; and the need for rural succession of their family properties. According to key informants interviewed, several productive inclusion policies that were implemented in recent years shifted the perception that to be a farmer was lack of option to more positive interpretations. This has had implications for the aspirations of young women and men living in rural areas: Now, youth were fighting for their right to remain on their land, which has meant greater demand for opportunities and policies to be brought to rural areas to enable rural succession for youth and less willingness to migrate.

In this context of exclusion from opportunities, school seemed to have even less meaning to rural youth in comparison to urban sites. First, youth must deal with the double burden of work and school from even younger ages. Rural youth's relationship with farming is more "naturalized" as compared to the relationship urban youth have with work. Girls will share the responsibility for the domestic work with their mothers and other female family members from a young age. Boys are expected to start working early on the family plot under the guidance of older family members.[51] This work is physically demanding and even more challenging to combine with a school routine.

> *Q19: P: Because we have a profession since we are born. Who is born in the rural area, is already born with a profession, that is [the profession of] farmer. The academic formation is a process that comes later, after which I may or may not have another profession...But I am already born with one in that place.*
>
> *Key informant, rural*

Second, school curricula seem even more disconnected to their realities and perceived possibilities. Differently from urban youth, when rural youth described their experiences in school, most spoke positively about the school quality and infrastructure. Nevertheless, most were unable to explain what they learned in school that was useful for their lives. Family members and peers have even lower educational attainment in comparison to urban areas. Finally, there was a perceived lack of opportunities to apply or derive returns from formal education in the absence of jobs.[52] Relatedly, a key informant with expertise with Pernambuco's rural youth describes the

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[51] In 2014, 2.2 percent of girls and 4.8 percent of boys were employed in Brazil according to the World Development Indicators. According to the ILO (2009), children aged 5-14 in Brazil tend to work more in rural areas: 2.2 percent of rural males work only compared to 0.9 of rural girls (and 0.5 of boys and 0.3 of girls in urban areas). However, when looking at the child population who works and studies, the discrepancies are striking: 24.9 percent of rural boys work and study, compared to 11.5 percent of rural girls, 4.3 percent of urban boys and 2.4 percent of urban girls.

[52] Several authors have shown how formal education is detached from the realities of rural areas in Brazil (Ferreira and Alves 2009, Dalcin and Troian 2009, Aguiar and Stropasolas 2010). On the other hand, Brumer (2007) emphasizes the potential that education has in empowering particularly women in rural contexts, providing more freedom and autonomy.

situation in rural Pernambuco and what she perceives as the school's inability to speak to their reality and support youth in carving life paths outside farming:

> *Q20: So we debate a lot about the importance of education in rural areas, but made for people from the rural areas. So, an education that is present in the semi-arid region but that doesn't only talk about the south of the country. It is important that we get to know new realities, other biomes, but it is fundamental and strategic that these young people see themselves inside this reality. Because it is very bad for us to leave our properties, where we eat mango and go to the classroom to listen to people talk about grapes, it happens so much.*

Third, young males perceived family farming as a high-risk activity which requires very specific and practical knowledge, which was provided in their social networks and not in schools. This was a recurrent concept mentioned by male interviewees in farming as a "game" or a "lottery."[53] In this context, informal, male-dominated learning networks (fathers, uncles, and other family members) often prepare young men to take over family farming activities and partly work as substitutes for formal education, as this type of knowledge is not acquired in schools. In this sense, male youth not identified as currently working or studying may be in a learning phase, preparing to make the transition into working their own land.

> *Q21: P: I think I will have to... work to see if I can already get anything [from the family property], I am thinking of working [the land]and... learning more about how to work, like my uncle teaches me. If you don´t know anything about plumbing, you should pay attention to learn... A rural business [too]. Because there is a lot of people who plant and don´t know how much poison to apply. You have to learn that if you want to plant by yourself, that's the thing...If I plant by myself, I have to know this, that right measure, you can't put too much poison, water.... You know how it is, you know? You have to.*
>
> *Man, 18 years, rural*

Consequently, although schools in the visited rural communities were not of bad quality,[54] they still failed to retain youth. Overall, participants report positive or neutral experiences at school in terms of the quality of supply and the infrastructure. Nevertheless, drop outs occur even earlier than in urban areas, typically around middle school in 4th or 5th grade. The predominant triggers are the same as in urban areas: the

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[53] The image of a 'game' is explained as follows: First, one must invest a substantial amount of resources to prepare the land without guaranteed returns. This initial investment requires either having a large amount of savings – which most do not have – or acquiring loans in-kind with local shops selling inputs such as fertilizers and seeds. To acquire such loans, it is important for farmers to be in good standing with shop owners. Second, after securing the inputs, a farmer needs to "saber trabalhar bem" ("know how to work well"). This refers to the fact that lack of experience may lead to employing the wrong combination or quantities of inputs and therefore having only limited output. In addition, one must know how to administer the entire activity to succeed: This involves taking only the necessary loans, spending your money carefully and saving when you make a profit for your future investments. Even so, this "game" has no guarantees as climate factors may cause a farmer to lose their entire investments.

[54] Interviewees had mostly good perceptions of local schools, pointing to the fact that teacher absence was uncommon, transportation systems were functional and school uniform and meals were regularly available. Nevertheless, some also reported poor teacher-student relationships and classes combining too different age groups as issues.

start of work life, unions and pregnancies – but those tend to happen earlier than in the poor urban communities included in the sample.

More Stringent Gender Norms Impact Access to Opportunities to Some Groups

Strong occupational segregation and division of gender roles in the households results in even scarcer and lower quality paid work opportunities for women. Social norms regarding the division of labor within households seem to be more stringent than in urban areas. The family operates also as a production unit and work inside households is divided according to gender and generation. Although some informants mentioned that arrangements were changing recently, most expressed the view that *"trabalho de casa é trabalho de mulher"* ("domestic work is women's work"),[55] *"roça é trabalho de homem"* ("farming is men's work").[56] Fewer women interviewed worked outside the home in comparison to urban sites, especially those married. Women in families who had their own property often did not participate in farming activities, which were operated by males. In addition, women who do engage in informal daily jobs perform activities that pay less in comparison to the work done by men. That serves as one feasible explanation as to why, after they are in unions, women may stop working altogether as their income becomes complementary in the family.[57]

> Q22: P: And for him it is easier to work in the field, like, cleaning... Now, for women it's not.
> IR: Why not?
> P: Because, like, men can "poison", women can´t do that, you know? (laughs). They can poison, work with the hoe and all. For women, there are only some female jobs like to clean onions, taking the grass out of the onions, these things...
>
> Woman, 22 years, rural

In addition, limited access to land, information, financial resources, care support and negative attitudes towards women's mobility also limit women's access to educational and economic opportunities in rural areas. Rural succession usually takes place within the family, with the father choosing a child or dividing the farm between his children - usually the men - who will be responsible for the property and care of parents in old age (Brumer 2014). Hence, it is common for many children, but especially

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[55] For most women in unions, a typical day will involve waking up early to prepare the breakfast for the husband before he goes to work on the farm, cleaning and tidying up the house in the morning, preparing a meal for the husband when he returns home for a mid-day break, and cleaning and watching TV the rest of the day. Typically, in rural areas, gendered segregation of work begins very early in life: for the male children, work involves farm labor, usually conducted by the father and his male children (Paulo 2016), while domestic activities are carried out by the mother with the involvement of her daughters (Brumer 2007).

[56] Although, in some locations in the northeast, women may perform farming activities for self-consumption, such as growing greens and herbs and raising small animals, this was not found to be the case in the agrovilas visited, where such activities were also considered men's work.

[57] Very few women could work in services, such as working as domestic workers or working in small local markets. Few women also worked as public servants in the local social service units as teachers, nurses, cleaners, etc. Nevertheless, according to the stories shared, access to these jobs usually required knowing someone who either appointed them to these jobs or let them know beforehand that these vacancies would be open, which gave them the lead. However, most of these positions are already filled by older women, limiting the opportunities for younger individuals.

for women not to inherit the land (Ferreira and Alves 2009). No women interviewees owned, took decisions and worked on their own land.[58] Furthermore, male-dominated learning networks contribute to constraining women's possibilities to conduct farming activities autonomously. In addition, restrictive family and community attitudes towards women's mobility posed an even severer barrier to women's access to education opportunities in the city.

> *Q23: IR: But for girls, for them to have a job, is it possible? Living here?*
> *P: No...Only if it is like...for example: in the health unit, but you need to have finished a course...(ok)..There is the nurse.. and the assistant, but she also needed to study to take the job. But it is all very small, it's not possible, there aren't more.*
> *IR: You mean there are people employed there already, in the health unit (Yes, there are already people there), in the school...So the option for girls is...*
> *P: The only option is to migrate...And not all want to go, you know.*
> *And why do you think they don´t want to go [to migrate]?*
> *P: Like, very often the parents... don´t allow. These two who went...they had a grandmother who lived there [in Petrolândia] and then they went ... another one... she was supposed to go too, but couldn´t find the job.*
> *IR: So, what you are saying is that, some parents wouldn´t let them... others couldn´t make it. And the... husbands?*
> *P: These two... they are single.*
>
> *Key informant, female teacher in the agrovilas*

Finally, the issue of sexual identity and its contribution to social exclusion also emerged in rural areas. Homosexual men interviewed mentioned the difficulties faced in accessing work opportunities due to prejudice. Some "recruiters" will refuse to speak to them or will only offer typically "women's work". Interestingly, the view that they would not be apt to perform certain types of work due to their sexual identity seemed to be internalized. A participant who identified himself as gay explained why he only had access to certain types of work: "Since I am gay, it is heavier for us, you know...that is more men's work". This demonstrates the importance of working on gender norms in communities to enable the inclusion of individuals who face overlapping constraints.

Less Access to and Information about Public Policies and Programs

Most interviewees shared the impression that they feel "forgotten" by the government and demonstrated very little knowledge about public policies in the areas of education and labor. This speaks to the notion that resources are generally concentrated in urban areas, and that if poor urban youth face difficulties in accessing these opportunities, the struggle of rural youth is even more pervasive. A key informant from the education sector explained that, although in the past decade there have been several advances in the promotion of policies to improve the well-being of youth in Brazil, reaching out to the population is still a challenge, especially in the case of rural

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[58] A key informant explained that the few women who have inherited a plot from their families usually rent them out to male family members.

youth.[59] The best known governmental intervention by rural youth was ENEM.[60] Nevertheless, they had very little knowledge about the specificities of the program and how to access it. In the following quotation, a young rural man discusses the extent of the sense of "disconnectedness" faced by rural youth:

> *Q25: Rights are for everybody but I think they should give more opportunities... Here [in the agrovilas], we are a little less connected, you know, with the world outside. Some people don´t have internet, like, what we know about the world is limited... A lot of people also don't know, like, 'My god, how would I enroll in Enem?', they ask this question, 'like how am I going to arrive to that or to that place?' 'How am I going to look for the school, how am I going to study for this Enem exam?' You see? What I think they [the government] could do is to put some volunteers that would go after these people who have less means, people who are more disconnected from this world, you know? And see their real needs, you know? What is it that this young person is not understanding, what is the difficulty they have, you know? That's it. I would think that, especially government, should remind themselves more of us, of the rural youth, who are the less favored. Because the urban youth is up to date, they always get to hear about what is new, get it? And we here get kind of disregarded in some things... not everything.*
>
> *Man, 21 years, rural*

The disconnectedness goes beyond simple access to information on educational or training opportunities. It is also accompanied by a fear of the unknown and an inability to envision themselves navigating through the necessary steps one must go through to access such opportunities.

6 Building Resilience: Support Systems and the Sense of Possibility [61]

This final section presents the results from the analysis of the data collected through in-depth interviews with individuals who achieved successful school completion and entry into the job market despite their origin in the same urban neighborhoods in urban Pernambuco. It will explore facilitating factors and strategies that enabled these individuals to move forward in their educational and work trajectories.

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[59] This "distance" between rural youth and governmental resources was reflected in interviews with both youth and local key informants from the education and social sectors. Furthermore, it was also observed when visiting a social service unit targeting youth in the area where the fieldwork was conducted when unsuccessfully trying to explore more in-depth the condition of youth in the area through this entry-point. This may be interpreted as a reciprocal process: Youth are not reached by these services – because they are either not aware of such programs and institutions or do not see the value added from reaching out and services themselves fail to reach out to youth.

[60] Although Brazil has governmental programs to support family farming, such as PRONATEC Campo (rural technical courses), Technical Assistance and Rural Extension Services (ATER), Program to Stimulate Rural Productive Activities (Programa de Fomento às Atividades Produtivas Rurais) and Seeds Program (Programa Sementes), they were not mentioned by participants during interviews. This suggests they are either not available locally or that the local population is not aware of their existence.

[61] Five women and four men were recruited from the same urban communities used in the first phase of data collection. They were divided among two distinct groups: individuals who were attending or had concluded a technical course or a university degree; and individuals who had attended a technical course or a university degree and managed to secure a *"trabalho fixo com carteira assinada"* (fixed job) upon completion.

Although this group shared similar negative school[62] and work experiences compared to the first group interviewed, they demonstrated very different attitudes and meanings of these experiences. These young men and women attributed positive meanings to these experiences, seeing them as "stepping stones" to the achievement of their longer-term goals and speaking with pride about the need to persevere to achieve better living conditions. They mostly aspired to specific and high paying careers - such as business administration and engineering – and demonstrated structured plans with clear steps and realistic expectations of the difficulties they would face along the way. Their greater capacity for resilience, higher levels of self-confidence and self-reliability seem to be largely built upon their relationships with their families, peers and partners.

> *Q26: IR: So what is it that you think was positive or negative in the experiences you had...in all the schools that you have been so far?*
> *P: Perseverance. Perseverance. Because if I were to give up on the first obstacle that I saw, I would not be ... I think I would already be dead. Perseverance really is get hit, fall, rise and then go again.*
>
> *Man, 21 years, from urban Brasilit*

They also demonstrated clear and personal motivations to continue their educational and work trajectories. Interviewees who were out of work and out of school often conveyed aspirations in terms of their future work lives in a vague manner[63] and seemed unable to pinpoint the reasons for which certain jobs seemed attractive to them or how finishing high school could make a difference in their lives. In contrast, interviewees from this group demonstrated clear and personal motivations for pursuing a career or enrolling in a technical or university course. These included: the recognition of higher financial returns they could derive from more years of schooling; the intrinsic value of learning; the desire "to be somebody" or "to be successful in life"; the desire to contribute to the wellbeing of their families and to make other family members proud.

> *Q28: IR... but what motivated you really?*
> *P: The pride I took in seeing my father and mother smile. Because they have suffered so much in life, so, and when we arrived with a good grade, when we got into university, when we did anything good it was a very gratifying smile... I loved it.... Until today I love to see them happy for, for our achievements... It was ... divine, like that.*
>
> *Man, 21 years, from urban Brasilit*

Support Systems – How Families, Friends and Schools Can Make a Difference

The most striking difference between youth in this group and youth who were out of work and school was the level of parental involvement in youth's decisions about education, work or life in general. Almost all the interviewees were single, had no children and still lived with both parents. This is different from the setting of other

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[62] Another theme that emerged during the interviews with this group - and also mentioned by some key informants - was the importance of fulltime schooling in contributing to better educational outcomes.

[63] For example, a recurrent concept mentioned was the desire to "have a fixed job, not mattering which one".

interviewees, in which the incidence of mono-parental families was higher and unions and pregnancies happened early in their life. Youth in this group demonstrated more positive family relationships, using words such as "*diálogo*" (dialogue), "*apoio*" (support) and expressions that denote the family as a team. Parents and older family members acted as role models and motivating figures for them, monitoring their school activities and holding youth accountable for school outcomes. This is rather different from other groups interviewed, in which parents were less involved in adolescents' school lives and were not able to enforce their attendance in school. These interviewees referred to their parents' involvement positively, as protecting them against the harms of life and poor decision-making.

> *Q27: P: My parents, literally, nowadays, they don't ... it's not like: "Go, do the homework and do this and that," because ... I already have a vision far beyond what they have. They see me like... "Wow, my son is studying Engineering." For them it's a strange thing, but for many it is not ... but for them it's something ... extraordinary. Do you understand? And back in the days no, they were always on my neck "Go study, go study." Always on my neck...From time to time, my mother would come and be like: "Did you already study today? Be careful not to get involved with the boys from the street. Do not waste time". It was that way that it worked.*
>
> *Man, 21 years, from urban Brasilit*

This greater involvement provided them emotional support and encouragement in critical moments in their work or school lives. Transitions to high school or from high school to university or work life were described as emotionally and psychologically distressing experiences, when they had to navigate through an environment with new peers and rules of engagement. Participants shared several moments in which they considered giving up and when their parents' encouragement was crucial to move forward. This demonstrates how a parental or mentor figure can provide reassurance, guidance in managing tasks, as well as reassure the young adult that his or her reaction is not uncommon.

In addition, family members of this group also provided them with practical and financial support, protecting their children from the burden of early work. In some cases, parents actively searched for opportunities for their children or accompanied them to inquire more details about specific opportunities. This contrasts sharply with the experiences shared by other groups interviewed, who reported not knowing what to do, being discouraged by the "fear of the unknown" and the complex process required to enroll in a university or take a new job. This support seems to have the important effect of reducing the costs of searching for youth by creating a sense of shared risk and "team effort". In addition, most families did not require children to contribute financially to the household, and they protected them from excessive household chores. This is not trivial as the evidence base showing that negative effects of child labor on schooling outcomes is quite strong.[64] By instructing their children to prioritize school as their key responsibility, parents not only signal an important symbolic meaning to the children's education for the family as a whole, but also allow their children to dedicate their full time and energy in learning.

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[64] Sedlacek et al (2005), based on data from 16 Latin American countries, show that beyond school attainment, child labor has an even larger adverse effect on the pace of progression through school and the quality of attainment. Even more concerning, these negative results are stronger for the poor.

Also, from the young women's perspective, their relationships with partners seem more supportive and equal. Although most female interviewees from this group were single individuals living with their parents, some had relationships, others have had them in the past. When they refer to their relationships, they use words such as "mutual incentive" and "respect". Nevertheless, some young women in this group were still exposed to controlling behaviors from their partners. With clear aspirations and sense of priorities in their lives as well as a solid support system at home, these women demonstrate higher levels of agency and an increased capacity to make their own decisions and to exercise their power in relationships.

The Sense of 'Possibility': More Role Models and Networks - Particularly for Women

Individuals in this group also had more positive perceptions of their friendships and were more likely to have an extended network of friends outside the community. While they typically had a few long-term friends from the community, most of their current friends were from outside their community. Some described the process of having lost friends in the community throughout their lives as following "*caminhos diferentes*" ("different paths"). Their social mobility impacts their social networks (and vice versa), gradually detaching them from their local peers. This process is not easy – peers from their original networks show resentment which can create emotional distress. On the other hand, ties with peers who had similar interests gave them additional capacity to persevere as they found support in sharing the same struggles.

They had more cases of siblings, other family members and peers who had completed high school or had successfully entered the job market or university. When probed about what facilitated their access to study or work opportunities, most of them mentioned accessing information through a family member or a friend, who could pass on the information about the opportunity, suggest their names to prospective employers and help prepare them for job interviews or examinations. In addition, knowing people who had successfully graduated from technical schools or university in their social circle also gave them a greater sense of possibility for their aspirations and a means to emulate successful strategies to achievement them.

> *Q29: I had a really cool teacher, who later became director after I left... I finished high school. And then, after I finished... I learned that the teacher was picking up the list of students who ... who finished high school at that time .... to put them in a course, but in reality ... it was a selection for the young apprentice program. Then I went to that selection, I passed ... [Before that] I thought I would do nothing after I finished high school because I did not ... I could not afford a course. And then I passed this selection the following year after finishing high school ... and, uh ... I started working and studying at the same time, because whoever was a young apprentice had to study [in technical school]. And then I spent a year and nine months in this company and I left for ... this internship opportunity because it was paid. It was a huge difference. Because until today I am ... how would I say? The head of the household. I'm the one who puts money in the house...And that's how I got to the technical ... technical course.*
>
> *Woman, 23 years, from urban Caranguejo-Tabaiares*

The existence of role models was particularly important for young women. Interviewees in this group were significantly more exposed to working women in their lives than other interviewees. In addition, these young women were also more likely to identify working women as persons of reference in their lives precisely because of their

perseverance or hard work. This shows how positive role models for girls are important for helping girls build aspirations related to work and school.

Q30: I admire this aunt of mine because she has the nursing technician degree, she is very hardworking. She encourages me a lot, for me to grow. There is another aunt of mine, she is a school director. She is graduated in pedagogy. She encourages me ... they encourage me a lot, they are my inspiration. Not that my mother is not. My mother is my inspiration inside the home, you know? But in this matter of professional life it's my aunts. They are my mirror to never stop. Never Stop ... It's my aunts.

Woman, 23 years, from urban Caranguejo-Tabaiares

7 Discussion and Conclusions

This research explored the experiences, meanings, attitudes and perceptions of young men and women in Northeast Brazil who do not fully participate in the labor market nor in the education system. Interviews explored a range of themes related to individual, family and community contexts as well as experiences, perceptions and aspirations related to work and education.

We find essentially three different groups of young individuals who are not at work or at school. The first is composed of mostly women in unions or with small children who do not express any aspirations to return to school or work. These women have negative attitudes towards women's participation in the workplace and have their lives focused on the domestic sphere. The second group is composed of young men and women, predominantly single and with no children. They are not attracted to the low-skilled jobs they see available. They aspire to go back to school, to return to university or pursue specific careers, but do not take measures to achieve these goals. Their inaction seems to be related to the absence of role models in their close lives who have attempted to engage in similar tracks, which limits their access to information and instills a sense of not belonging. Finally, the third group is composed by young men and women who aspire to return to work or school and continually try but are faced with external barriers that they are unable to surpass. In terms of work, these barriers are associated with their lack of access to opportunities due to the perceived economic crisis and their lack of qualification and experience. In terms of education, they face difficulties in combining work and study, and their lack of financial resources leads them to prioritize work over education. Long distances, inadequate hours in which most education and work opportunities are offered, and discrimination from employers are other factors that emerge and that specifically constrain women's ability to combine employment or study with their care responsibilities.

One of the key findings is that the term "*nem-nem*" does not capture well the complex reality of these youth. The term seems to hide the fact that this is a highly heterogeneous group - individuals are participating in neither the labor market nor education for a variety of reasons. By treating them as a homogeneous group, policy makers may fail to provide effective policy measures to help change their circumstances.

The application of the term "*nem-nem*" in current research may also favor a mismeasurement of the problem. As the term often relies on a strict definition of

"work,"[65] it may fail to differentiate between complete inactivity, informality and engagement in unpaid work. Few of the individuals interviewed for this research were completely inactive. Participants demonstrated informal relationships to several forms of work. When asked whether they had worked in the previous week, participants answered negatively, but upon further questioning, they would describe having performed several informal sporadic jobs. They explained that, for them, "work" meant "having a fixed job" or "working for a boss". In addition, although many women did not engage in paid work, most fulfilled some type of caregiving role that involved long working hours at home. Given the differences in values and meanings attributed to work by society and participants themselves, studies may not always capture adequately the work conducted by these young people, who end up categorized as non-working individuals.

Second, by defining their life situations negatively, the term embeds a normative notion that stigmatizes youth while not recognizing their social exclusion is largely created by systemic policy failures. It portrays the picture of individuals who are to blame for not choosing a more "positive track of action", while ignoring the internal and external constraints that limit their access to opportunities throughout their individual journeys. This seems associated with the misconceived popular image of the "nem-nems" in Latin America as either middle-class individuals who choose not to work or study, or as young men who engage in crime and violence.[66]

A better understanding of the social context reveals that many young women and men interviewed are following the tracks perceived as possibilities given the social reality they live in. While it may be socially expected that a "middle-class" young woman will finish high school, go to university and engage in the formal workforce, this is not the case for most of the youth we encountered. Most youth interviewed have parents and peers who did not finish secondary school and who dropped out of school to engage in informal work. The results show how, in the absence of role models of individuals who achieved success in their careers in their proximity, young adults may not aspire to achieving anything beyond what they have at the moment (social context/ poverty and deprivation effect).

As the paper shows, even youth who are actively seeking to pursue new lives for themselves and their families were often defeated by the limited set of opportunities. A significant share among these youths did aspire to return to work, school or to engage in tertiary education. Nevertheless, the constant failed attempts can generate frustration and resignation in a context where services are of bad quality or where opportunities are unavailable (frustration/ lack of opportunities effect).

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[65] For example, de Hoyos et al (2016) define "ninis" as individuals aged between 15 and 24 years old who are not enrolled in formal education and reported not working at least one hour one week prior to the survey.

[66] Although there are no data for Brazil, De Hoyos et al (2016) point to the fact that a recent analysis done by Factiva of the terms most associated with "ninis" in the Mexican media found that the top 10 words included "violencia" (violence), "flojo" (lazy), "drogas" (drugs), and "inseguridad" (insecurity).

Besides the social context of poverty and lack of opportunities, gender norms are also powerful in keeping girls from aspiring to economic activity, which may create a vicious circle. Most women out of work and out of school who were interviewed also had female family members and peers who formed families during adolescence. This shapes their views of what is normal, acceptable and socially desirable. If young women perceive their roles as that of being wives, mothers, and not to be working for an income unless there is physical need for it, they will likely not aspire to do something different (gender effect). However, economic opportunities are important catalyzers for agency.[67] Not only will these women have lower aspirations related to employment and paid work, but they will also not accumulate the necessary endowments to succeed in the labor markets. This may have important negative effects also on their children, who will grow up in similarly vulnerable situations and conditions of poverty and gender inequality, framing their preferences and aspirations based on those.

The heterogeneity among youth out of work and out of school calls for a multi-pronged approach to reach these different groups. First, a challenge among all groups is the external barriers faced to access economic and educational opportunities: limited supply of governmental interventions and too stringent eligibility criteria (e.g., ENEM, Jovem Aprendiz, PROUNI, etc); inadequate times and methodologies of adult education and technical courses offered; lack of financial support; lack of secure and safe transportation; lack of care services; among others. Nevertheless, there is the need to go beyond these external factors to effectively reach youth.

Second, a vital step is building youth's agency - their capacity to aspire and take consistent action – to support them in creating and pursuing life projects that go beyond their limited perceptions of what is achievable. In other words, it is likely insufficient to increase the supply of technical schools with the objective of facilitating youth's participation in labor markets if this is not associated with interventions that: facilitate access to information about opportunities and how they can change their lives; instill a sense of belonging and preparedness for youth who feel the opportunities available are not for them; offer support or mentorship arrangements that help them cope with the difficulties associated the pursuit of a goal that requires challenging their mental frames of possibility. The paper shows that the promotion of aspirations related to work and education among youth, particularly women, is an important entry-point for programs and policies. It may be important to also offer young women and men higher-order cognitive and socio-emotional skills training. Programs which seek to improve higher-order cognitive skills build on basic cognitive competencies of literacy and math, and include skills such as critical thinking, decision-making, organization, efficiency, problem solving, written and oral communications (Cunningham and Villaseñor 2014). Socio-emotional skill components training can equip young people

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[67] Research on norms and agency drawing on data from women and men in 20 countries in all regions, for example, concluded that "women's ability to work for pay… may be one of the most visible and game-changing events in the life of modern households and all communities." (Muñoz Boudet et al. 2014)

with the capacity to think critically about social and gender norms and to avoid behaviors that perpetuate gender inequalities (Gimenez et al. 2015). Evidence shows that providing young people with these skills has positive impacts along many dimensions including education, health, and the labor market, both in the short and long term (Ibarraran et al. 2012, Bandiera et al. 2012, Cunningham and Villaseñor 2014).

Third, it is important to address gender norms in families and community, and at the individual level. Many women interviewed are unable to envision lives for themselves beyond the role of the caregiver and specific challenges in attempting to change their lives. It is important that interventions: expose them to other female role models and mentors that can instill a sense of possibility and support them in the challenges associated with the process of looking for a job or studying; support women's negotiation of household responsibilities; offer positive coping strategies to deal with negative community and family attitudes towards their work, education, and mobility. One channel to address norms is the media: In Brazil, La Ferrara et al (2012) show that exposure to soap operas, showing women with smaller families reduced fertility and increased divorce. Jensen and Oster (2009) provide similar evidence for India, showing that exposure to soap operas portraying urban women reduced fertility and domestic violence as well as changed beliefs about women's autonomy in rural India. A recent review of the existing evidence found that enhancing mass media programs with discussion groups at the community level can turn into particularly effective transmission channels for new values and norms, especially in rural sites (Marcus et al, 2014).

Finally, specific interventions are needed for rural areas. The findings from the rural sample indicate a need to: a) address gender roles and gendered division of labor; b) link education content with the reality of rural women and men while also allowing them to think of possibilities beyond farming; c) promote rural youth's capacity to aspire and create autonomy, especially among girls; d) connect youth with opportunities by ensuring affordable transportation and mobility to city hubs. Finally, because rural youth have less access to information, it is important that these interventions are combined with awareness raising on existing governmental youth programs, active search and mentoring schemes, which can be implemented through the school system.

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Annex 1: Original Quotations in Portuguese

Q1: *Entrevisador(a) (ER): Se tu pudesse escolher como seria a tua vida daqui a dez anos?*
Entrevistada (ED): Acho que a mesma. {Risos}
ER: Como assim a mesma?
ED: Mesma de sempre. Sempre... indo mermo.
ER: Sempre indo?
ED: É.
ER: Ee... em relação à trabalho, o que que tu pensa, assim? Tu queria ta trabalhando, não queria, ou não importa?
ED: Não, tá bom mermo do jeito que eu to.
ER: E tu pensa em... é... voltar a estudar?
ED: Não.

Q2: *ER" Tu acha que o fato de tu não tá trabalhando faz alguma diferença na sua vida?*
ED: Faz. Porque assim, a gente quer ter o nosso dinheiro, né. Não quer tá dependendo também só de homem. De ninguém. Aí contar só com o nosso dinheiro. Porque pra tudo tem que depender deles. Se quiser comprar uma roupa, ter que perguntar se vai dar pra pagar. Pra fazer alguma coisa tem que ter dinheiro. E se ele não tiver? E eu tendo já é diferente".

Q3: *ED: "Eu pensei no Enem, só que no dia que fui me inscrever estava fora do sistema e eu não quis fazer mais. Eu pretendo fazer faculdade, fazer um concurso público e o que eu quero me formar é medicina. Mas pelo que estou vendo, medicina tem que estudar muito. Ou medicina ou enfermagem. Alguma profissão eu quero ter. E concurso público, sei lá, eu acho que não tenho paciência para estudar. Pegar um livro e dizer 'eu vou estudar hoje', eu não tenho. Sei lá, acho que minha paciência já terminou"*

Q4: *ED: "Uma vez meu irmão falou para mim 'vai lá no Senac, vai lá no Senai, tu tem habilidade com várias coisas, vê um curso que tu quer fazer que eu pago'. Eu até fui, mas as coisa lá são muito caras e aí eu fiquei meio com vergonha de falar para ele, mas às vezes ele pergunta 'e aí, foi lá?'. E eu digo a ele que vou, mas eu fico meio sem jeito de ficar dependendo dele. E por isso....Tudo bem, eu posso fazer isso, mas para a gente homem é um pouco difícil você ficar dependendo. Eu sei que eu moro aqui nessa casa com minha esposa, dependo da minha mãe, meu irmão e mais a gente se sente incomodado com isso. Eu não me sinto bem com isso".*

Q5: *ED: "Acho que poderia trazer mais, assim, cursos que fossem beneficiar melhor a gente. Fazer tipo, levantar assim para saber realmente o que a gente quer, né. Porque geralmente quando tem de cozinha aqui, curso de cozinha, quando eles trazem, a prefeitura, tudinho, é mais senhoras assim. Jovem não vejo ir, porque não tem interesse nessa área. Então acho que deveriam levantar, saber direitinho o que a gente, o interesse da gente, da comunidade".*

Q6: *ED "Então, tá muito difícil pra todo mundo. A última vez que eu fui na agência de trabalho, é... tava muito cheio, e aí no horário que eu cheguei já não tinha mais ficha. E, geralmente... tenho entregado muito currículo, é.... fiz algumas seleções, mas infelizmente eu não evoluí. Mas eu não desisti ainda... To fazendo outros, pra deixar em casa pra quando surgir uma oportunidade eu já tá pronta. Mas tá bem difícil. É, Pra que tem mais experiência do que eu, e pra mim que tenho menos, complica mais"*

Q7: *ED: Fiz uma entrevista semana passada, tinha eu e mais quatro meninas. Eu acho que eu perdi a oportunidade, até porque o dono falou que tinha gostado muito de mim e tudo mais, mas perdi a oportunidade na hora que perguntou quem tem filho e de todas que estavam, uma tinha um e eu era a única que tinha dois. E dois, um bebê. Quando ele perguntou a idade e eu falei que tinha um de um ano e três meses, a primeira coisa que ele perguntou, você tem uma estrutura montada pra alguém olhar seu filho bebê? E eu disse tenho. E ele disse seu filho mama? E eu disse mama. Então aí eu acho que caiu, eu não vou porque criança pede quando tá doente, então eu acho que ele não queria alguém faltando no trabalho por conta de uma criança que estaria doente. Não que ele adoeça constante, mas tem aquele medo, de não ficar com aquela pessoa que esteja com a criança. Que falta pra levar pra médico, pra dar vacina. Aí eu acho que foi isso que ele não me deu realmente a oportunidade.*

Q8: ER: O que é que tu acha que podia acontecer para melhorar essa situação? Para tu conseguir um trabalho, o que é que tu acha que podia ajudar você a conseguir um trabalho?
ED: Eu no momento não acho que nada. Que sempre quando eu boto ninguém nunca chama. Eu já perdi as esperanças já.
ER: Por que você perdeu?
ED: Porque de tanto eu colocar currículo e ninguém nunca me chamar. Só lugar que, se eu for mesmo sem currículo é só na banca de bicho mesmo. Você vai lá, fala e ele coloca numa banca.

Q9: ED: Os professores tratam a gente muito mal, tratam o aluno muito mal e também tem muito aluno que não quer nada com a vida e fica nos corredores bagunçando, gritando e ninguém faz nada. Às vezes a diretora chega e reclama, mas parece que não adianta. E às vezes as coisas acontecem, você ia na diretoria reclamar e ninguém dava atenção. A diretora não dava atenção ao que você falava.

Q10: ED: Tinha professor que, na verdade as aulas desses professores era chegar na sala e escrever no quadro e a gente tinha que copiar no caderno. Isso para mim não é aula, para mim, se eu tivesse que ir para a escola fazer isso, eu posso fazer isso em casa e aí eu não acho que isso é bom. Mas tinha professor que dava aula, que contava realmente. Se era professor de história contava as coisas que aconteciam, não só o que estava no livro, mas trazia outras coisas. Tinha professor que usava filme às vezes para a gente poder conversar depois sobre o filme. Então esses professores eram bons. Agora de todos os professores, você encontrava dois, às vezes três, que eram bons. O resto tudinho ou não tinha professor ou eram professores e professoras que não estavam nem aí para o aluno, nem aí para dar aula direito e aí a gente não se sentia com vontade de estar na escola.

Q11: ED: Na verdade, eu tentei [voltar], que foi justamente ano passado. Porque o emprego estava segurando todo o tempo que eu tinha. Eu pegava duas da tarde e saía três horas da madrugada. Aí para ir para o cais de Santa Rita, pegar o busão para ir para a casa. Aí onde moro demora mais ou menos meia hora, 40 minutos. Aí chegava em casa tinha que comer alguma coisa, tomar banho e quando eu ia olhar para o céu já estava claro, já estava de dia. Aí ia para a escola e dormia, não conseguia ficar acordado nem a pau... Eu não estava conseguindo estudar. Aí eu decidi que eu ia sair mesmo. Ou era a escola ou era o emprego.

Q12: ED: "Terminou os estudos, terminou o curso de enfermagem... Até minha sogra mesmo fala, a mãe dela, terminar seus estudos e fica se matando aí. Porque ela trabalha na cozinha. De domingo a domingo. Aí que nem eu tava dizendo, pra pessoa que terminou os estudos e tá se matando na cozinha dos outros?...

Q13: ED "Eu estudei até a quarta série, repeti duas vezes e por isso é que eu enjoei de ir para a escola. Eu achei que se eu estou repetindo, então não estou aprendendo. Da primeira série até a quarta série eu não repeti. Quando chegou na quarta serie eu comecei a repetir. Eu estudei três anos na quarta série aí eu enjoei ... Aí eu dei uma parada... Quando eu repeti as três vezes, não tive mais ânimo para estudar"

Q14: ED: "Se eu saísse do meu emprego por causa da escola mainha ia botar, sei lá, eu não sei o que ela poderia fazer, se ela ia me expulsar de casa. Porque ela já fez isso várias vezes. Então eu preferi fica no emprego e sair da escola. Para não criar conflito maior em casa."

Q15: ED: Ah, eu comecei a namorar com ele, aí fui morar com ele.. aí eu saí, não quis mais estudar não... Eu tinha doze, treze anos..
ER: Como é que você tomou a decisão de não ir mais?
ED: É, ele não queria também que eu fosse...[Falava] 'Não vai não, pra escola não'. Aí eu comecei a trabalhar também na roça, aí... fui mais não... Às vezes eu ía uma semana, aí... dois dias não. Aí... aí comecei a faltar, faltar... e pronto, fui mais não.
ER: Ee... e tua família nessa época? Alguém falou alguma coisa?
ED: Não.

Q16: ED: Não, conversei não, com alguém sobre isso. Só disse a mainha que não queria mais estudar...
ER: E sua mãe, quando você falou que não ia estudar mais, o que que ela disse pra você?
ED: Ela ficou aperreada, querendo que eu fosse pra escola estudar. Mas sei lá, eu achei que não dava, disse a ela que não dava mais, aí eu engravidei, aí ela não ligava mais, quando eu engravidei ela não ligou mais pra nada. Nem eu, aí pronto, parei de estudar de vez.

Q17: ED: Tipo assim, é... se... pra trabalhar, muitas vezes, assim, já apareceu oportunidade de trabalhar e ele fica "não, não vai pro trabalho", essas coisas, assim.. E ele dizia "eu já trabalho, não precisa você trabalhar e não sei o que", essas coisas.
ER: E como é que é pra você isso?
ED: É ruim. Eu converso muito com ele, e assim, eu creio... ele tá mudando ..

Q18: ED: Eu não tenho amiga nenhuma aqui. (Por que?). Aqui não tenho amiga nenhuma. Eu fico só dentro de casa.
ER: E por que não tem amigas?
ED: Eu não gosto de estar nessa rua. (Por que?) Porque aqui essas amizades falam com você agora e dali a pouco quando você sai estão falando de você por trás. Aí não quero essas amizades, prefiro estar sozinha.

Q19: ED: Porque a gente tem é uma profissão desde que nasce. Quem nasce na roça, já nasce com uma profissão, que é ser agricultor. A questão acadêmica é um processo posterior, que eu posso ter ou não outra profissão, mas eu já nasço com uma naquele lugar.

Q20: ED: "Então muito debatemos sobre a importância de dialogar uma educação no campo, mas para as pessoas que são do campo. Então uma educação que esteja no semiárido, mas que não fale simplesmente do sul do país. É importante que conheçamos as outras realidades, outros biomas, mas é fundamental e estratégico que esses jovens.. se enxerguem dentro dessa realidade. Porque é muito ruim a gente sair lá da nossa propriedade, da nossa roça onde a gente chupa manga e ir para a sala de aula e ouvir falar em uva como ouvimos tanto...

Q21: ED: Acho que eu vou ter que... trabalhar, assim, pra ver se já consegue alguma coisa, pensando em trabalhar, aí... aprender a trabalhar mais, que nem meu tio me ensina, você não sabe negócio de encanador, você tem que prestar atenção ali pra aprender, um negócio de uma roça, porque tem muitos que plantam roça, não sabem a medida de um veneno (Hum), você tem que aprender isso, que se você for plantar só, isso aí... é... ..Se eu vou plantar roça só, você tem que saber aquilo ali, aquele... aquela medida certa, não pode botar aquele veneno demais, água no total... ce sabe como é, né. Ce tem que saber..

Q22: ED: E pra ele é mais fácil trabalhar de roça, assim, de limpar... (uhum) Agora, pra mulher não...
ER: Por que não?
ED: Porque assim, pra homem tem "envenenar"... mulher não envenena, né? {Risos} Envenenar, mexer com enxada e tudo. Pra mulher, tem os serviços de mulher aí... limpar cebola, tirar mato de cebola... essas coisa.

Q23: ER: É... mas pra menina... pra... pra ter um trabalho, aqui, é possível, morando aqui?
ED: Não... Se não for assim,... exemplo: que nem no posto, tem que ter feito um curso mermo pra poder... (Uhum)... tem a enfermeira... e tem auxiliar de enfermeira, que é uma auxiliar de enfermagem...... mas ela também teve que estudar pra poder fazer. Mas é pequeno... não tem como...Não tem, assim, outro...
ER: Já tem os empregos, né, no posto (É, já tem gente), na escola já tem gente? Então a opção pra meninas é...
ED: Só dá ir pra rua[68]*...E nem todas... querem ir, né.*
ER: Hm... E por que que cê acha que elas não querem ir?
ED: Assim, às vezes muitos, né, os pais... num, num deixam. Essas duas não... por causa da avó, morava lá, né, aí elas foram...e a outra também ía mas não conseguiu mais o empreguinho...
ER: Então ce tá falando... algumas os pais não deixam... (É)... outras não conseguem...
ED: É.
ER: E os... e os maridos?
ED: Essas duas... essas são solteira.

Q24: ED: Aí sempre é assim nós tamo em crise de separação, é... é muita coisa, num... eu tenho oito anos que eu vivo com ele, eu me juntei com ele, eu tinha dezessete ano, mas no começo era bom, agora tá muito difícil. Ele passou a ser um homem agressivo (Uhum)... por qualquer coisa zoa, ameaças de morte... tem tudo... ainda, ainda a gente vai se prendendo, porque quem tem criança pequena, pra sair pra casa dos outro é muito difícil, né (Hum), mas assim, ele põe as coisas dentro de casa, não falta a feira, num falta o alimento, tudo bem, mas a

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[68] Expression that means to go live in the urban area.

gente não vive só por causa disso. Não adianta viver com uma pessoa que não lhe valoriza, quando bebe, quer lhe agredir, lhe ameaça, joga na cara que o que tem é dele... num... a vida, minha vida praticamente é essa.

Q25: *"Os direitos são de todos...mas.... eu acho que eles deviam dar mais oportunidade.... aqui é um pouco menos conectado, sabe... com o mundo aí a fora. Tem gente que não tem internet... tipo o que a gente conhece o mundo.... muitos também não sabem, né, tipo... "Meu Deus, como é que vou me inscrever no ENEM..." fazem essa pergunta, "Meu Deus, como é que eu vou fazer... como é que eu vou chegar no tal canto?", ".. como é que eu vou procurar a escola, vou, é... estudar, que eu vou fazer essa prova do ENEM?", entendeu? Eu acho que eles... poderiam fazer o que? É, colocar... pessoas voluntárias, vir à procura dessas pessoas.. que tem menos possibilidade, que, que é um pouco desconectado -desse mundo, entendeu?. É... e... vir pra ver qual é a necessidade, entendeu?..... o que é que o jovem não tá entendendo, qual é a dificuldade que ele tem, entendeu?. É isso. Eu acharia assim., principalmente o governo, que .... lembrasse mais da gente, né, do, dos jovens rurais, que são os menos favorecidos.. entendeu? Porque o jovem urbano .. ta atualizado, ele sempre tá sabendo das novidade, entendeu? E a gente aqui fica meio desprezado em algumas coisas (Hum), em algumas coisas, não em tudo, né...*

Q26: *ER: E aí, então, o que é que tu tira de bom oou também de ruim nessa experiência nas escolas, não só no Novaes Filho, mas todas as escolas que passasse até agora? ED: Perseverança. Perseverança. Porque se eu fosse desistir no primeiro obstáculo que eu visse, eu num tava... eu acho que já taria morto (Uhum). Perseverança mesmo é bater, cair e levantar e ir de novo.*

Q27: *Meus pais, literalmente, hoje em dia, eles não... não é daquela forma "Vai, Pedro, fazer a tarefa e tal, fazer isso e aquilo outro", porquee... eu já to numa visão bem além do que eles têm. Que eles me veem assim... "po, o meu filho ta fazendo Engenharia". Pra eles é uma coisaa... estranha, mas pra muitos não são... não é mais nada, mas pra eles é uma coisa... extraordinária. Entendeu? Eee... antigamente não, antigamente eles tava lá sempre no meu pé. "Pedro, estudar, Pedro". Se-sempree no pé. .. De vez em quando que mainha chegava lá: "Pedro, já estudasse hoje? Cuidado pra tu não se envolver com os menino daqui da rua. Não sei quê. Não perca tempo". Era dessa forma que funcionada.*

Q28: *ER:... mas o que tinha de incentivo realmente?*
ED: O orgulho de ver meu pai e minha mãe sorrir, assim, porque eles já sofreram tanto na vida, assim, e quando a gente chegava com uma nota boa, quando a gente passava em vestibular, quando a gente fazia qualquer coisa boa era um sorriso muito gratificante, assim... eu adorava. Eu... até hoje em dia eu adoro ver eles felizes pela, pela nossa conquista, assim. Era um... divino, assim.

Q29: *Eu tinha um professor muito legal, que depois ele se tornou diretor depois que... eu terminei o segundo grau. E aí.. depois que terminou, éé... o segundo grau, a, eu fiquei sabendo que o professor tava pegando a lista dos alunos que... que terminaram o terceiro ano naquela época pra... pra colocar em um curso, mas na, mas na verdade foi... uma seleção que teve pra jovem aprendiz, e aí eu fui pra essa seleção, passei... eu pensava que não ía fazer mais nada, porque não tinha... até porque não tinha como pagar um curso, depois que eu terminei o terceiro grau... terceiro ano. E aí eu passei nessa seleção, no ano seguinte, após o término do, do segundo grau... e, ee... comecei a trabalhar e a estudar ao mesmo tempo, porque quem era jovem aprendiz tinha que ta estudando. E aí eu passei um ano e nove meses nessa empresa e saí para a... essa oportunidade de estágio por conta da remuneração. Foi, foi uma diferença enorme. .. Porque até hoje eu sou... como eu diria? O chefe da casa. Sou eu quem boto dentro de casa. E aí quando eu fui sair dessee... da pre... do jovem aprendiz para o estágio, eu não sabia que tinha que tá fazendo curso. Foi aí que eu cheguei no curso técn... técnico.*

Q30: *... eu admiro essa minha tia que ela tem o técnico de enfermagem, ela é muito batalhadora. Ela me incentiva muito, pra questão de crescer, tem também outra minha tia, que ela é diretora de colégio. Ela é formada em pedagogia. Ela me incentiva... elas me incentiva muito, é minha inspiração, são elas. Não que minha mãe não seja. A minha mãe é minha inspiração dentro de casa, assim. Mas nessa questão de profissional são minhas tias. Elas são meus espelho para nunca parar. Nunca parar... É minhas tias.*

Annex 2: Extended Methodology

Research Design and Implementation

Data collected. The paper is based on 77 in-depth interviews with young men and women (18-25 years)[69] who were out of work and out of school in rural and urban Pernambuco, Brazil. Interviews explored a range of themes including: family and community contexts; experiences and perceptions about work and education; aspirations and plans for the future, and perceived barriers to implement them; and knowledge about public policies. A set of nine "positive deviance cases" (PD) was also collected from urban sites to investigate the factors and strategies that enabled some individuals to complete high school and enroll in technical schools or university or to enter the job market. In addition, 18 key informant interviews were conducted with local community leaders, policy practitioners and academics in the areas of education and labor to inform the research design as well as to capture their perspectives on the issue.

Fieldwork. Fieldwork was conducted in the period between March and November of 2016. The team included four field researchers from diverse backgrounds. Fieldwork was conducted in three phases: first with key informants and youth out of work and out of school in urban sites, then with "positive deviance cases" in the same urban sites, and finally with youth out of work and out of school in rural sites.

Criteria for selecting field sites. First, communities were locations in which field researchers had prior experience to facilitate participant recruitment and to secure safe entry for the field team. Second, communities were characterized as areas with moderate to high levels of poverty.[70] Third, communities did not have strong presence of NGOs.[71] In the case of rural communities, field sites should also have economies based primarily on agriculture and family farming.[72]

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[69] Adolescent males and females were not recruited because of ethical concerns and respective research procedures. For example, Brazilian regulations require that informed consent is obtained both from the minor and their guardian, which would make recruitment substantially harder.

[70] Data were collected from small communities composed of mostly informal settlements with low access to infrastructure such as water and sanitation or pavement and services. In the absence of official poverty data for these small communities, we relied on these characteristics as proxy for levels of poverty as well as on the assessment provided by fieldworkers.

[71] The rationale behind this criterion is that communities with strong NGO presence can have different social and political configurations in comparison to others that do not.

[72] The terms 'family agriculture' or 'family farming' were formally established under the National Program for the Strengthening of Family Farming- PRONAF (Decree No. 1946 of 28/06/96), which legally defined it as: 'The family unit (…) comprises the set of individuals within the nuclear family (husband or partner, wife or partner and children) and other individuals who exploit the same rural property under various ownership conditions, but strictly under the management of the family, including cases in which the property is operated by an individual with no family.' In 2006, 84.4 percent of all agricultural establishments in Brazil belonged to family farmers (IBGE 2007). Therefore, our criteria reflect the intention to select a field work site as representative of the reality of rural Brazil as possible.

Criteria for selecting participants. Two different groups of participants who were not at work or at school were recruited: 1) youth who self-reported as "not having studied or worked in the last year"; and 2) youth who "did not study but had informal temporary work (less than 20 hours) in the month prior to the interview."[73] The PD cases were also divided into two groups: 1) youth who were currently attending or had concluded a technical course or a university degree; 2) youth who had concluded a technical course or a university degree and managed to secure a *"trabalho fixo com carteira assinada"* (formal fixed job)[74] upon completion.[75]

Box 1: Research Design Adaptations Based on Realities Encountered in the Field

The initial criterion for selecting all participants was stricter than the one applied in the very end: youth (18-25 years) who did not study or work (either formally or informally) within the past year. However, during fieldwork, recruiting male participants became nearly unfeasible. First, males were more likely to be out of the house and to refuse participation. Second, almost all males reported having engaged - although infrequently - in some sort of informal income generation activity in the last year. Third, many potential interviewees who local key informants identified as matches to the criteria did not self-identify as such. Their hesitation appeared to stem from feelings of shame and inferiority imparted by the social pressure to be economically active. Finally, even those who self-identified as matches to the stricter criterion were likely to reveal during the interview that they engaged in infrequent income generation activities in the last year. We interpret this as a demonstration of participants' informal and naturalized relationships to several forms of informal work, especially in rural areas. To adapt to this difficulty, we adopted broader criteria by dividing our target sample into the two groups mentioned above. Nevertheless, recruiting males remained difficult. As a result, most of our male participants belong in "group 2". All of them reported not having any fixed income.

Recruitment strategy. A mix of recruitment strategies were adopted to accommodate the features of each site. Overall, participants were identified through local key

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[73] The literature review conducted for this study showed the heterogeneity in definitions applied in different studies to describe "*ninis*" or *"nem-nems"*. The main differences were related to whether or not youth who are "unemployed" or "looking for work" should be included or not, or whether merely the "inactive/ not currently looking for a job" should be included. Similarly, the age range considered also varied between different studies as well as the consideration of whether non-remunerated work was accounted for as work or not.

[74] We define "fixed job" as a formal, remunerated, personal, non-eventual job that is performed under subordination of a stable employer. The Consolidation of the Labor Laws (CLT) of 1943 instituted the use of the "*carteira assinada*" (formal contract), which records a worker employment history. The CLT also included a large body of laws that determine the individual and collective rights of workers such as: maximum hours of work per week; maximum overtime hours per week; the extent of paid leave; the duration of paid maternity leave; the minimum working conditions; the minimum notice period for dismissal; and so on. It also determines who is a formal worker and who is not, through the obligation to use the *"carteira"* (Gill 2002).

[75] There are two reasons for using these parameters for defining "positive deviance" cases. First, a recurrent concept mentioned by the first two groups interviewed (youth out of work or school) when discussing their aspirations was their desire to have a fixed job with *carteira assinada*. Hence, we use this as a definition of success derived inductively from interviewees themselves. Second, because the non-PD sample is composed of those who do not work, work in infrequent and instable jobs and do not study, we can define that a parameter for success would be those who study or have formal fixed jobs.

informants' suggestions, random "door-to-door knocking", snowballing[76] or a combination of those. Fieldwork was conducted in three phases in the period between March and November 2016.[77] Table 1 summarizes the data collected, recruitment strategies and criteria used in each phase.

Table 1: Summary of Data Collected, Recruitment Strategies and Criteria Used

	Rationale	Recruitment Strategy	Criteria
Phase 1: Urban Pernambuco: 55 in-depth interviews: •29 females (18-25yrs) •16 males •10 key informants	• What are young men and women's perceptions about school, work, public policies, aspirations, plans for the future, barriers to their participation in school, university or the labor market?	• Poor urban communities; entry into community safe for interviewers. • Recruitment through a mixture of door-to-door and snowballing, facilitated by community leaders.	• Group 1: Did not study and did not work during the last year. • Group 2: Did not study during the last year, but had informal, temporary work (less than 20 hours during the last month).
Phase 2: Positive Deviance (PD) Cases in Urban Pernambuco 9 in-depth interviews: • 5 females • 4 males	• In the same urban context, why do some "make it" and others don't? What are the factors that support them in achieving these outcomes? How can those factors be fostered for others?	• Same communities as Non-PD. • Facilitated by community leader.	• Group 1: Have attended or are attending a technical course or university. • Group 2: Have attended or are attending a technical course or university and have a fixed job.
Phase 3: Rural Pernambuco 40 in-depth interviews: •19 females (18-25yrs) •13 males •8 key informants	• How does family, social, education and productive structures differ between urban and rural contexts?	• Same as urban: entry safe and contact availability; locality "typically rural" with little access to untypical opportunities.	• Same as urban non-PD.

Research Instruments. The interview guide for phase 1 was developed based on the main research questions and taking into consideration topics that emerged from a selective review of literature[78] collected using the terms "*nem-nems*" and "youth disengagement" and focused on Brazil and Latin American countries. These emerging themes were used to develop interview guides and are broadly presented in table 2. They contained open-ended questions organized in the following sections: family and community contexts, relationships and daily lives; experiences and perceptions about education; experiences and perceptions about work; aspirations, plans for the future and perceived barriers to implement them; and a final section on public policies.[79] Phase 2 instruments were similar but with greater emphasis on facilitating factors to

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[76] Snowballing is a non-probability method used when the desired sample characteristic is rare. Respondents are selected on the criteria of their ability to provide certain information that may be relevant to the study.

[77] Three female researchers and one male researcher interviewed women and men, respectively, aiming to ease participants' comfort when discussing sensitive topics.

[78] Some traditional approaches to qualitative research resist formal literature reviews prior to the onset of collecting field data due to the belief that qualitative studies should attempt to capture the "meaning" of events, including their unique time, place, and distinct historical moment. Following the approach suggested by Yin (2015), the main purpose of the selective review was to refine our preliminary considerations regarding the specific array of previous studies directly related to the topic of study, method, and data source.

[79] Interviewers were instructed to cover key questions laid out in the instrument while also probing for unforeseen themes brought by participants.

remaining in school or at work. Phase 3 instruments had the same structure as the initial one but emphasized family organization of work and production.

Table 2: Themes Addressed in Research Instruments

Dimensions	Main Themes Covered	Dimensions	Main Themes Covered
Individual and context related factors	o Gender roles and stereotypes o Role models and social interactions o Family relations and resources; o Involvement in crime and violence; victimization o Self-esteem	Future	o Aspirations, expectations and existence of plans for the future o Expectations for future o Sense of control of their lives o Implications for partner/family relations/family planning
Educational factors	o Experiences in and perceptions of the educational system o Meaning and perceived utility of education o Perceptions about the fairness of the school system	Public Policy	o Access to information about specific policies, perceptions about those, gender diferences in accessing these
Labor market & income generation	o Income generation and labor market experiences and perceptions o Experience looking for jobs o Meaning of professional career/ participation in the labor market o Perceptions about "fairness" / meritocracy in the labor market	Gender-related dimensions	o (Gendered) social norms around secondary schooling and about labor market participation o The role of early unions, care and teenage pregnancy (girls) o Early unions and the pressure to be the 'breadwinner' (boys) o The role of engagement in crime and violence

Data Storage. All interviews were audio recorded and fully transcribed. Audios, signed consent forms and transcriptions were stored under unique identifiers under the responsibility of the lead researcher to protect participants' confidentiality.

Data Analysis. The analysis process was organized in the following steps. (i) Prior to categorizing the data, two workshops with the four field researchers and two research assistants were held at the end of phases 1 and 3, in which each team member shared their experience and preliminary assessment of key themes emerging from the data. (ii) An in-depth analysis of selected transcripts was conducted separately and simultaneously by the lead researcher and an independent research firm.[80] This involved reading each data document several times and identifying the key categories and patterns among them. (iii) Based on the previous two steps, a list of codes was created. All transcripts were then coded by two team members using the software Atlas.ti. (iv) Data organized under each category were read and analyzed according to participant characteristics (e.g., location, gender, marital status).[81] This allowed the team to better understand the heterogeneity of themes emerging for different groups in the sample. And (v) a comprehensive literature review was conducted to understand how the study's emerging findings dialogued with existing literature on several topics. This approach to data analysis allowed the team to balance the need for a policy focus,

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[80] In the co-analysis arrangement, independent researchers work with the research team to analyze and understand the flow of the qualitative data as well as organize data management and research implementation strategies.

[81] For example, all data from urban women were analyzed first, followed by data from urban men. Next, urban women were split into those in unions and those not in unions and data from each group were analyzed separately.

keep the analysis grounded in the data, and take advantage of investigator triangulation.[82]

Box 2: Ethical Standards and Protocols

Consent as a process. Prior to all interviews, participants were given consent forms stating: broad objective[83] of the research and its confidential nature; who was sponsoring the study; how long the process would take; the major themes that would be covered during interviews; any costs and benefits that they might incur from their participation; and their right to withdraw their participation at any point: before, during or after the research. In addition, participants were also given the opportunity to ask any questions before signing the forms[84] and were asked if they wanted to continue at the end of each section. Interviews were conducted in private spaces to ensure participants' confidentiality.

Team training. The research team received training based on WHO ethical guidelines (2001) prior to fieldwork. Protocols were developed to be followed during fieldwork for: participant recruitment; dealing with difficult situations such as aggressive behavior from participants or bystanders; security threats; and responding to reports of domestic violence.[85]

Data handling. All interviews were audio recorded and fully transcribed. Transcripts were stored in a protected database managed by the research coordinator, along with observation sheets, audio files and consent forms. To ensure confidentiality, consent forms with participants' names had no direct link to the data, which were anonymized and stored under unique identifiers.

Limitations of this Research

Certain themes and realities were not explored in-depth in this research. Participation in crime and violence was not actively explored due to safety concerns. Underage individuals were not included in the sample given the need for parental consent, which would have complicated recruitment. We were not able to explore how race and ethnicity might impact the situation of youth.[86] In addition, stigma faced by

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[82] Investigator triangulation involves using several researchers in the analysis process. The perspectives of each investigator are then compared to develop a broader and deeper understanding of the data.

[83] Researchers explained that the objective of the research was to investigate youth's experiences and perceptions about education and work and stated that for that purpose individuals were sought who matched the given criteria. This strategy aimed to avoid stigmatization of interviewees.

[84] This research followed the principles of protection of human subjects outlined by the Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects in Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1978) and the WHO Ethical Guidelines and safety recommendations for research on domestic violence against women (2001).

[85] The team held a full day workshop to: align and discuss the research themes and approach; discuss ethical standards and protocols for conducting interviews and handling data; pilot research instruments; receive safety training; and how to respond to difficult situations and reports of domestic violence. This included a range of simulation exercises. For example, in terms of dealing with a disclosure of exposure to domestic violence, researchers were instructed on how to react to avoid re-victimization of participants, what was appropriate to ask, how to stop or change the topic to protect participants from distress and how to forward victims to the nearest social services.

[86] The importance of analyzing overlapping constraints has been highlighted through the concept of intersectionality (see for instance: Tas, Reimao, and Orlando (2013)). The authors show how the intersectionality approach seeks to understand and analyze gender in combination with other identities. According to that approach, the intersection of identities (gender, sexual identity and orientation, ethnicity, etc.) produces different experiences and relations when comparing different groups. This can significantly affect outcomes and lead to "cumulative disadvantages". Overlapping

young men who are not "breadwinners" may have caused a self-selection of interviewees who felt less pressure to be economically active.

The sample was limited to low-income populations in certain locations of rural and urban Pernambuco who may face a reality different from that of youth in families with higher incomes or in other geographic locations. For example, families with higher incomes may have more resources to support their young members in coping with difficulties in school or when transitioning out of work. Different socioeconomic realities may shape youth's experiences with education systems[87] and their access to the labor market. Finally, different political contexts in other geographical locations may affect the implementation and availability of the public policies discussed here.

Qualitative research is not representative of the whole population, but that does not compromise its validity. Rather, findings from qualitative research should be understood and used in ways that are different from quantitative findings. The objective is not to test causalities and generalize findings. It is precisely by studying the conditions, meanings and practices found in specific contexts that qualitative research can provide a deeper insight into the heterogeneity within a generalized picture. Doing this also allows for the collection of data that can help in refining theories, but also alerts for the caution needed when applying those theories to specific contexts.

Description of Field Sites

This subsection provides a brief description of field sites-based data from observations, key informant interviews and data collected from official statistics when available.

Urban Communities: Caranguejo-Tabaiares, Brasilit and Córrego do Jenipapo, Recife (Pernambuco)

The three urban field sites consist in informal urban settlements in Recife, the capital of Pernambuco. According to key informants, these areas were progressively occupied from the early 1900s by low-income populations due to rural migration and land price hikes. Without proper urban planning, they became densely populated while lacking basic services such as paving, water and sanitation and garbage collection. All households in these sites have access to electricity.

The areas have relatively good access to labor markets and educational services. Some are embedded in neighborhoods with higher levels of income per capita, which facilitates the access to quality social services.[88] All sites have access to a variety of transport alternatives including several bus lines and, in some cases, metro. Also, labor

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constraints do matter in this context though: Black women in Brazil (when controlling for household wealth) have a higher probability to become a *nem-nem* compared to white women (Simoes et al 2013).

[87] For example, in Brazil, youth from richer families will tend to attend private schools with significantly better infrastructure than public schools.

[88] For example, Brasilit is located within the middle-class neighborhood of Várzea, and local youth make use of schools, health units, parks and leisure areas of that neighborhood.

markets and formal employment opportunities in the industrial and commercial sectors are within feasible reach.[89] Neighborhoods in these areas are highly commercial, with several bars, markets, bakeries, hair salons and restaurants. According to key informants, the commercial sector, street vending and domestic work are common jobs for the local population.

Although all areas have access to public schools, their infrastructure is generally considered poor by informants.[90] In addition, two of the communities have access to public childcare, but vacancies are scarce. In all communities, educational attainment is low.[91]

Crime and violence and drug abuse are present problems in these areas, especially among youth. Participants shared a general sense of deterioration of the security situation in all communities. This was attributed to drug and alcohol consumption as well as the increase in the number of gangs and drug trafficking.

Houses are typically very small and primarily made of masonry and stilt, and are usually built wall-to-wall. It is common for multiple nuclear families to live in the same household[92] or for extended family members to live in the neighboring houses. Streets in the communities are narrow and cars are not able to pass through several of them. Social life within the communities is very lively, with people typically staying in front of their houses talking and children playing in the street. The several bars located in the communities also contribute to social life.

Rural Communities: The Agrovilas[93] of Petrolândia

Petrolândia is a city located 430 km inland from Recife, in the semiarid region of the state of Pernambuco. The city was built in the context of the construction of a

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[89] Out of the selected communities, Caranguejo/Tabaiares is the closest to central Recife. The area is near a business school, a Support Service to Micro and Small Businesses unit (*Serviço de Apoio a Micro e Pequenas Empresas* – SEBRAE) and several companies from commercial and service sectors, especially medical and automobile industries (Etapas 2005). Brasilit has 51 registered companies in its vicinity, including four large industries: glass; tiles; ceramics and furniture production (FIEPE 2016).

[90] In Caranguejo, there is one elementary school inside the community and six other public schools in neighboring communities: three elementary schools, one middle school and two high schools. There are no public childcare services available, only private services in nearby neighborhoods. In Córrego do Jenipapo, there are two public schools and five others in the vicinity – ranging from elementary to high schools. There is also a public childcare facility that is free and functions based on volunteer services and donations. Brasilit is the best served in terms of educational services, with close access to: 10 public middle schools; four public high schools; two technical schools; 23 private schools; one private and one public childcare unit.

[91] For example, in Caranguejo, 80 percent of residents have not completed middle school and 23 percent of household heads were illiterate in 2011 (Gonçalves, 2011).

[92] For example, a common arrangement is that young females with children, her parents, grandparents and an uncle will live in the same household.

[93] Agrovilas are typically planned villages in which houses are grouped together in one area rather than on each farmer's parcel of land, which are located at further distance. This way of grouping houses is meant to facilitate the provision of basic services to households such as electricity and potable water (Zibechi 2007).

hydropower plant in the late 1980s. The construction of the dam relocated 40,000 people from "Old Petrolândia" to "Petrolândia" - a new city 10 km away from the original. Both urban and rural areas of the new city were planned and built. Rural areas were organized in the form of *agrovilas* (Siegmond Schultz, 2016).

Agrovilas visited had good access to primary and secondary education, primary health, water, sanitation and electricity. Contrary to urban sites, interviewees shared primarily positive perceptions about the infrastructure of local schools.[94] Nevertheless, according to key informants, in all *agrovilas*, educational attainment is lower than in urban sites, with higher levels of illiteracy and school dropouts occurring at an earlier age.

Poor transportation systems to the urban areas limit access to formal jobs and to technical and higher education. *Agrovilas* are situated over 60 km from urban Petrolândia, where most economic opportunities outside of agriculture are located. Roads are precarious and unpaved. From the late afternoon onwards, there is no public transportation available, which severely limits people's ability to regularly access the town to study or work unless they migrate their residences to the city or have access to private transportation. The main sources of income are farming, governmental transfers or remittances. Families may plant in their own plot,[95] perform daily informal jobs in larger farms or both.

Although the area is affected by droughts and climate change,[96] existing water irrigation systems are key enablers of local farming activities. Due to irrigation systems, the area has been considered a "good area for family farming" in comparison to other semiarid areas. There has been a steady inflow of migrant families from poorer cities looking for better economic opportunities.[97] Nevertheless, there is a perception that irrigation systems have started to fail and that this has affected the livelihoods of families: their own farming activities become less lucrative and there are fewer daily jobs offered by larger farms.

According to informants, levels of crime and violence are low, but some raised concern over increasing drug and alcohol abuse among youth. They point to the deterioration of the local security situation, which is attributed to the inflow of new

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[94] High schools are located in larger agrovilas with free public transportation for neighboring agrovilas to the school. Interviewees pointed to the fact that teacher absence was uncommon; that transportation systems to school were functional; school uniform and meals were regularly available.

[95] Families who were relocated due to the dam were given a house, with access to water, an extra plot to plant, and a living stipend – some still receive it today.

[96] This is a common feature of the semiarid region in Brazil. Several interviewees highlighted the fact that the region has been suffering from a long drought of approximately five years. This could be observed during fieldwork, in which dead animals (goats, cows, horses) could be seen lying along the roads. On the other hand, due to the irrigated agriculture, it was also possible to observe several properties with a variety of crops including coconuts, watermelons, banana, peanuts, cassava and others.

[97] More recently, there is a perception of growing inequality between "original families" and "*a gente nova*" ("the new people"). These incoming families are generally poorer, live in "invaded plots" and secure their livelihoods through informal daily jobs.

families, shortened distances from the urban area and the appearance of drugs in the area.

Families typically live in larger houses in comparison to urban areas. The pattern of multiple nuclear families living in the same household can also be found in *agrovilas*. Households may also host temporarily family members from other regions who arrive in search of informal work. In these rural areas, the family is also a production unit, with gendered and generational division of productive and reproductive work. Social life is less active in comparison to urban areas. Men spend time in bars and other spaces socializing; while women mostly stay at home, sometimes visiting friends and family.