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PERSONAL NETWORKS AND PARTY AFFILIATION IN STATUS ATTAINMENT PROCESSES IN CUBA: HOW DO INDIVIDUALS END UP IN ECONOMICALLY PROFITABLE POSITIONS IN EMERGENT SECTORS?

Sara Romanò

From 1990 to the early 2000s, in order to solve the sudden crisis caused by the collapse of the USSR, the Cuban government prioritized the reconstruction of the international tourism sector and the development of telecommunications services and nickel mining (Pérez-Villanueva, 2004). To this end, it enforced policies aimed at attracting direct foreign investments, mainly from Canada and Europe. At the same time, the Cuban government legalized new forms of self-employment¹ in order to boost productivity and incorporate a part of the growing informal economy into the formal economy (Henken, 2005).

As a result of crisis and reforms, Cuban socio-economic structures have changed. New economic sectors, the so-called emergent sectors, appeared and, more generally the services and primary sectors grew, while the secondary sector decayed (Espina-Prieto and Togores-González, 2012). Moreover, inequality started to grow and a process of social re-stratification occurred (Ranis and Kosak, 2004; Mesa-Lago, 2004; Espina-Prieto, 2004; Romanò, 2012). Studies on inequality carried out in Cuba show that in the Cuban labor market, the emergent sectors provide the most economically-profitable occupations (Espina-Prieto, 2004, 2005, 2008, 2010; Espina-Prieto and Togores-González, 2012; Zabala, 2010; Henk-

en, 2000, 2002, 2008; Corrales, 2004). In effect, a recent study by the Center for Psychological and Sociological Studies (CIPS, hereafter), a research center affiliated with the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment, notes that Cubans associate the attainment of economically advantageous position in emergent sectors to paths of upward mobility (Espina-Prieto and Togores-González, 2012). Therefore, in the paper I will use the terms profitable and desirable interchangeably.

In the evolving socio-economic structures briefly described above, control of specific resources (e.g., education, expertise, information, influence) has enabled some individuals to move to new employment or new occupational positions, while others who lacked such control remained stuck in their traditional positions. In the Cuban labor market the more economically profitable positions do not necessarily coincide with the more prestigious ones; therefore, restrictions were established to avoid skilled technicians or professionals from traditional sectors (i.e., doctors and other health workers, professors and teachers) migrating towards more gainful jobs in order to cope better with the effects of the crisis. To this end, the government has strengthened the restrictions limiting job changes between ministries. In order to be

1. The non-state sector widened with the enactment of Decree Law 141 of 1992, which authorized the exercise of self-employment for a wide range of activities.

hired by an enterprise or institution a job seeker must show his or her work-record. Applicants to emergent sector jobs or those seeking self-employment licenses must also have a clean criminal record, especially if they are expected to work in front-offices, interacting with foreigners.

Taking the above-mentioned basic factors into account, this paper will try to answer the following question: how do individuals reach the economically profitable state-jobs in emergent sectors? To answer this question I will focus on the role of party affiliation and personal networks in the labor market. Before formulating the hypotheses, I will first review what is already known about inequality in mixed socialist economies and in Cuban society as well.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON SOCIAL MOBILITY IN REFORMING STATE SOCIALISM

Although the study of social mobility relies on a long tradition in sociology, unfortunately Cuban data do not allow a state-of-the-art, fully comprehensive analysis of social mobility at a national level. Moreover, social mobility studies lack a tradition in Cuba. Just recently, the CIPS has begun to participate in an international academic cooperation project on methods to investigate the macro-structural dimensions and the micro-mechanisms of social mobility (Espina-Prieto, 2012).

Traditional studies on social mobility develop statistical models to estimate the effects of different individual attributes (typically, social origin, education attained, sex, race) on status attained (Marshall, 1998; Goldthorpe, 2007). Evidence from social mobility research supports the socialist ideology thesis that posits that the social and economic policies enforced by socialist governments generate both a weak direct link between social origin and educational attainment and a strong link between attained education and occupational status (Grusky and Hauser 1984; Yaish and Andersen 2012; Krymkowsky, 1991; Sieben and De Graaf, 2001; Erikson and Goldthorpe, 1992).

Social origin and education attained, however, explain only part of professional success in socialist societies. Due to the fact that in a planned economy

Party administrators not only have the authority to redistribute income, but also to allocate jobs, Party affiliation can interfere with the social status attainment processes (Moore, 1989; Connor 1979; Cliff, 1974; Djilas, 1957; Kalleberg, 1988; Parkin, 1976; Szelenyi, Beckett and King 1994; Walder, 1985; 1986). Moreover, Party membership constitutes a political credential of trustworthiness that should be rewarded.

While being a Party member makes it more likely for an individual to enjoy some career opportunities, or economic benefits, Party membership does not automatically and homogeneously lead to a status implying a greater ability to control resources (Szelenyi, 1987). Therefore, the direct or indirect role played by Party membership in status attainment processes is a complex matter, both in socialist and in transition societies (Walder, 1995; Nee, 1991; 1996; Szelenyi and Kostello, 1996; Gerber, 2002; Ronatas, 1994; Staniszkis, 1991). Szelenyi (1982) argued that in the so-called second stage of socialist societies, the relationship between Party membership and high status positions (mainly managerial and professional positions) is spurious, as the main factor explaining both the occupational attainment and Party membership is education (see also Konrad and Szelenyi, 1979). Yet, some interplay processes between Party affiliation and status attainment can be reasonably presumed. Nevertheless, available data do not permit to clearly unravel these processes.

According to evidence from reforming state socialism, Party membership at most seems to directly interfere with the attainment of managerial positions in state organizations.² In a study carried out in China, Walder (1995) found that both Party membership and education positively affected the chances of becoming an administrator, but the impact of political credentials is greater—up to 10 times—than that of the educational degree. Conversely, high-level professionals are not screened according to political credentials: in fact, college education is the strongest predictor of entry into a professional occupation whereas Party membership is not significant. Taking into account that high professionals are not screened according to political credentials, it becomes possible to

suppose that Party affiliation is also not a necessary credential for the attainment of occupations of lower profile.

While international research programs on inequality in reforming state socialism are focused on the role Party affiliation plays in the attainment of desirable positions, the literature on inequality in Cuba is almost silent about this matter. To the best of my knowledge, there are no empirical studies carried out in Cuba focusing on the relation between Party affiliation and the attainment of advantageous positions in emergent sectors.

From a network perspective, opportunities for mobility are conceived of as a function of information and influence that are embedded in and mobilized from one's social networks (Granovetter, 1988; Granovetter and Sweberg, 2001; Lin, Walter and Vaughn 1981; Lin, 1999, 2004; Flap, 1988). Thus, studies from this perspective focus on the role personal contacts play in labor markets.

Studies from a network perspective have been carried out mainly in China and Russia (Bian, 2002; Bian, Breiger, Davis and Galaskiewicz, 2005; Bian and Soon, 1997; Gerber, 2010; Huang, 2008; Yakubovich, 2006; Rona-Tas, 1994). They show that effectively an individual who turns to personal contacts has a better chance of obtaining an advantageous position in the labor market (Gerber, 2010; Huang, 2008; Yakubovich, 2006). As in capitalist societies, in China personal networks facilitate all three aspects of occupational process: entry into the labor force, inter-firm mobility and re-employment after being laid off (Bian, 2002). Moreover, Huang's (2008) in-

terviews in China suggest that networks play a greater role in the state sector than in the private sector.

Similarly, initial findings from Cuba suggest that job selection via informal channels is rather common practice (Echevarría-León 2008; Espina-Prieto and Tógores-González, 2012). The CIPS's interviews suggest that personal networks are decisive to reach advantageous positions: the decisive prerequisites to get such desirable jobs combine high qualifications with the use of personal contacts who can provide information about job opportunities as well as references that facilitate the entrance in this new sector (see Espina-Prieto and Tógores-González, 2012).

Studies on social capital carried out in capitalist societies suggest that an individual that can mobilize weak ties (Granovetter, 1973) and high status contacts (Lin, 1999; 2004) to conduct his or her job search has better chance of reaching desirable occupations. In contrast with what occurs in capitalist societies, however, initial results from China suggest that strong ties are the most valuable resource in facilitating occupational attainment. This is so because in socialist societies, strong ties secure influence from authorities, an asset that is more difficult to obtain than just information (Bian, 2002). Similarly, initial findings from CIPS's study suggest that individuals embedded in better-educated families (i.e., individuals who can mobilize strong ties in high status positions) are more likely to succeed in the job market (Espina-Prieto and Tógores-González, 2012).

Moreover, CIP's studies showed that sex and skin color are among the individual attributes that could bar the movement of individuals into desirable occupations (*ibidem*).

2. On the contrary, research findings from post-socialist countries in East Europe show that the Party elite (or its specific segments, typically technocratic cadres) had better chances of getting jobs in dynamic and profitable private sectors (Rona-Tas 1994; Staniszkis, 1991). According to Szelenyi and Kostello (1998), mixed results about the role of Party affiliation in the attainment of desirable occupations (Nee, 1996; Cao and Nee, 2000) can be accounted for by the diverse kinds of market penetration in reforming state socialism and post-socialist societies (see also Szelenyi and Kostello, 1996). After the political turn, or more generally when privatization policies are enacted and private accumulation begins to be tolerated, Party members start to engage in the private sector. Under these conditions, cadres enjoy two decisive advantages. First, they can rely on their influence to obtain licenses for themselves (or their offspring). Second, they can commodify their bureaucratic privileges to create new income opportunities for themselves outside the planned economy. These two advantages explain why research findings from East Europe, where the political turn occurred, show that ex-Party members had more chances to engage in profitable private sectors.

THEORIES AND HYPOTHESES

Empirical Question and Hypotheses

Until now I have briefly reviewed the literature on social mobility in reforming state socialism, in order to identify those possible key factors—such as individual attributes, Party affiliation, personal network—affecting the attainment of desirable occupations. Taking these factors into account, I will formulate hypotheses on how individuals reach the more economically profitable positions in Cuba.

As stated above, from a network perspective, opportunities for mobility stem from information and influence obtained from one's social networks (Granovetter, 1973; Bian, 2002). Taking into account that the value of social resources (information and influence, as in the case of social mobility) depends on the institutional conditions (Volker, 1995), scholars studying mobility in reforming state socialism suggest that the most valuable resource to attain a desirable job is the influence of authorities. From this viewpoint, the information about a vacancy per se might not be a valuable resource for occupational attainment in socialist societies. Therefore, Bian (2002) suggests that in China's reforming state socialism, strong ties, rather than weak ties, allow to complete a successful job search. As seen above, although studies carried out in Cuba do not focus on the nature of contacts mobilized to reach desirable occupations, initial findings from CIPS's study in Cuba are rather consistent with Bian's (2002) hypothesis.

Moreover, Bian's (2002) argument about the "strength of strong ties" is relatively consistent with the so-called *sociolismo* culture existing in Cuba. *Socios* (a Cuban term almost equivalent to "associate" or "friend") are those personal close contacts that an individual uses in order to perform her/his instrumental actions. These *socios* are useful sources of trustworthy information about job opportunities and, at the same time, willing providers of references for employers. More generally, *socios* represent both a trustworthy source of information and a useful gatekeeper to reach reliable providers of items that are in

short supply. People often mobilize *socios* when trying to bend the institutional and formal rules, but sometimes they activate them even just to expedite or ensure the attainment of "licitly" desirable items. Cubans "inherit" *socios* from their relatives and acquire them by attending institutional contexts, such as school, workplace, neighborhood, etc. In other words, in Cuba "instrumental" mating often stems from meeting in institutional contexts generating strong ties.

Taking the above into account, the first hypothesis to be tested is:

Hypothesis 1: Consistent with the strength of strong ties argument, other things being equal, an individual who turns to strong ties in his or her job-search is more likely to attain economically profitable positions such as state-employment in emergent sectors.

As discussed above, the domestic literature on social mobility in Cuba is rather silent about the effect of Party affiliation on the attainment of economically profitable positions, be they in traditional or emergent sectors. Conversely, the international literature is rather focused on whether Party affiliation facilitates the attainment of economically profitable positions in state or private sectors. Thus, in order to place the Cuban case within the international literature, the exploration of this topic in Cuba becomes almost inescapable. To this end, first I will present some considerations about what being a Party member means in term of cost-benefits, then I will present my hypothesis.

In Cuba, "[Party] membership must be sought out, and there are typically two paths to consideration for membership: having been selected as a 'vanguard worker' or having distinguished oneself previously in the UJC"³ (Henken, 2008:221). The waiting period for UJC members to apply for consideration to become Party members is two years (Henken, 2008). People who apply for consideration are screened with regards to private life, familiar background, activism in institutional associations and participation in neighborhood-life (i.e., Committee for the Defense

3. UJC is the acronym of the Youth Communist Union.

of the Revolution, CDR, Federation of Cuban Women, FMC, etc), job, educational careers and political record.

Due to the fact that the formal path to become a Party member is rather costly in terms of individual efforts necessary to meet the Party standards, not all those who desire to become Party members can do so. Moreover, once one has full membership, efforts to meet Party standard continue. In general, they include participation in meetings, participation in voluntary work, cooperation with Party officials, and displaying the appropriate political and personal behavior, and so on.

In addition, Party members must set good examples to colleagues, neighbors and friends with regard to consistency with socialist ideals. A Party member has to be accountable to *compañeros* for her/his public and private life. Last, but not least, in the event that a Party member lacks labor discipline, the Party applies sanctions more severe than standard sanctions. In their efforts to meet the socialist ideals (including leading an honest and simple life), Party members observe and evaluate each other. Moreover, as in any hierarchical organization, members are subject to observation and evaluation by superiors. Thus, a Party member is confronted with formal and informal control and (dis)approval more so than other persons not involved in the Party. Seen in this perspective, Party affiliation becomes a recognizable credential of political trustworthiness: by continuously observing its own members, the Party checks political trustworthiness.

As discussed above, getting into the Party is rather costly; but getting out of the Party could be more costly still. A member who applies to leave the Party must explain the motivations for such a decision. His/her motivations must be reasonably grounded to avoid a negative political record. Grounded motivations to leave the Party could be, for example, retirement from job, poor personal health or a demonstrable necessity to attend to one's own relatives.

Due to the organizational structure of the Party, every Party cell is linked to a given workplace (e.g., UJC cells may be linked to educational centers). For this reason, the movement of a Party member in the

labor market has to be mapped out by the Party. When changing jobs, Party members need to obtain an authorization in the form of an introduction letter from the current Party cell and receive an acceptance letter from the receiving cell.

Every Party cell discusses topics related to its workplace, but obviously Party cells also discuss political and economic guidelines at the local or national levels. Moreover, the Party is an institutional setting where the individuals expand their personal network. From this perspective, Party affiliation can be seen as a source of information as well as a relational setting potentially rich in influential ties. Access to reliable information and influential contacts along bureaucratic power are key factors that, according to the so-called power conversion thesis (Staniszki, 1991), allowed Party members to reach economically profitable positions during the institutional transition from socialism to capitalism in East Europe countries.

Taking the above into account, the hypothesis about the Party membership's effect on the attainment of non-managerial positions in emergent sectors relies on a set of considerations that can be stated as follows below. Considering that:

1. Political trustworthiness is an important credential, useful to reach elite position such as managerial positions in state-enterprises and institutions, but with less effort an individual can obtain a certificate attesting the correct social conduct by other civil institutions (i.e., the CDRs, FMC);
2. Jobs in emergent sectors are potentially affected in some respects by an ambivalent social perception due to the fact that public statements presented the reforms of the 90s as a bitter medicine to take with caution (in line with tactics) in order to save the Cuban Revolution;
3. Party members are subject to an indirect but additional control over the appropriateness of job change during their careers;

it is reasonable to assume that—other things being equal—being a Party member is not advantageous for an individual willing to engage in the emergent sectors. On the contrary, it can become an obstacle.

Thus, the second hypothesis to be tested is:

Hypothesis 2: Assuming that Party affiliation represents an encumbrance to move freely towards some segment of the labor market, Party membership represents an obstacle to attain those desirable non-managerial job positions in emergent sectors.

THE SURVEY (METHOD)

Sampling Techniques

The hypotheses have been tested using a dataset collected in 2011, that is, before the start of the new cycle of economic reforms.⁴ In the dataset there are two basic groups of state-employees:

- the first group (n = 122) is composed of tourism agents and guides working as employees of the three most important State companies in the tourism sector. In fact, tourism agents and guides typically represent desirable occupations. Therefore, among state-employees in emergent sectors there are highly-educated service workers.
- the second group (n = 148) is composed of state-employees in traditional sectors, for example teachers, technicians, office workers, medics, librarians, soldiers. Among these state-employees in traditional sectors, professionals and services workers and technicians are overrepresented (they correspond to 38% and 36% of the subsample, respectively), while the remaining workers are administrators and soldiers (who together account for 13% of the sample) and lower blue-collar workers.

The fact that both groups of state-employees are rather homogeneous in respect to the overrepresentation of highly-educated workers would contribute to make the results conservative. In the total sample, the distribution of variables such as race and gender are consistent with the distribution among Havana residents; women and blacks are just slightly overrepresented among state-employees in traditional sectors (respectively, +5%, +2.5%).

Twenty-three percent of the total sample is composed by Party members (members of UJC were considered as Party members). In 1997 Party members were 750,000 nationally (see Domínguez, 2002 in Henken, 2008). Considering that in 2010 the Cuban working age population was about 6.8 million workers, a rough estimation of Party membership as a percentage of the Cuban population as a whole could range from 10 percent to 15 percent. Therefore, in my sample, Party members are slightly overrepresented; as Party members are overrepresented in both groups of state-employees, this fact should not affect seriously the results.

The Questionnaire and Its Operationalization

To test the hypotheses, I used a set of items included in the questionnaire. These items are shown in Table 1. The descriptions of the regressors and the dependent variable (state-employment) are reported in Table 2.

The data lack information on the number of years since an individual joined the Party. Therefore, it cannot be excluded that a respondent joined the Party after attaining the current position, but this possibility is unlikely. As stated above, Party membership must be sought out and becoming a Party member is hard. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that individuals occupying economically profitable positions would see too few benefits and too many costs in attempting to become a Party member. This is all the more true as Party membership does not secure additional material advantages (Romanò, 2012). Similarly, it cannot be excluded that a respondent left the Party after attaining the current position. However, due to the severe norms regulating the exit from the Party, this possibility is even more unlikely. Discussing the results it will be evident that these shortcomings of the survey data do not seriously undermine the results of the analysis.

4. Information was collected from May 2010 to January 2011 in La Habana and Varadero, by Cuban students and professors as part of a broader research project which is centered on the relationship between brokerage opportunities and wealth. To this end, sampling was based on a type of factorial design (Corbetta, 2003) that returned a sample constituted by distinct groups of workers' categories whose brokerage opportunities vary.

Table 1. Components of Questionnaire Used to Test Hypotheses

| |
|--|
| <p>Session I. Job position Profession (whether employee is in emergent sectors or not) How many years ago has been occupying the position?</p> |
| <p>Session II. Relational data Party affiliation Information source used to attain the current job position: <i>18. A través de qué vía supo sobre el empleo que hoy tiene? (Por favor, marque sólo una casilla) (v60)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Por mis padres, mis hermanos o hermanas</i> • <i>or otros familiares</i> • <i>Por un amigo cercano</i> • <i>Por un conocido</i> • <i>Por una agencia o servicio estatal de empleo</i> • <i>Por el periodo de adiestramiento después de graduado al culminar los estudios</i> • <i>Por un anuncio</i> • <i>El jefe me llamó para el trabajo</i> • <i>Directamente llamé o fui a buscar trabajo</i> <p>Source: <i>No me acuerdo</i></p> |
| <p>Session V. Socio-demographic data, parental background and family status Skin color Education Parental education</p> |
| <p>Session VI. Incomes Remittances</p> |

Table 2. Variable description

| Variables | Operationalization variables |
|-----------------------|--|
| Dependent variable: | Categorical: |
| State-Employment | • state-employment in emergent sectors, • state-employment in traditional sectors (Reference Category) |
| Independent variable: | |
| Party affiliation | Binary |
| Strong ties | Binary. Strong ties are: parents, siblings, other relatives and close friends. |
| Control variables | |
| Sex | Binary |
| White | Binary |
| Remittances | Binary |
| Education | Years of school |
| Age | Number of years of age |
| Family background: | Binary. One of the parents holds university degree |
| • Parental education: | |

Results

Table 3 presents the results of two logistic regressions of the attainment of economically advantageous positions. The models compare the odds of becoming a state-employee in emergent sectors (hereinafter, ESWs) versus a state-employee in traditional sectors (TSWs).

- Model 1 includes control variables that refer to the subjects’ individual attributes and parental education, plus another variable (remittances) that could potentially interfere with the attainment of a desirable position.
- Model 2 includes the control variables and the two independent variables representing each hypothesis.

As shown in Table 2, the status of TSWs is taken as the reference category of the variable state-employment.

Table 3. Logit Coefficients for Regression of Attainment of an Economically Advantageous Position on Selected Independent Variables

| | | | Model 1 | Model 2 |
|------------|---------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| | | VARIABLES | ESWs/ TSWs | ESWs/ TSWs |
| Hypotheses | Expected sign | Sex | -0.34 (0.252) | -0.37 (0.220) |
| | | Age | 0.01 (0.011) | 0.01 (0.012) |
| | | Skin color | -0.08 (0.267) | -0.09 (0.223) |
| | | Education | 0.17*** (0.045) | 0.19*** (0.049) |
| | | Parental Education | 0.77** (0.275) | 0.87** (0.294) |
| | | Remittances | 0.27 (0.328) | 0.34 (0.308) |
| | | Hp 1. | ++ | Strength of Ties |
| Hp 2. | - | Party affiliation | | -1.26*** (0.317) |
| | | Constant | -3.40*** (0.850) | -3.52*** (1.051) |
| | | Observations | 289 | 270 |
| | | Pseudo R2 | (0.11) | (0.12) |

Note: Standard errors in parentheses
 ***p<0.001, ** p<0.01, * p<0.05

Model 2 indicates that, controlling for education, sex and the other variables, strong ties by themselves do not allow the attainment of desirable positions in emergent sectors. To be more precise, the non-significant coefficients for strong ties in Model 2 indicates that turning to strong ties in order to successfully complete the job search does not make the attainment of a job in emergent sectors more likely. However, these results do not imply that in Cuba strong ties are not useful to get a job. These non-significant coefficients just indicate that about the same percentage of individuals in both groups obtained their cur-

rent job—whether desirable or not—by using strong ties.

Specifically, about 35 percent of individuals in the sample, independently of their attained position, obtained their job by mobilizing parents, other relatives or close friends.⁵ More generally, about 50 percent of interviewed subjects reported that they used personal contacts (weak or strong) in order to obtain their current job position. These data seem to suggest that in Cuba it is quite a common practice to turn to personal ties, especially if strong, in order to successfully complete a job search. This result is relatively consistent with the argument about the strength of strong ties in socialist societies (Bian and Soon, 1997; Bian, 2002) and it is relatively consistent also with the results from CIPS’s study (Espina-Prieto and Togoeres-González, 2012). In fact, this latter study points out that access to personal networks informing about vacancies combined with qualifications makes it more likely that an individual will obtain a profitable position in the emergent sectors.

As seen above, other social mobility studies utilizing network perspective suggest that the successful attainment of a desirable position is explained by the high status of mobilized contacts (Lin, 1999; 2004). Unfortunately, my data do not allow investigating if the attainment of desirable positions is explained by the high status of the mobilized contacts. As shown in subsection above, the questionnaire collected information about how the subjects knew about the vacancy that they filled (personal contacts, job announcement, institutional agencies), but it did not include the possibility for the person interviewed to indicate the status of the contact who informed them about the vacancy.

However, two findings of this study suggest that also in Cuba the opportunity of enjoying support from high status contacts makes it more likely that an individual will become a state-employee in emergent sectors rather than in traditional sectors. These two findings are: the positive and significant effect of pa-

5. Conversely, less than 10 percent of individuals attained their job position by utilizing weak ties—this percentage is almost identical in both groups.

rental education in both models and the fact that many of the sample's individuals turned to strong contacts (parents, relatives and close friends) in order to obtain the current position.

Turning to Party affiliation, the negative and significant coefficient in Model 2 indicates that being a Party member makes it less likely that an individual will become a state-employee in an emergent sector than a state-employee in a traditional sector. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is confirmed.⁶

This finding appears to refute the simple idea that the Cuban Revolution survives by highly rewarding the Party's own members. In fact, the results seem to indicate that in the last 20 years, Party membership has not provided additional advantages in attaining profitable positions in state-emergent sectors. On the contrary, they suggest that Party membership has reduced the chances of reaching a considerable number of economically profitable non-managerial positions. In other words, results from this study seem to indicate that the defense of frontiers separating different economic principles has been successfully maintained within the Party.

I hope that future research efforts will investigate a more diverse sample of state-employees in emergent sectors—namely a sample that does not include only positions in front-office with tourists—in order to explore more extensively the Party membership's effect on the attainment of these positions. Moreover, further research could reveal whether the negative effect of Party membership on the attainment of desirable positions in emergent sectors remains true in the new context of reforms, in which market reforms are no longer presented as a sort of necessary evil to be reversed as soon possible.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

Due to characteristics of the sampling design, the results from this study must be considered cautiously. Nonetheless, these results are relatively consistent with most of the literature on the effects of party affiliation and use of personal contacts on the status attainment processes in reforming state socialism.

In addition, this study is innovative with respect to prior studies on inequality in Cuba because it empirically explores both the effects of Party membership and of personal networks (and their characteristics) on the attainment of profitable positions.

In so doing, results from this study suggest at least two issues whose potential consequences need attention. Firstly, resorting to strong ties to attain job-positions is prone to an anti-egalitarian tendency. Due to their nature, if strong ties are meant to secure the reproduction of class privileges, then they are bound to undermine Cuba's equality-based policies.

The second issue refers to the relation between inequality and institutional change dynamic in Cuba. Even though findings from this study should be replicated using a statistically representative sample of the Cuban population, the negative effect of Party membership combined with the positive effect of parental education suggests that high status families might retain their occupations in traditional sectors but mobilize their high status contacts to facilitate the entrance of their offspring in profitable emergent sectors. Therefore, I hope that these initial findings on network effects will entice future research on social mobility in order to shed further light on the mechanisms responsible for inequality in Cuba and on the relation between inequality and dynamics of institutional change.

6. Running this model on a sub-dataset constructed *ad hoc* in which individuals who do not reach tertiary education and administrators and soldiers were excluded, the results (not shown) indicate once again that coefficient of Party membership is significant and negative (-1.08*).

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