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FLORIDA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

Miami, Florida

ENTREPRENEURIAL INTERSECTIONS: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF ENTREPRENEURIAL STRATEGIES AMIDST CRISIS AND COMMUNITY IN HAVANA, CUBA

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

GLOBAL AND SOCIOCULTURAL STUDIES

by

John "Jack" Vertovec

2021

To: Dean John F. Stack, Jr.
Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs

This dissertation written by John "Jack" Vertovec, and entitled Entrepreneurial Intersections: An Ethnographic Study of Entrepreneurial Strategies amidst Crisis and Community in Havana, Cuba, having been approved in respect to style and intellectual content, is referred to you for judgment.

We have read this dissertation and recommend that it be approved.

Andrea Queeley

Michael Bustamante

Mark Padilla, Co-Major Professor

Guillermo Grenier, Co-Major Professor

Date of Defense: March 24, 2021

The dissertation of John "Jack" Vertovec is approved.

Dean John F. Stack, Jr.
Steven J. Green School of International and Public Affairs

Andrés G. Gil
Vice President for Research and Economic Development
and Dean of the University Graduate School

Florida International University, 2021

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

ENTREPRENEURIAL INTERSECTIONS: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF ENTREPRENEURIAL STRATEGIES AMIDST CRISIS AND COMMUNITY IN HAVANA, CUBA

by

John "Jack" Vertovec

Florida International University, 2021

Miami, Florida

Professor Mark Padilla, Co-Major Professor

Professor Guillermo Grenier, Co-Major Professor

This dissertation has two primary goals. First, to examine how structural conditions (e.g., state policies/regulations, resource scarcity, etc.) and intersecting inequities and inequalities shape opportunities and challenges for entrepreneurship. Second, to analyze how local experiences with, and interpretations of underlying social and economic narratives influence the ways that people conceptualize and draw upon local/global resources in order to act entrepreneurially in individual ways and with their communities in mind.

While scholars discuss how structural conditions impact entrepreneurship, and how entrepreneurship can improve communities (social entrepreneurship), the consequences of intersecting inequalities on both areas remain understudied. Using ethnographic data gathered in Havana, Cuba between 2017-2019, as well as a participatory photography project (PhotoVoice) carried out with 14 community leaders / social entrepreneurs from August-October 2019, I describe how entrepreneurial strategies and rationalities interact

with and engage broader realities of access and privilege as well as underlying stereotypes, stigmas, and inequalities.

Cuba offers an intriguing case study because the state maintains strong control over the economy, firmly regulating access to resources and restricting the possibilities for entrepreneurial growth and ingenuity. And yet, Cubans continue to enter this uncertain line of work because they recognize entrepreneurial opportunities to respond to challenges left by state policies and regulations as well as, in some cases, the inequities that are commonplace in Cuba. This research adds to academic conversations and has policy implications, in Cuba like elsewhere, revealing how structural conditions, social differences, stigmas and stereotypes, and hybrid entrepreneurial practices intertwine and shape personal and community outcomes. This study also complicates celebrations of entrepreneurship, revealing that liberalized economic participation may be positive for some but can still be precarious for others. The participatory methods I utilized in this research were a methodological innovation to the difficulties of doing research with such a vast participant base, and can serve as a guide to engaging in more locally beneficial and ethnographically grounded study of entrepreneurship in Cuba.

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CHAPTER ONE | Introduction

My research interests in Cuba began in 2012. I was looking for a research project that could examine the impacts of international tourism on local sociocultural conditions and practices. I discovered the possibility to analyze these phenomena in Cuba, under the guidance of L. Kaifa Roland. She invited me to research under her supervision during a study abroad trip she was leading. I agreed, knowing this would be an invaluable opportunity to not only delve into my research interests but also to learn ethnographic approaches to sociocultural research from a successful cultural anthropologist.

Over six weeks, I had the privilege of travelling across Cuba, exploring, in grounded-theory fashion, the contemporary transformations within Cuban socialism that had been occurring since the re-introduction of international tourism and the implementation of a dual currency system after the disappearance of the Soviet trading bloc in 1989. Socioeconomic gaps grew from 1990 to 2012 as some Cubans had more access to foreign currency than others.[1] In particular my research project at that point, entitled "Street Hustling, Wanderlust, and Two Currencies: Contemporary Transitions Within Cuban Socialism," focused on *jineterismo* (street hustling) as a lens into the transformations that had been occurring such as growing socioeconomic inequalities, the growing power of material incentives, as well as the growing wanderlust among Cuban youth. A primary finding of that project was that *jineterismo* – including the rationalities that surround it – revealed some generational breaks in perceptions towards Cuban-foreigner interactions as well as a desire for young Cubans to integrate with people and ideas outside of Cuba.

[1] As you will see throughout this dissertation, these socioeconomic gaps and associated inequities and inequalities never stopped growing in Cuba.

In the years that followed, I never forgot that first research experience; the interlocutors turned friends turned family, the insights I formed around sociocultural and socioeconomic transformations, and my overall drive to study the relevance of socioeconomic, and sociocultural, inequities and inequalities. A year or so after I finished that project, I had a memorable conversation with Marc Perry, author of *Negro Soy Yo: Hip Hop and Raced Citizenship in Neoliberal Cuba*. As we discussed my research findings and how they overlapped with his own research that examined Cuban hip-hop as a lens into the relationship between global circulations and marginalized people, he mentioned something that has rolled around in my head ever since. In light of the tremendous growth of entrepreneurship in Cuba over the past 25 years, he suggested I consider street hustling as a form of entrepreneurship. After all, as he suggested, hustlers had overhead costs too – like their transportation to tourism zones, fashionable clothes, or something to eat on their long stays away from home – and they had to think creatively in order to search for and satisfy their "clientele" (e.g., in Cuba: the foreigners they were hustling).

I never had interest in researching entrepreneurship until this moment. However, considering entrepreneurship as a potentially informal, though still innovative response to other transformations piqued my interests. I would later discover that this was a particularly important consideration since entrepreneurialism in Cuba grew out of an array of informal survival strategies that Cubans used to navigate the harshest years of the economic crisis (A. Ritter & Henken, 2015). And, in recent years, entrepreneurship has become entrenched in the Cuban economy.

As many as 4 out of 10 working age Cubans work in the private sector, with more than 600,000 Cubans holding licenses for legal self-employment - a 300% increase since

Raúl Castro unveiled market driven reforms in 2010 (Feinberg, 2018; Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas de Cuba, 2019a; A. Ritter & Henken, 2015). Based on my own ethnographic observations, I argue that over 75% of Cubans earn incomes from all types of private sector work, side hustles included. Entrepreneurial strategies are becoming a popular way to secure much needed incomes and they provide a degree of autonomy from the limited opportunities in the state-sector. While conducting my dissertation field research, I also discovered many community organizations across Havana (and probably across Cuba) who used private sector activities to fund their operations or help community members secure their own non-state sector incomes; thereby utilizing entrepreneurship to effect positive social change for people who had been harmed by different social and economic fallouts of the devastating 1990s economic crisis.

These are historic shifts for such a strict state socialist society, and many scholars have suggested that opening up liberalized participation in the market is a critical step in improving Cuban society and the economy (see, e.g., Brundenius & Torres Pérez, 2014; Carmelo Mesa-Lago, Veiga González, González Mederos, Vera Rojas, & Pérez-Liñán, 2016; Pérez Villanueva, 2016). However, these celebrations conceal the structural conditions (e.g., state policies and regulations or resource scarcity) and inequalities that shape opportunities and challenges for Cuban entrepreneurialism. Moreover, they do not provide insight into the local rationalities of Cuban entrepreneurship (Mody & Day, 2014), nor do they reveal how people draw upon these logics to respond to social, political, and economic challenges, both personally and with their communities in mind.

The purpose of this research was to attend to these gaps by asking a general, guiding question: How and why might people in Havana, Cuba – each positioned differently in

relation to race, sex, age, and location – use different entrepreneurial behaviors, activities, and strategies to shape their personal endeavors and interactions with their communities?

Research Questions and Broader Impacts

Using ethnographic data gathered in Havana between 2017-2019, I describe how entrepreneurial strategies and rationalities interact with and engage broader realities of access and privilege as well as underlying stereotypes, stigmas, and inequalities. This dissertation is framed around four specific questions:

1) How do state economic policies and regulations shape entrepreneurship in Cuba in both discourse and practice?
2) How do intersections of social and demographic differences shape Cuban entrepreneurship?
3) What hybrid entrepreneurial strategies emerge for differently positioned people and in differently positioned communities?
4) What are the subjective logics that cohere around these hybrid entrepreneurial strategies, and how do these relate to demographic, social, and economic inequities and inequalities?

This research seeks to both advance entrepreneurship research, applied and theoretical, and to contribute to a better understanding of the intersectional effects of broader structural conditions and hybrid entrepreneurial strategies across an array of subject positions. Cuba offers an intriguing case study because the state maintains strong control over the economy, firmly regulating access to resources and restricting the possibilities for entrepreneurial growth and ingenuity. And yet, Cubans continue to enter this uncertain line of work thus begging the question: why?

On the surface, there is the economic utility of private sector work and it gives many people the chance to distance themselves from the limited possibilities in the state sector (see Chapter 4). However, as I discuss in Chapters 4-8, entrepreneurship in Cuba also provides opportunities – or at least the illusion of opportunity – to overcome personal challenges as well as improve local community circumstances without having to deal (as much) with the bureaucratic state sector. The contributions of this sort of analysis are not limited to an academic context, but also have policy implications, in Cuba like elsewhere, revealing how structural conditions, social differences, stigmas and stereotypes, and hybrid entrepreneurial practices intertwine and shape personal and community outcomes. This study also complicates celebrations of entrepreneurship, revealing how liberalized economic participation may be positive for some but can still be precarious for others.

"Entrepreneurship" and Entrepreneurship in Cuba

There are many studies on and just as many definitions of entrepreneurship (Carlsson et al., 2013). But, broadly speaking, entrepreneurship is the process of discovering and exploiting economic opportunities (Shane & Venkataraman, 2000). Individuals utilize entrepreneurial strategies—either independently or within an organization—to discover market gaps and innovate new or enhanced products, services, means of production, or supply chains to respond to those gaps (Schumpeter [1934] 1983, [1943] 2003). While engaging in entrepreneurial activities, people often rely on their flexibility and autonomy to adjust to market conditions and shifting social, political, or economic realities (Freeman 2014).

In the Cuban context, entrepreneurship is most commonly discussed with regards to self-employed small-business owners (*cuentapropistas*) because they are atomized units and separated enough from the centrally planned economy that they carry their own individual risk and draw from their independent initiatives and motivations (Díaz Fernández 2017).[2] In this dissertation, however, I focus on a wider array of people; those who operate their own businesses, either as licensed entities, unlicensed informal ventures, or "side hustles" to their state-sector employment. In Chapter 6 I draw from some accounts of employees in these small businesses. I also describe community organizations that foster socially responsible entrepreneurship in Chapters 5 and 7 in order to explain how entrepreneurial strategies can be used in an array of circumstances and which can positively address some of the inequalities and problems caused by a society in which the private sector has expanded and state support has receded. To be clear, I acknowledge that entrepreneurship can exist in state-owned companies or cooperatives, but I did not collect data on these types of entrepreneurial activities and therefore do not focus on them in this dissertation.

Cubans who engage in entrepreneurialism are often (semi-)autonomous small business operators who navigate market uncertainties and generate incomes through an array of hybrid, flexible, innovative, and potentially risky formal and informal economic

[2] Small businesses in Cuba are contrasted with cooperatives, which are non-state enterprises owned and operated collectively by a group of members. The range of cooperative enterprises is not restricted, like it is for self-employment activities (A. Ritter & Henken, 2015, p. 187). They also have legal identity (see Chapter 3), which is likely, as Ritter and Henken conclude, "[because] 'cooperativism' [is] more compatible with state socialism (and perhaps more easily controlled) than is private microenterprise" (182). Until recently (see Marsh, 2019), they operated with a greater degree of flexibility and autonomy than state or private enterprises (A. Ritter & Henken, 2015).

strategies (Freeman, 2014; Long, 1983; Ritter & Henken, 2015, p. 24). Leaders of community organizations in Havana also draw from these strategies to effect positive social change in their unique settings, and which help describe the possibilities for and the current state of entrepreneurship in Cuba. Such entrepreneurial strategies help people negotiate the political-economic opportunities and constraints shaped by state policies and regulations, and the hurdles that may exist based on social difference or one's social position.

As I developed and executed this project, I became interested in how individuals – each positioned differently in relation to intersections of race, sex, age, and geographic location – combined formal and informal entrepreneurial strategies to navigate broader structural conditions, and to identify the patterns and rationalities that emerged in the hybrid economic strategies people developed, especially during the current period of economic and social transformation. My preliminary, exploratory research showed that a diverse group of Cubans used a wide array of entrepreneurial strategies to navigate the opportunities and challenges they encountered in their daily lives (Stein & Vertovec, 2020; Vertovec, 2018, 2020a). This led me to a central question: How do we understand emerging patterns in entrepreneurship in contemporary Cuba in relation to demographic, social, and economic difference?

This dissertation posits that diverse intersections between social and demographic factors as well as state policies and regulations shape the opportunities and challenges that entrepreneurs face, as well as the entrepreneurial identities and strategies that individuals develop to understand and narrate these patterns. The observations I discovered while working with community organizations across different parts of Havana – in addition to some of the strategies and rationalities I witnessed while observing individuals – extends

the scope of this argument, and revealed how some groups of people have incorporated entrepreneurship not only as a mechanism to secure vital sources of income, or funding for organizations, but also to catalyze more positive local circumstances.

Scholars are increasingly aware of how state policies and regulations or situations of resource scarcity impact entrepreneurial strategies (see, e.g., A. Ritter & Henken, 2015; Sarduy González, Pans Pérez, & Traba Muñoz, 2015; Williams, Round, & Rodgers, 2013), and the role entrepreneurship can have in impacting or improving communities (see, e.g., Beresford, 2020; Bornstein, 2007; Jasor, 2016; Nicholls, 2006; Peredo and McLean, 2006); however, the effects that intersecting social and demographic factors have on entrepreneurial experiences in both areas, and how these relate to a diversity of hybrid entrepreneurial strategies that people use to navigate uncertainty remain understudied (Romero & Valdez, 2016). Filling this research gap is important in Cuba like elsewhere because it can help identify important inequalities that shape the possibility to improve personal and community outcomes. This can take form via policies that enhance entrepreneurial opportunities for people across the board as well as creating frameworks that help people use entrepreneurship to improve their local communities.

The timing of my fieldwork is paramount to the analyses and conclusions I developed in this dissertation. 2018-2019 – the years I conducted the bulk of this research – were years of great flux for Cuban entrepreneurship, or self-employment more specifically. For example, regional circumstances permitted more Cubans to travel internationally for "shopping tourism," giving many formal and informal business owners the possibility to circumvent resource and product shortages in Cuba. However, entrepreneurship has also been hotly contested in Cuba since its legal authorization in the

1990s and some hardline officials suggest it is a call to arms for neoliberalists (e.g., Zayas Bazán, 2020).

As I discuss in Chapter 3, the state tried to reign in this sector after a boom in entrepreneurship occurred when Barack Obama and Raul Castro began to normalize bi-lateral relations between the two countries. This normalizations process led to an influx of tourism when the US eased travel restrictions to Cuba. During that time, many entrepreneurial ventures geared towards international visitors became very lucrative and many people flocked to those types of ventures to look for more gainful employment. When Trump took power in 2016, however, Cuban entrepreneurship suffered. The US imposed travel and remittance restrictions and many people who were once the principle benefactors of local / global connections saw a loss in income and revenue. These circumstances combined with stagnant local economic conditions and forced Cuba's economy downward. Rampant resource shortages swept across the island and economic crisis once again reared its ugly head.

The changes to the socioeconomic landscape have shaped the main discussions in this dissertation, including: how the everchanging political-regulatory environment has colored the contours of what entrepreneurial strategies Cubans use, why they use them, and how they can be used to resist certain dynamics brought about by the state (Chapter 4); how the most recent economic downturn has exacerbated social and economic narratives, creating particular entrepreneurial challenges based on intersections of race and geographic location and the imaginations that surround those positionalities (Chapter 5); or, how local / global circulations of people, money, and ideas – in conjunction with local policies and norms – shape how Cubans piece together different entrepreneurial strategies to improve

their own personal circumstances (Chapter 6) or those of their community (Chapter 7). Thus, this dissertation captures the state of entrepreneurship in Havana at a particular time in an evolving story.

Moving Between Research on Personal, Micro-Entrepreneurship and Community Oriented Entrepreneurial Strategies

The trajectory of this research project is worth noting in order to gain the full understanding as to why I went from studying more personal experiences with entrepreneurialism in Havana to the different ways some people have used entrepreneurship to effect positive socioeconomic changes at the community level. Indeed, my initial research goals were to understand how intersecting social and economic circumstances shaped the ways that people (i.e., individuals) experienced entrepreneurship, including the opportunities and challenges they regularly faced in their private business dealings. However, after a few months in Havana, I realized that this question was incomplete, or that it at least led to a fatalistic understanding of Cuban entrepreneurship. Repeatedly, I encountered people who did not just give up when faced with different social, geographic, or economic hurdles, and instead fashioned innovative responses to these circumstances and, in some cases, searched for entrepreneurial ways to improve conditions for people around them (i.e., their communities).

Through interviews and participant observation during the first few months of my research, I discovered that many people who had been most affected by recent increases in inequities and inequalities (see Chapter 3) – and who often feel disenchanted with the system and frequently look for physical or other ways to "escape" (see Chapter 5) – often

feel abandoned or forgotten. Through my work with different community organizations (see below), I discovered that these feelings of abandonment were worse in marginalized areas of Havana that are discriminated against as "delinquency centers" or places that indicated some sort of inherent failure. However, I also noticed that there were many people from these areas – in addition to other people who may have lived in 'better-off' areas but were otherwise disadvantaged because of other racial, gendered, or aged inequities – who refused to give up. Based upon these circumstances, I began to wonder how stigmatized or marginalized Cubans responded to contemporary negative social/economic circumstances in entrepreneurial ways, and how community leaders sought to address these conditions through their entrepreneurial procedures, initiatives, and organizational logics. Around the end of 2018, I began to incorporate more community-based research and research methodologies into the central framework of my dissertation project as a means to better understand how people in Havana were engaging entrepreneurialism in personal *as well as* communally focused ways. In other words, I began to incorporate a focus on social entrepreneurship that was evolving around and in relation to more 'traditional' forms of entrepreneurship as a means to generate personal income and economic prosperity.

Theoretical Considerations

Access to resources contributes to the most obvious opportunities and greatest challenges facing entrepreneurship. State policy and regulation designed to create equitable opportunities can also constrain entrepreneurialism, inspiring an array of hybrid formal/informal entrepreneurial strategies. Some research suggests that in Cuba policies and regulations characterized by factors such as high taxes, deficient credit lines, and

inefficient resource supply systems drive risky, informal entrepreneurial strategies (Carmelo Mesa-Lago et al., 2016; A. Ritter & Henken, 2015). I would argue these strategies are also innovative or flexible responses to said challenges and which demonstrate a desire for a greater degree of autonomy. While this reveals the diversification of informal entrepreneurial strategies, previous observations may neglect the hybridity that exists in an individual's actual decision-making process, or the diversity of influences behind it.

Scholars have observed that economic opportunities and challenges are shaped by social and demographic factors linked to race or gender (de la Fuente, 2001b; Díaz Fernández & Echevarría León, 2015; Katrin Hansing, 2017). Many studies examine different social and demographic factors separately and often overlook interrelated axes of inequality. Cuban and Caribbean scholars frequently use sex work to study how racial, gender, sexual orientation, and class disparities drive informal strategies, some of which may be a last resort for marginalized people (see, e.g., Allen, 2011; A. Cabezas, 2009; Kamala Kempadoo, 1999; Padilla, 2007; Stout, 2014). These studies offer models for conducting intersectional analyses of the informal sector, but are limited to one type of informal exchange (sexual commerce). We must consider the variety of ways that social and demographic factors influence the use of differing economic strategies to navigate broader structural conditions during structural transformation.

Theories of informal sectors and economic transitions describe how formal and informal economic processes operate concomitantly during periods of reform (see, e.g., Fernández-Kelly & Shefner, 2006; Williams et al., 2013). But, these theories tend to focus on political processes and rarely examine how social factors intersect to shape diverse

opportunities and challenges for people using entrepreneurial strategies. These theories also often neglect the subjective rationale behind entrepreneurialism. What hybrid entrepreneurial strategies mean for individuals and communities, and what they reveal about broader structural conditions, requires deeper ethnographic investigation. Beyond traditional ethnographic observation techniques like prolonged periods of participant observation as well as semi-structured and informal interviews, the applied dimensions I employed to study social entrepreneurship and community organizations – see Chapter 2 – permitted additional experience-near descriptions of the hybrid strategies Cubans utilized during the current period of structural transformation and the rationalities behind them.

The research I conducted in Cuba sought to address the critical knowledge gaps described above through an ethnographic study of the conceptualizations that people have of their entrepreneurial experiences, including the use of hybrid formal/informal entrepreneurial strategies, and how their entrepreneurial activities interact with or are facilitated by broader structural conditions. I conceptualized this research through an engagement with the field of entrepreneurship research, including the anthropology of entrepreneurship (see Chapters 4 and 6) and broader theories of social entrepreneurship (see Chapter 7). Although the field of entrepreneurship research lacks a common core theory and is fragmented across many academic disciplines, much entrepreneurship research centers on the study of entrepreneurial opportunities (Carlsson et al., 2013; Shane & Venkataraman, 2000; Short, Ketchen, Shook, & Ireland, 2010; Venkataraman, 1997). Fundamental questions remain that are integral to the advancement of this field of research. Specifically, how are opportunities conceived of in different societies; how do these conceptions drive different entrepreneurial strategies and experiences; and how might these

strategies be opportunities in and of themselves (Short et al., 2010)? This dissertation emerges from these three questions.

My theoretical framework integrates three fields of inquiry with the broader discussions presented in entrepreneurship research as well as some participatory research techniques – namely, Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) and participatory visual methods – in order to ensure that the voices and desires of my interlocutors were met. (1) Theories of intersectionality are critical to this research because they reveal interlaced systems of inequity (i.e., injustice or unfairness) and inequality (i.e., unequal circumstances) that are embedded in structural conditions, such as state policies and regulations, access to resources, or overarching narratives of stigma and discrimination. (2) Theories of informal sectors are also critical because they highlight an array of economic strategies used to negotiate broader structural conditions. Together, both fields are relevant to understanding the tensions between structure and agency during periods of (3) economic transformation, which simultaneously create opportunities and shape challenges for entrepreneurship. Such a synthetic framework accounts for the broader structural conditions shaping opportunities and challenges for a diverse range of people engaged in entrepreneurial behaviors, while also permitting analysis of the hybrid, innovative, and flexible set of formal and informal strategies that are used by individuals to navigate periods of structural transformation.

During my time in the field, I chose to engage in applied, participatory research as a methodological innovation and as a means to give back to the community and interlocutors who opened their doors to my specific research project. Participatory research involves researchers and participants working collaboratively to examine a social problem

and / or actions to improve it, and my goal was to replace an extractive research model with one that sought to more directly benefit the communities involved (Kindon, Pain, & Kesby, 2007). I employed a CBPR approach because I recognized that I – an outsider – could produce the best possible analysis with community partners, who themselves were the experts (Rhodes, Duck, Alonzo, Daniel-Ulloa, & Aronson, 2014).

Intersectional identities

Based on various intersections of race, sex, age, and location, I examined the social and demographic factors shaping entrepreneurship during Cuba's current economic and social transformations. 'Intersectionality' offers the critical insight that social and demographic differences are not mutually exclusive but rather interrelated and interactive. The intersection of social and demographic differences, for example, become evident in the inequities and inequalities that emerge through the enactment of state policies and regulation (see, e.g., Davis 1983; Mullings 1997). When applied to entrepreneurship, the premises of intersectionality suggest that structural conditions contribute to intersectional variations in opportunities and challenges, and which may or may not make certain entrepreneurial strategies valuable, risky, or worthwhile. But, the use of such intersectional approaches to study a wide range of entrepreneurs is rare (cf., Romero & Valdez, 2016; Valdez, 2011, 2016). The proposed research is guided by the premise that 'entrepreneurial intersections' should be analyzed using more personal and in-depth methodologies, such as ethnography, which aim to describe entrepreneurship from a diverse range of subject positions, while considering variation in experience as emerging – at least in part – from interconnected systems of power (Hancock, 2007; Marfelt, 2016).

Intersectionality is an inherently complex field of study because of the vast amount of intersections and interconnections between a nearly infinite number of intersecting factors. I draw upon the following contributions of intersectionality theory to attend to this study's primary objectives: *a)* social and demographic factors are relational; *b)* interconnected power systems (e.g., racism, patriarchy, etc.) shape inequitable experiences across individuals and groups; *c)* relations of power and subordination are interrelated and interactive; *d)* social inequities and inequalities are historically contingent and vary across sites; thus, while intersectionality can be applied across the world, it is expressed differently in each time and place (Collins, 2015, p. 14; Knapp, 2005).

For my research, 'entrepreneurship' acts as a social experience and, therefore, I am interested in discovering how different social factors are more critical in different entrepreneurial scenarios and for different people who engage in entrepreneurial activities. Part of this research is to determine the salient social factors to entrepreneurship in Cuba and what alignments make them more critical in certain scenarios as opposed to others. However, I also recognized that people move fluidly within social and demographic categories, such as dressing or speaking in certain ways in certain scenarios, and thus play important roles in not just the entrepreneurial opportunities or challenges that people face but also the behavioral strategies they used within their entrepreneurial experiences. When juxtaposed with broader structural conditions, as well as situations of stigma or discrimination, this analytic approach helped bring into relief the ways that different factors intersected and influenced the capacity for people to mobilize the resources that foster entrepreneurialism or the ways they used entrepreneurship with their personal circumstances or their community in mind.

Informal sectors

Scholars theorize 'informal sectors' in various ways but, in their broadest sense, 'informal sectors' refer to economic markets where licensed or unlicensed activities circumvent state regulations (Beckert & Wehinger, 2013). Informal sectors often emerge because of high taxes and/or burdensome regulations (see, e.g., de Soto, 1989; Williams & Horodnic, 2016). Although informal sectors have been theorized as distinct from formal sectors (cf., Chen, 2007; Portes, 1983; Williams, 2009), I guide this research with anthropological studies on hybrid economic sector relations in Latin America and the Caribbean (e.g., Babb, 1989; Ulysse, 2007).

Hybrid formal/informal sectors are particularly common during economic transformation because of emergent or growing socioeconomic disparities that often exist alongside potentially constraining state policies and regulations. As some scholars observe, hybridity can stem from formal employees supplementing their income with informal practices, particularly when the state is incapable of satisfying basic (e.g. food or livable wages) or entrepreneurial (e.g. business supplies or finance opportunities) needs (Carla Freeman, 2000; Smith & Stenning, 2006; Williams et al., 2013). Other scholars observe formal entrepreneurial practices within street based informal sectors (e.g., Bromley and Gerry, 1979). Hybrid formal and informal sectors were historically entrenched across the Caribbean because of structural conditions that institutionalized inequalities within colonial systems of race, gender, and class (Ulysse, 2007). In some scenarios, people who suffer from these colonial systems of institutionalized inequalities can draw upon informal economic strategies to earn not only income but also improve their social status (Browne,

2004). Moreover, post-colonial economic reforms such as a growing reliance on international tourism have further increased socioeconomic inequalities, thereby driving many people to use informal strategies despite ostensibly viable formal opportunities (see, e.g., Cabezas 2009; Padilla 2007).

Cuba offers a valuable case study to examine hybrid formal and informal sectors because much formal, legally licensed entrepreneurship emerged from a series of informal strategies people used to survive the unravelling economy from the 1980s onward (Ritter and Henken 2015). Many authorized entrepreneurs continue to use informal strategies due to policy limitations, rigid regulations, or resource scarcity. My research departs from other studies that analyze hybrid sectors as outcomes of political regulatory schema and by drawing upon intersectionality theory to study how interrelated axes of difference intersect amidst broader structural conditions that are changing as the political-economic environment transforms. As such, I identify and analyze how social and demographic intersections shape a hybridity of innovative yet possibly risky formal/informal economic strategies for a diverse group of Cuban entrepreneurs.

Economic transformation

Entrepreneurialism often emerges under neoliberal circumstances, when state regulations shrink and economic actors must innovate flexible and often autonomous responses to the risk and uncertainty that comes with market fluctuations (see, e.g., Freeman, 2014; Harvey, 2005). However, Cuban state regulations have not shrunk; on the contrary, the state remains restrictive and impedes market growth through policy limitations and rigid regulations during this moment of economic and structural transformation.

During economic transformation, the state can be particularly active in crafting policies and regulations directed towards formal and informal economic sectors. This is usually the case when the economy transforms from redistributive socialism to a mixed-market economy (Nee, 2000). Specific to entrepreneurship, legal opportunities are outlined and policies are created that set boundaries between formal/legal and informal/illegal behaviors (Block & Evans, 2005). The policies that emerge through this process are often perceived as challenges or constraints for entrepreneurial ventures. While economic transformations vary widely across the world, in Cuba, the centralized state uses a rigid regulatory intent coupled with a strong regulatory capacity to guide a gradual economic transformation (Centeno & Portes, 2006; Font & Jancsics, 2015). This means that the state is maintaining a totalitarian approach to emergent forms of entrepreneurship and, therefore, Cubans who use entrepreneurial strategies to generate incomes are faced with uncompromising, even if sometimes vague, policies and regulations (A. Ritter & Henken, 2015).

State regulatory rationales and capacities determine the potential scope of hybrid formal and informal business strategies. Indeed, state regulations create the conditions for informality when some formal activities are allowed but others are not (Portes, 1983). Attempts to control formal practices sparks informal innovation. The Cuban state's restriction of entrepreneurship before its authorization in 1993 proliferated informal strategies as Cubans still engaged in entrepreneurial behaviors in order to survive (Centeno & Portes, 2006, p. 31). Now, Cuban entrepreneurship exists as a hybrid formal/informal sector, and informal strategies arise and transform in relation to the formal opportunities that are regulated by the Cuban state.

"Community-Based Participatory Research" and "Critical Visual Methodologies"

My focus throughout the years on developing a research project that engaged theories on intersectionality and inequities and inequalities, especially during a moment of intense social / economic transformations and increasingly hybridized (formal / informal) economic identities, led me to discover the importance of community-engaged ethnography. Specifically, I became interested in Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) as a research orientation that emphasizes the development of partnerships between community members (including local organizations) and researchers (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008). Some of the core principles behind CBPR are that it is participatory, cooperative, a co-learning process, empowering, and a balance between research and action (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2008, p. 9). I was particularly interested in drawing from the strengths of my research participants to enhance my understandings of entrepreneurship in Cuba – they were the experts after all – and, ultimately, improve the well-being of community members, as they saw fit (Israel et al., 2008).

I began with a simple goal of offering time and energy to anyone who was willing to participate in this research. Sometimes I helped sweep someone's shop, helped shovel some unused terrain, participated in community organization planning meetings, or even helped write up business proposals or budget sheets to help formalize someone's entrepreneurial or local development endeavor. Often, these interactions morphed into engaging intellectual or methodological discussions that at once added to the development of my grounded theory approach as well as provided potentially novel perspectives based on the interests of my research participants.

As I became more integrated with different community organizations and people engaged in socially conscious entrepreneurship around Havana (see Chapter 2), I discovered not only invaluable opportunities to access more meaningful relationships and interactions with a variety of communities and their community members, but I also realized important opportunities to give back to the communities who so readily opened their doors to me, a foreign researcher. Too often, social science researchers go to foreign communities, conduct their research, and then leave to go publish in another country (often in another language); which I argue can be exploitative as these products can lead to incomes that are far higher than their local counterparts. One might argue that is exactly what I am doing here. However, a fundamental goal of many of my research relationships lay in adjusting my research objectives towards something that could be mutually beneficial to their endeavors – even if in some cases this was only via the conversations / interactions we had surrounding my project – and then look for methodological innovations to at once push forward my research agenda as well as attend to the desires of my research participants, within reason of course.

Some scholars argue that CBPR should be an equitable partnership between community members, organizations, and researcher(s) in *all* aspects of the research process (Israel et al., 2008). Unfortunately, the trajectory of my dissertation project – one that attended to predetermined research questions and objectives – did not allow me to develop such a strict partnership with the community members / organizations with which I worked. That is, my research timeline did not permit the different partners to be involved in *all* aspects of the research process, such as the data collection decisions or the full interpretation of results. Nevertheless, the openness of my research goals did permit me in

having some of the community members with whom I was closest play a foundational role in defining the problems or phenomena I examined. Chapter 5 is a great example of this, wherein I identify, describe, and analyze two social crises which were revealed to me while working with one community leader in particular. He has since told me that our conversations during the formation of my analyses have also helped him conceptualize how to attend to these issues within the framework of his own community organization and his creative forms of social entrepreneurship.

While CBPR underpinned much of my ethnographic approach, the most concrete example of a CBPR project within this broader study was the PhotoVoice project I conducted, and which is the subject of much analysis in Chapters 5 and 7. PhotoVoice is a CBPR methodology focused on empowerment and critical analysis. Critical theories – like Freirian approaches to pedagogy and "praxis" (Freire, 1993) – underpin the process and encourage community members to think critically about their experiences both within their own communities and in broader society. Our specific application of the PhotoVoice project emerged from the beginnings of a community organization network in Havana I helped initiate, called *La Red de Proyectos Comunitarios* (The Network of Community Projects) (see Chapter 7's conclusion for more details on how this network emerged). Throughout my time with seven of the founding organizations – both before the network's first meeting and afterwards while they / we worked to provide a solid foundation to that network – I observed that some of their most desired outcomes of their participation in *La Red* (the nickname of the network) was to discover opportunities and underlying challenges, and solutions, in their communities. When we began planning the PhotoVoice project, I suggested that we focus our visual and captioned narratives on these two themes

in addition to their primary goals which I thought would instigate better understanding and therefore stronger bonds between the participating community organizations; another goal that the organizations wanted as a foundation to *La Red*. The participating organizations unanimously agreed that these would be important topics to document and we decided that those would be the three themes of our gallery. In Chapter 2, I provide a much more detailed description of the PhotoVoice project's processes and procedures.

I drew from Critical Visual Methodology (CVM) to better understand how the PhotoVoice contributions – including the images themselves as well as captions made up of a title, an analysis or description of the photo's content, and suggestion or a way to improve or maintain the content described through the images – contributed to a better understanding of challenges and opportunities for communities as well as within entrepreneurship. Rose (2016) defines CVM with the following parameters: (1) that individual images require in-depth analysis; (2) that the social context within which the photo exists or comes out of is a critical consideration; and (3) that social, historical, geographical, and cultural lenses shape the creation and interpretation of visual imagery (22).

I found these conceptualizations of CVM pertinent considerations for the images *as well as* the captions. I thought that by considering the photos and captions together in light of CVM would be an valuable opportunity to look at my data from many different perspectives; that is, between the participants' contributions to the PhotoVoice project, how that related to my other ethnographic data, and how my participatory informal conversations with my interlocutors framed my eventual analysis. To move from the individual PhotoVoice contributions to broader themes and narratives, I analyzed them as

stand-alone examples of cultural / social expressions (Rose, 2016, p. 22), and then considered them within a broader spectrum of social, geographic, and historical influences gathered through my other ethnographic research strategies. I found this movement back and forth through my CBPR strategies critical because participatory methodologies also attempt to mitigate power imbalances either between the researcher and local communities, or between local community members themselves (see, e.g., Enria, 2016). In these ways, the PhotoVoice project I conducted also helped create an archive of contemporary issues that were created and decided upon by local actors, and which simultaneously attempted to create non-hierarchical knowledge and messaging while also responding to my central research questions.

Overview of the Chapters

The blend of this project's theoretical framework, attention to multiple inequities and inequalities in Cuba, and state policy reforms during economic transformation, provide the conceptual scope of my analysis of the opportunities and challenges for Cubans who engage in entrepreneurial activities, and how hybrid entrepreneurial strategies and the rationalities behind them are shaped by strict state policies and regulations as well as overarching economic and social crises. In Chapter 2, "Participants, Methods, and Procedures," I describe the methodology and research design that enabled this research. Specifically, I describe the semi-structured in-depth interviews, informal topically focused conversations, participant observation, and document analyses I utilized to ethnographically explore the diversity of entrepreneurial experiences that emerge from broader structural conditions and underlying social and economic narratives. I also describe

the five research dimensions I engaged in in order to deepen the perspectives described in this dissertation. Those dimensions included working with and volunteering at a range of community organizations (who use social entrepreneurship to achieve their initiatives), a PhotoVoice project with some of those organizations, and two research projects with some colleagues I met in the field.

Perhaps my proudest methodological contribution was facilitating the Photovoice project that brought together social entrepreneurs from nine neighborhoods in Havana and taught them basic photography, ethical observation, and critical reflection so they could visually document, analyze, and communicate their and their communities' greatest opportunities and challenges from their collective perspectives. The culmination of the PhotoVoice project was a gallery of 21-photos. For my research, this process helped overcome geographic and social hurdles and led to a more locally beneficial and ethnographically grounded study of entrepreneurship in Havana.

Chapter 3, "Background," provides important context to the development of this study's key findings. I begin with a discussion of the economic crisis that has persisted in Cuba since the Soviet trading bloc disappeared in 1990. From there, I describe how legal entrepreneurship emerged from a series of informal survival strategies that the government was forced to formalize due to their overwhelming, uncontrollable prevalence all the while maintaining its central control over the economy. In the second part of the chapter, I discuss some of the intersecting inequities which shape the opportunities or challenges Cubans face in their entrepreneurial experiences. I conclude Chapter 3 with a comparative case study analysis of two adjacent municipalities in Havana – *Plaza de la Revolución* and

el Cerro – in order to show that socioeconomic circumstances are indeed different depending on where one is in Havana.

The central question addressed in Chapter 4, titled " '*No trabajaré pa' ellos*': Entrepreneurship as a form of state resistance," is: Why do Cubans choose to engage in entrepreneurial activities in the first place – especially since there are so many barriers (ideological, political, material, and otherwise) – and how might entrepreneurial strategies help Cubans resist their current circumstances? This chapter serves as a gateway from the central frameworks of the dissertation (methods, theoretical perspectives, and background sections) to the broader discussions of how entrepreneurship intersects with underlying circumstances – like stigmas, stereotypes, discrimination, inequities, and inequalities – and how different people engage with those circumstances both in individual ways (Chapter 6) and with the community in mind (chapter 7). Specifically, Chapter 4 examines how entrepreneurial strategies are driven not just in spite of but also because of challenging political and regulatory environments.

Chapter 5, "'*La Crisis Económica no es la Única*': The Social Consequences of Economic Crisis" puts the PhotoVoice project into conversation with my other ethnographic methods to illustrate how harsh economic circumstances have led to two interconnected social crises in Havana. These two interconnected crises – a supposed "crisis of values" and a "spiritual crisis" – have emerged in light of growing inequities and inequalities in Havana and they are related to underlying stigmas and stereotypes which, ultimately, have important implications for entrepreneurship. I argue that while some stereotyped groups of people have been able to craft resilient responses to more personal circumstances (see Chapter 6), or others have utilized (social) entrepreneurship as a means

to respond to the consequences of these crises at the community level (see chapter 7), there are still many people who are caught in desperate circumstances where they are at once dispossessed of their belonging and stigmatized by their supposed failures. Chapter 5's conclusion deepens this analysis surrounding feelings of belonging and reveals how economic and social crisis shape entrepreneurial possibilities for people in the current moment.

Chapter 6, "'*Mecániquiar con lo que tengas*': Entrepreneurial Responses to Crisis in Cuba," explores how young, marginalized people in Havana negotiate social and economic transformations within Cuba's emergent mixed market economy. The primary aim is to better understand how marginalized or stigmatized people adjust to shifting local and global forces and gain access to livelihood opportunities through one of Cuba's economic pillars: international tourism. The contents of this chapter describe how global circulations of people, capital, and ideas shape micro-economies, cultural traditions, and personal local/global encounters, and how marginalized people can engage with stereotypes and stigmas in unique ways in order to gain access to better incomes and potentially valuable local/global connections.

Chapter 7, "'*En la calle, se resuelve todo':* Entrepreneurship, Community, and Crisis" analyzes community oriented entrepreneurial strategies and rationalities. Specifically, the goal of the chapter is to describe how people utilize entrepreneurialism (in a variety of ways) to deal with the fallout from restrictive state policies as well as increasing inequities, inequalities, and other broader social crises. The chapter begins with more personal, individualistic responses before moving to broader neighborhood and city-wide initiatives. As the title suggests – *en la calle, se resuelve todo* (in the street, everything

is resolved) – Cuban (social) entrepreneurs have found their own unique ways to manage problems or challenges that the government seems unwilling to tackle on their own.

In the conclusion (Chapter 8) I review the key findings of the dissertation. I also consider some current circumstances that have transformed entrepreneurship in Cuba, including the ways it can be used for positive social change. These circumstances include the COVID-19 global pandemic, monetary reform in Cuba, as well as some other economic transformations that have directly impacted entrepreneurship / private sector activity in Cuba. I finish with some potential future research opportunities that deserve attention and, if completed, would extend the scope of this dissertation.

CHAPTER TWO | Research Methods, Participants, and Procedures

The diversity of opportunities and challenges that emerge across intersecting social and demographic factors requires experience-near approaches with a diverse set of actors (Knapp, 2005). I did not restrict the study to one entrepreneurial activity because my main point of departure is the documented phenomenon of entrepreneurship as a growing hybrid formal/informal sector of the Cuban economy. I explored ethnographically how Cubans conceptualized and perceived their entrepreneurial experiences in relation to broader structural conditions and documented their innovative formal/informal entrepreneurial strategies. What follows are my research objectives, research sites, and data collection and analysis strategies.

Research Objectives

Q1: How do state economic policies and regulations shape entrepreneurship in Cuba in both discourse and practice?

Objectives:

- 1) Describe the formal state policies and state discourses that shape entrepreneurship in Cuba.
- 2) Identify how a diverse group of Cuban entrepreneurs understand, experience, and respond to Cuban economic policies and regulations.

Q2: How do intersections of social and demographic differences shape Cuban entrepreneurship?

Objectives:

- 3) Examine the social, demographic, and entrepreneurial histories of a diverse group of Cubans who engage in entrepreneurship.
- 4) Identify the opportunities, and challenges that emerge from the intersection between social and demographic differences and state policies and regulations.

Q3: What hybrid entrepreneurial strategies emerge for differently positioned people and in differently positioned communities?

Objectives:

- 5) Describe the range of hybrid formal and informal entrepreneurial strategies used by Cubans and their transformation over time.
- 6) Identify patterns in the structural, demographic, or personal/individual factors that shape the use of different hybrid formal and informal strategies across intersectional experiences.

Q4: What are the subjective logics that cohere around these hybrid entrepreneurial strategies, and how do these relate to demographic, social, and economic inequities and inequalities?

Objectives:

- 7) Identify, from the perception of a range of people, the broader structural conditions that shape their opportunities and challenges in entrepreneurship.
- 8) Examine narratives of entrepreneurial decision-making and personal/communal aspirations across an array of intersectional experiences.

To complete this research I lived in Havana, Cuba for 15 months from August 2018 through October 2019. I initially chose one year because it encompassed the full range of tourism,

from high season to low season, which was important because it is the most lucrative Cuban economic sector and businesses with foreign clientele can often make much more money. Havana is a popular tourism destination and is the main entry point for tourists visiting Cuba. I surpassed one year in order to complete a PhotoVoice project (see below) with a group of community organizations / social entrepreneurs.

As I describe in Chapter 1 and below in the section on the PhotoVoice dimension of this study, the PhotoVoice project evolved out of a network of community organizations in Havana, in line with their goals to identify and begin to act against underlying common challenges they were facing. The PhotoVoice project also helped form more cohesive bonds between the participating community organizations as well as attending to my research goals of better understanding opportunities and challenges that existed in different areas and with different groups of people in Havana.

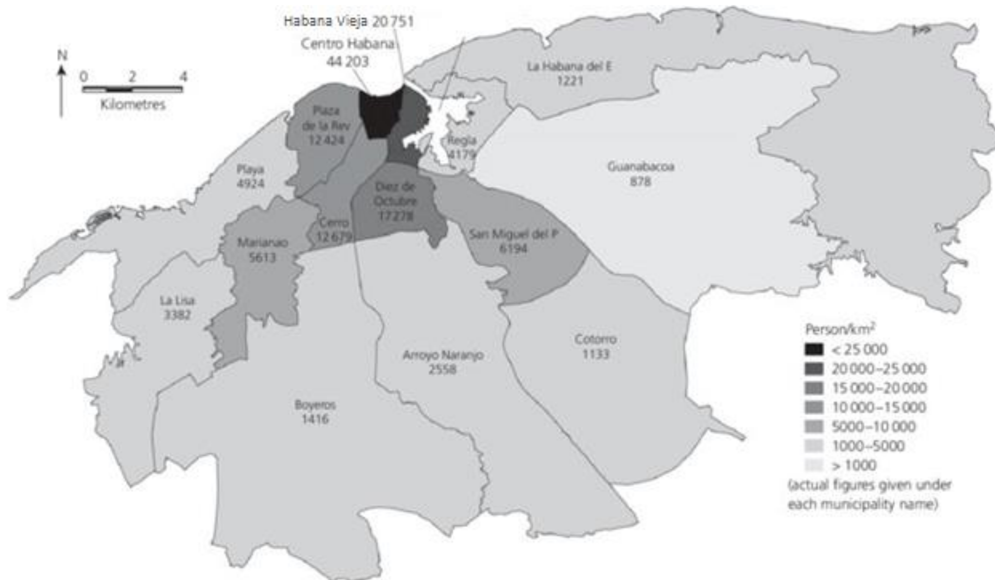
Field Sites

My specific field sites in Havana were as follows: *Calle Tulipán* (between *Ayestarán* and *Calzada de Cerro*), *San Martín, Vedado, La Timba, Santo Ángel, Barrio Colón, Vieja Linda, Buena Vista,* and *Los Pocitos*. These sites were across seven of Havana's fifteen municipalities (*Cerro, Plaza de la Revolución, Habana Vieja, Centro Habana, Arroyo Naranjo, Playa,* and *Marianao*; see **Map 2.1**). As I describe in **Table 2.1**, these sites were characteristically very different, offering an intriguing level of comparison. This was especially important for my analysis of how structural conditions, including stigma and inequalities, shape different opportunities and challenges across Havana, and the conceptualizations, rationalities, and utilization of local and global resources within

entrepreneurship. Where applicable, I included which community organization resided in which field site. As you will see below, volunteering / working with community organizations were useful ethnographic opportunities.

As you will see below in the section that describes my research participants, I decided to sample participants from three types of locations: tourist zones, urban residential non-tourist, and rural or peripheral (see **Appendix B**). These are my own distinctions that I used to reflect people's access to the lucrative tourism industry. On the map (**Map 2.1**), the tourist zones are *Habana Vieja*, *Centro Habana*, and the northern half of *Plaza de la Rev.* The urban residential non-tourist areas are *Diez de Octubre, Cerro,* the southern half of *Plaza de la Rev., Marianao*, the northwestern half of *San Miguel del P*, and northern half of *Arroyo Naranjo*. All the other areas I considered rural or peripheral.

Map 2.1 *Havana's municipalities and population densities*



(Source: Warren & Ortegon-sanchez, 2016)

Table 2.1 *Field Sites Locations and Descriptions*

Barrio Name	**Municipality**	**Characteristics**	**Common Private Business Types**
Calle Tulipán (between *Ayestarán* and *Calzada de Cerro*)	*Cerro*	Quiet street with few lights. Common thoroughfare for people walking to local transit points. Used to be a common place to buy illicit drugs but has since been "cleaned up." *Home to *Contramuros* - an artist collective that teaches people with developmental disabilities how to make art and artisanal products.	one small café (selling small sandwiches, juice, and coffee) many informal businesses operated out of people's homes
San Martín	*Cerro*	Often referred to as "*la favela*" by local residents (because of its maze-like center). Lots of illegal activity; a primary income is cigar sales because of its proximity to a cigar factory	informal businesses selling about anything you could imagine (e.g., meat, laundry detergent, illicit drugs, alcohol, etc.)
Vedado	*Plaza de la Revolución*	Area of the city with better conditions. Large houses that have been converted to house multiple families. A common place for people from all over the city to come hang out in. Lots of bars, restaurants, theaters, and other things to do.	many private businesses (mostly restaurants, bars, bed and breakfasts)
La Timba	*Plaza de la Revolución*	Area of Havana that is improving, though it is still notorious for poor housing conditions and some black-market activity. *Home to *Entimbalao* - an auto restoration workshop that uses some of its income to improve the neighborhood.	few private businesses (1 auto restoration shop and a few food service establishments)
Santo Ángel	*Habana Vieja*	A small neighborhood on the northern tip of *Habana Vieja*. 25 years ago, it was a "bad" neighborhood but has been rejuvenated by the social entrepreneurship of Papito and *Artecorte* - a barber/hairstyling/bartending school for young people who do not have work nor go to school.	many private businesses geared towards tourism (mostly restaurants, bars, and bed and breakfasts)

Barrio Name	Municipality	Characteristics	Common Private Business Types
Barrio Colón	*Centro Habana*	A notorious neighborhood in *Centro Habana* known for sex work, drugs, alcoholism, and *guaperia* (aggressive macho behavior). Tall buildings that are in disrepair, many of which are falling down. *Home to *los Azules del Malecon* - a baseball team that helps young men focus on something else besides their domestic or other neighborhood problems.	*cafeterias* and other food service establishments on the ground floor of most buildings. "Pop-up" shops that sell beer, rum, and cigarettes ("pop-up" because they open with varying frequency)
Vieja Linda	*Arroyo Naranjo*	A socially marginalized neighborhood on the outskirts of the city. Very few opportunities for formal (authorized) work. Only one bus travels through this neighborhood once an hour (when it is on schedule). *Home to *Proyecto Vida* - a local development organization based around family values.	Very few legal private businesses (a couple agricultural product vendors) but many informal businesses
Buena Vista	*Playa*	A neighborhood with good housing conditions in between a wealthier section of Havana (Playa) and a poorer section (*Marianao*). *Home to *Mi Barrio Sueña* - a community organization that hosts adult and children soccer leagues (with up to 40 teams from all over Havana) with the goal to encourage fitness and well-being.	Large congregation of small businesses (some mobile and some stationary) around the "*la ceguera"* transit point.
Los Pocitos	*Marianao*	A "*lleg-y-pon*" (shantytown) located on the banks of the Quibu river on the border of the municipalities *Marianao* and *La Lisa.* Like most other *lleg-y-pon*s, *Los Pocitos* is notorious for black-market activity, extreme poverty, and *guapería*. The settlement is home to many migrants from the Eastern side of Cuba who, because they do not have legal residence in Havana, cannot access social welfare. *Home to *Proyecto Akokan* - a non-profit initiative that works for the integral development of the community, facilitating social transformation, environmental-social-economic sustainability, social equity, and the protection of its distinctive local heritage.	Café that funds the *Proyecto Akokán* initiatives. Costs are mostly too high for residents of this community. Besides that, only one legal private business that sells snacks, cooking spices, soda, and other consumer items. All other private businesses are informal (some of which operate in illicit transactions (drugs, sex work, etc.)

Research Activities

During the 15 months I was in Havana, I conducted research within five interconnected dimensions. The first dimension pertained to ethnographic strategies which I had designed before entering the field (e.g., interviews, participant observation, and document / media analyses). The other four dimensions were unanticipated ethnographic opportunities that presented themselves in the field and which I pursued because they were within the scope of my original project and they shed new light on my research questions. While I utilized participant observation, document analyses, and interviews within each of these four dimensions, they were methodological innovations that allowed me to follow the data and demonstrated my openness to the iterative process of my fieldwork (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I describe them individually below in the following sections: "Community organizations dimension" "PhotoVoice dimension," "Unequal crisis dimension," and "Dance instructors dimension;" but first, I describe the activities that fell within my initially planned research design. For a tabled breakdown of my research activities, within all dimensions of the project, please see **Appendix A**.

Initially planned document and media analyses

I collected and examined government documents focused on Cuban entrepreneurship. These included the policies and regulations laid out by *la Oficina Nacional de Administracion Tributaria* (the National Tax Administration Office) (*ONAT*). These documents were given to me by a friend who was formalizing his own business. These government documents also included *La Gaceta Oficial No. 35* (The Official Gazette No. 35), an official announcement of policy changes from 2018 that would help create "better

order and control" (Ministerio de Justicia, 2018). I also collected all national newspapers (*Granma, Trabajadores,* and *Juventud Rebelde*) during the 15 months I was there. I read each newspaper every day and scanned articles that discussed pertinent topics such as entrepreneurship, private business, personal identity characteristics (age, race, sex, etc.), and locations where I was working. Finally, I watched the early morning, mid-day, or nightly news – depending on what my research schedule was that day – with my phone nearby. Whenever a segment came up that I thought would add to my data collection I would record it. I added the scanned articles, government documents, and video recorded news segments to my NVivo database and coded them based on the codebook I had developed (see below).

A primary goal in analyzing the documents and other sources of media was to describe the formal state policies and state discourses of self-employment that shape entrepreneurship in Cuba. I also paid particular attention to the possible ways that state policies and regulations created a diverse set of opportunities or challenges for differently positioned Cubans who may be involved in entrepreneurial activities. This helped me identify the array of entrepreneurial experiences that arose from the intersection between social and demographic differences and state policies and regulations. These analyses also helped facilitate interviews and conversations directed specifically towards state policies or regulations.

Initially planned interviews and participant observation

I conducted interviews and participant observation with a wide range of small business owners, private sector employees, and community organization directors (who were also

social entrepreneurs) (see **Appendix B**). The interviews consisted of 41 semi-structured interviews with small business owners and private sector employees (see "All Participants" section below). These private sector workers were from a diverse range of entrepreneurial industries (e.g., beauty services, restaurants, IT services, education, artisanal products) (see **Appendix B**). To facilitate ethnographic observations of such a wide array of business types, I cycled through businesses and community organizations, visiting each one at least every other week, and participating however they saw fit (e.g., helping with day-to-day business operations or simply sitting and observing).

In particular, the interviews and participant observations sought to identify how a diverse group of Cuban entrepreneurs conceptualized, enacted, and interacted with Cuban policies and regulations; examined the social, demographic, and entrepreneurial histories of this diverse group; identified the opportunities and challenges that emerged from broader structural conditions; described the range of hybrid formal/informal entrepreneurial strategies used by Cuban entrepreneurs and their transformations over time; identified patterns in structural, demographic, and personal factors shaping the use of hybrid strategies across intersectional identities; identified, from the perception of a range of entrepreneurs, the broader structural conditions shaping their opportunities, challenges, and constraints in self-employment; and examined the narratives of entrepreneurial decision-making and economic aspirations across intersectional identities. Furthermore, when 'hanging out' with the business owners, employees, and directors, I always brought a notepad that I used to track questions or thoughts I came up with while conducting the document and media analyses as well as other interesting insights I discovered elsewhere in the field. I used this notepad to conduct informal topical conversations with my main

participants, helping to develop my analyses along the way. The outcomes of these conversations are listed in the dissertation as “Conversations,” whereas the interviews are listed as “Interviews.” Both citations have the month and year when the interaction took place. I detail if/when I audio recorded the interactions in the “Data Analysis and Management” section of this chapter (see below).

In addition to the interviews and informal conversations, I conducted regular participant observation with 31 of the participants listed in **Appendix B** (directors, owners, or employees at 14 separate businesses and 7 community organizations). The purpose of these observations were to identify how a diverse group of Cubans and a diverse set of entrepreneurial strategies and activities enact or interact with economic policies and regulations; identify the opportunities and challenges facing Cubans who are engaged in entrepreneurial pursuits; describe the range of formal/informal entrepreneurial strategies used by Cubans of many different walks of life; and identify patterns in the broader structural factors shaping the use of hybrid entrepreneurial strategies.

Other initially planned research activities

Through local confidants as well as other members of the academic in Cuba and the US I carried out a few other activities with local experts to help me better understand the structural aspects of entrepreneurship in Cuba. This included four separate meetings with a group of lawyers who were well versed with the self-employment system. These meetings focused on some policy changes that were being discussed in Cuba with regards to licensing structures and other business operations protocols (e.g., hiring and tax

procedures) (*Gaceta Oficial* 2018). This was particularly useful because the lawyers gave me their opinions of how they thought those changes would drive inequalities in Havana.

During the exploratory phase of this project (summer 2017) I also met with a private business consultant who was a representative of sorts for the rights of entrepreneurs in Havana (name withheld for confidentiality[3]), in addition to meeting two times with the staff/director of *Cuba Emprende* – a Cuban organization located in Havana that trains and advises aspiring entrepreneurs to build and augment the success of their businesses. The first meeting helped me ensure the feasibility of my dissertation proposal. The second meeting was to explore the feasibility of using an intersectional research approach to study entrepreneurship in Havana, which they agreed with.

Community Organizations Dimension

Towards the end of September 2018, a close friend invited me to attend his tryout for a local baseball team from *el barrio Colón*, a notorious area of Havana, known for *guapería* (aggressive, confrontative macho behavior) and *jineterismo* (street hustling, broadly defined, including tourist driven sex work) (see Chapter 5). It was a full weekend event and, having nothing on my schedule, I went with him. At the field, I struck up a conversation with the head coach and discovered that this was not just any baseball team; it was actually a community organization that used baseball as a mental and physical outlet for adult men suffering from stress and anxiety and associated substance-abuse problems

[3] All names except "Papito" are pseudonyms. Gilberto "Papito" Valladares is a well-known figure in Havana, especially as he is the director of *Artecorte*, a well-known community organization and across the world. He agreed to have his name published in this dissertation and future publications of my research.

or other domestic problems. These were common challenges for men from *Colón* because of the seemingly insurmountable socioeconomic hardships in this neighborhood including low incomes and awful housing conditions. The coach invited me to become a member of the management group for the organization and help him and his friend – a social psychologist who advised the coach and the captains of the team on how to resolve different scenarios that arose – run the baseball team as a community organization.

From September 2018 to March 2019, I attended all practices, games, and bi-weekly social functions / volunteer events. I acted as a manager of sorts for the baseball team, helping in warmups and in the dugout at games. I also acted as a sounding board and someone who would take notes and analyze my observations for the coach and the social psychologist. I regularly gave them my perspective on how (*I thought*) they could better manage the challenges they faced in their community advocacy venture.

Towards the end of my time working with the baseball team – which ended because many of the baseball players lost interest in the community organization side of things – another friend came to me and expressed his interest in starting his own organization in order to convert some unused space near his house into a urban artisanal fair. I told him I was not well versed in starting an organization but that I would be happy to help however I could. By this time, I had discovered that working with community organizations was mutually beneficial. They gained access to another set of hands and, in some cases, a committed volunteer with a set of skills that were perhaps not readily available in their community. For example, me being bilingual allowed me to help the community organizations implement English as a Second Language curricula, as well as the possibility for me to act as a translator for any meetings or interactions they had with English-speaking

visitors. They also invited me to share my ethnographic observations in hopes it would help improve their initiatives. The organizations also helped improve my research, not only facilitating my access to their communities but also giving me important insights, critiques, and suggestions on the analyses I was forming.

As I worked with the first two organizations, though, it became apparent that both suffered from disillusionment on the parts of the community members with whom they worked (see also Chapter 5). Perhaps it was because there was already a long history of what some people might consider broken social agreements (Fernández, 2000). Nevertheless, it was a serious frustration for the community organizations, and the two I worked with in particular expressed that it was all the difference between having a successful organization or one that flounders.

One evening, I arrived at my apartment and a group of friends were sitting on the stoop with a young man I had never seen before. I leaned my bicycle against the curb and walked up to them, greeting them as I sat down. One of my friends introduced me to the young man, saying I was in Cuba as a social scientist working with community organizations in Havana. The young man's eyes lit up. He told me he was a student at a local community organization called *Artecorte* (see **Table 2.2**) and that he would like to introduce me to the director. Little did I know that this young man had been kicked out of *Artecorte* recently and was using me to get back into the school. Nonetheless, I eagerly accepted his invitation and told him I would meet him the next day in front of the school.

The next day he awkwardly introduced me to the organization's director. The director and I spoke for about an hour. I explained to him what I was studying in Cuba and the difficulties I was encountering with the different community organizations with whom

I was working. He told me those were common challenges for any Cuban community organization, and he explained that the best way for me to learn about potential resolutions, among other topics like the importance of diverse forms of funding or the day-to-day management of an organization was to integrate myself with more organizations. He invited me back to *Artecorte* and then began to call other organizations he knew to send me there to talk with their staff and hopefully begin a routine with them.

With Papito's help, I worked with and volunteered at eight different community organizations in Havana. This was a useful research strategy because I gained more meaningful access to a range of communities (i.e., more meaningful than if I had just shown up in these communities). I went to these organizations weekly (bi-weekly for one organization) and had regular conversations with the directors, office managers, and other employees about topics for my dissertation. I also helped one organization – the one that was trying to install an artisanal fair – formalize their initiative which meant I was privy to the many documents they had to fill out and which guided their organization. Beyond the conversion of the local public space, they were a group of artisans who sold pieces of art to fund their work with children with developmental disabilities. Therefore, the documentation about how they could fund their initiative was particularly useful for my project.

In addition to the document analyses and participant observation/conversations with the members of these organizations I conducted additional activities which helped my primary project, while also consistent with my commitment to community engagement. For example, I helped in advisory capacities with four organizations: *Artecorte, Proyecto Vida, Contramuros,* and *Mi Barrio Sueña* (see **Table 2.1** and **Table 2.7** for descriptions of

these projects and their neighborhoods[4]). These advisory roles helped me get closer with the organizations and better understand how they used social entrepreneurship to attend to key initiatives in their communities. I also conducted the following site visits led by each organization's director to better understand the organization as well as the community with which they worked: 4 site visits to *Vieja Linda* (*Proyecto Vida*); 4 site visits to *Buenavista* (*Mi Barrio Sueña*); 2 site visits to *Los Pocitos* (*Proyecto Akokán*); 4 site visits to *Havana Vieja* (*Artecorte*). Site visits are different from participant observation because they entailed guided tours with historical and other pertinent descriptions.

While I conducted ethnographic research with the seven unique organizations in Havana, the organizations' leaders repeatedly described similar difficulties accessing material or financial resources and challenges navigating bureaucratic hurdles. At the time, however, there lacked infrastructure for these organizations to communicate their experiences with one another. So, even though they would all likely face similar challenges throughout their individual trajectories, they had difficulties sharing their thoughts on potential or already successful solutions to their problems.

With the help of Gilberto "Papito" Valladares,[5] referred to throughout the dissertation as Papito, an experienced community organizer and social entrepreneur in Havana, and someone who has since become my close friend and mentor, I helped form *La Red de Proyectos Comunitarios* (The Network of Community Projects), referred to in

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[4] *Mi Barrio Sueña* is not listed in the PhotoVoice participants table (**Table 6**) because they did not participate in that project. However, a short description of their organization can be found in **Table 1** in the "*Buenavista*" row.

[5] Again, this is the only real name used in this dissertation.

the dissertation as *La Red* for short. *La Red* was a network of community organizations with the primary goal of helping different organizations work together to solve common challenges and support one another through community (inter)action. We hosted two all day conferences with different organizations to help them initiate / maintain consistent interaction. The first was in May 2019 with 17 organizations in attendance, the second was in February 2020 with 25 community organizations in attendance. These were useful meetings because they allowed for me to better understand the role of social entrepreneurship in Havana as well as observe the interactions between the member organizations.

Finally, I participated in three intercommunity events: the Olympics of Traditional Games, a beach cleanup at a local's beach on the eastern side of Havana, and Mara-Barrio (a marathon style fitness race). These intercommunity events were also important to my primary project because they helped me observe and analyze how social entrepreneurs cultivated and utilized resources (personnel and material) to carry out key initiatives between organizations.

PhotoVoice Dimension

La Red was immediately successful in helping the separate organizations discover new volunteers, new opportunities to access resources, or increased attendance to their individual community initiatives and events. However, as I continued to work between the different organizations, I noted that there were potential challenges that I observed in one community but were perhaps overlooked in another community and therefore could not be communicated to the rest of the group. Since this was a fundamental goal of *La Red* (i.e.,

identifying and resolving common challenges) it was imperative to find a tool that could help the participating organizations see the underlying challenges that they shared.

Based upon my previous experiences with the PhotoVoice methodology (Padilla, Matiz-Reyes, Colón-Burgos, Varas-Díaz, & Vertovec, 2019; Vertovec, Colón-Burgos, Matiz-Reyes, Padilla, & Varas-Díaz, 2018), I thought that perhaps PhotoVoice could be an effective tool in terms of supporting community organizations in reframing and relating changes within their organizational logic. So, I set up individual meetings with the organizations I worked closely with and presented the idea of doing a PhotoVoice project. I expressed that we could work together to identify underlying challenges between the groups – as well as opportunities – and that this would be an opportunity for them to learn the PhotoVoice methodology firsthand, to later use in their own communities with their community constituents. Most were immediately interested in the idea, seeing the opportunity to not only discuss some of their challenges with other organizations but to also promote their own initiatives through the gallery production. Just one community leader was hesitant because they were already involved in many other activities such as a course on financial stability as well as completing all their organization's own initiatives while taking care of two young girls. I told him that it was up to him to decide whether or not he could commit, but that we would also be flexible in order to ensure he was able to complete all his other responsibilities. He agreed to participate and acknowledged that the first group meeting he would need to bring his daughters – which was just fine.

From August to October 2019, I conducted the PhotoVoice project with seven of the eight community organizations with which I had previously worked. The eighth organization was unable to participate because their leader was diagnosed with dengue a

few days before the beginning of the project and his co-leader was travelling in Canada. The PhotoVoice project was beneficial to the participating organizations because it helped members of *La Red* identify and reconceptualize some potentially overlooked challenges in their own communities, and created a mechanism for them to act on them. Indeed, we initiated the PhotoVoice project with two primary goals in mind: (1) form a more cohesive bond between the participating organizations and (2) give them a 'shared language' to communicate some of their experiences and to search for, identify, and begin to resolve some underlying circumstances (Hergenrather et al., 2009). The PhotoVoice project culminated with a gallery exhibition at one of the participating community organization's headquarters on October 21, 2019.

As I mentioned in the "Theoretical Considerations" section in Chapter 1, PhotoVoice is a Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) methodology focused on empowerment and critical analysis. In their seminal article on the methodology, Wang and Burris (Wang, Burris, 1997) describe the three main goals of PhotoVoice as: "(1) to enable people to record and reflect their community's strengths and concerns, (2) to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about important community issues through large and small scale group discussions of photographs, and (3) to reach policymakers" (370). The methodology has been used across an array of topical themes including community rebuilding, health promotion, living with disabilities or illnesses, among others (see Hergenrather et al., 2009).

PhotoVoice is often used as a needs assessment tool and to reach policy makers, as described above (see also Pauwels, 2015). However, the community leaders expressed to me during informal conversations that they were not interested in taking *La Red's*

PhotoVoice project to policy makers in part because they were not convinced their voices would be heard politically. This was a common theme across many civilians I spoke with in Cuba. Additionally, a few of the community leaders also hinted at their nervousness of being caught "documenting" Cuban society. This was a valid concern since other artistic representations of Cuban society – whether through film, music, or still image – have sometimes been considered too critical and, in some extreme cases, legally prosecuted (Fernandes, 2006). Though, the leaders did reassure me that the themes they had chosen would not be too controversial. For example, while bureaucracy and the government in general were often considered the primary source of most of their challenges, the community leaders all agreed that they would not try to document these challenges for fear of coming off too critical of the government. Moreover, there was tacit agreement that they would not take photos of the police or other authority figures.

Rather, La Red participants decided to use the process to instigate intercommunity conversations about their opportunities and challenges and to illustrate the ways they could improve or maintain those narratives themselves. During the planning portion of the project (i.e., before the formal project began), the community leaders decided that this project would be an invaluable way to document local experiences as well as allow them to curate an archive of contemporary issues. Based on my previous experiences using the PhotoVoice methodology I also knew that this was an opportunity to create non-hierarchical knowledge and messaging (Padilla et al., 2019; see also Enria, 2016).

This PhotoVoice project was also beneficial to this dissertation for several reasons. First, Anthropologists have long utilized camera-based imagery – both photography and videos – as a source of visual ethnography (C. Mitchell, 2011; Pink, 2013; Weber, 2008).

These types of imagery are valuable to the social sciences because of their ubiquity in society and their iconic and indexical qualities (Pauwels, 2011, p. 10). Participatory or collaborative visual methodologies have generally been utilized within two distinct approaches: (1) as visual stimuli in interview or focus group situations and (2) as a stimulating mechanism where participants from the field produce their own images regarding a certain issue (see Pauwels, 2015). Participant photography methods that fall into the latter group help place the documentation of personal and local phenomena in the hands of the participants. The PhotoVoice methodology is one such method and it can be fashioned as a social science tool that aims to combine reflection on social conditions with photographic images that are taken by participants from the field and which are analyzed collectively by community members / research participants and social scientists (C. C. Wang, 1999; C. C. Wang & Burris, 1997).

For those reasons, this PhotoVoice project gave me additional perspectives into the participating community organizations, including the communities with whom they worked. Also, since the main themes from the project were the opportunities, challenges, and primary goals of the organizations, it focused directly on how social entrepreneurs view their greatest opportunities and challenges, and their primary ways of addressing those circumstances. Finally, our PhotoVoice project served certain ethnographic usefulness in the following two ways: (1) the PhotoVoice photos and captions were useful data sources that spoke to local or emic lived experiences and interpretations (Pauwels, 2011); and (2) the nuances that arose during the execution of the PhotoVoice project – i.e., the day-to-day circumstances that permitted or hindered the project's completion, what could otherwise be considered minutiae or trivial – were also invaluable data, especially

for the study of inequalities. For example, as I describe below, the difficulties that one set of community leaders had in arriving to our first meeting – because of a lack of public transportation – helped corroborate the geographic inequalities that physically marginalized some areas of Havana from more lucrative spaces like the tourism zone where we conducted said meeting.

Participating organizations, methods, and procedures of the PhotoVoice project

La Red's PhotoVoice project consisted of seven organizations who I had already been conducting research with and who volunteered their participation when I discussed the opportunity with them in individual meetings. During these meetings, I also conducted a pre-project interview with each organization's director to better understand their expectations and desires with the project. Per my request, each organization sent two leaders, effectively forming a team for each community organization. Of the fourteen PhotoVoice participants, 50% were women, 50% were black or mixed-race, and they ranged in age from 19-61 years old (see **Appendix B**). As you will see below in the captions of the different PhotoVoice photos (primarily in Chapters 5 and 7), the participants were all very well educated. Though I did not ask them outright in our interviews, most of the participants (n=8) mentioned at some time or another that they held higher-level degrees. This was consistent with descriptions of Cuba having high levels of education across the board (e.g., N. Fernandez, 2010).

Like *La* Red as a whole, the different organizations were also diverse in their makeup. One organization used art to attend to mental health disparities; there were three local development organizations from vastly different neighborhoods [one shantytown, one

rural periphery area, and one lower-income neighborhood in a wealthier municipality (*Plaza de la Revolución*)]; one organization preserved local religious traditions; another used sports to shield young people from drug or alcohol abuse and/or domestic problems; and the last organization provided vocational training for young people without work or who did not go to school. **Table 2.2** has descriptions of each organization that they gave to me to make brochures for the gallery exhibition.

Table 2.2 *Participating Organizations in La Red's PhotoVoice Project*

Organization	Barrio	Municipality	Organization Description
Proyecto Vida	*Vieja Linda*	*Arroyo Naranjo*	"*Proyecto Vida* is a family-based community project whose objective is to transform their community through lifestyle changes. They propose abandoning the inappropriate habits, vices, and bad habits that exist in the community, giving the opportunity to incorporate work, permaculture, and love of life in the inhabitants of this community. The project has the challenge of being "a light in the midst of darkness."
Proyecto Akokán	*Los Pocitos*	*Marianao*	"The *Proyecto Akokán* community project in *Los Pocitos* is a non-profit initiative that works with, from, and for the *Los Pocitos* community in the *Marianao* municipality, Havana. They promote creative, solidarity, and participatory actions with the main objective of contributing to the integral development of the community, facilitating social transformation, environmental-social-economic sustainability, social equity, and the protection of its distinctive local heritage, in line with national goals and global aspects of the 2030 agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals of Cuba. *A brief note: *Akokán* is the Yoruba (a West African culture/language) word for heart."
Azules del Malecón	*Colon*	*Centro Habana*	"The base and main strength of the *Azules del Malecón* community project is the promotion and development of "Baseball 5," an approach to the national pastime based on the needs of contemporary inclusiveness for all ages and genders in Central Havana."
Proyecto Entimbalao	*La Timba*	*Plaza de la Revolución*	"The main objective of *Proyecto Entimbalao* is to promote socio-cultural spaces with the members of the *La Timba* neighborhood to build the development and social transformation of the community. The project is supported by the Entimbalao workshop that does auto-restoration."

Organization	Barrio	Municipality	Organization Description
Artecorte	*Santo Ángel*	*Habana Vieja*	"*Artecorte* is a community project that arose in 1999 in order to dignify the profession of barbers and hairdressers in Cuba. At the beginning, it was a purely cultural project. With the passage of time, it became what it is now a sustainable local development project that possesses extensive experience in working with young people who are disconnected from study and work. *Artecorte* started from three important points: art, history, and the trade (barber/hairstyling). It focuses on providing tools and skills to a young group of workers who then become active socially and economically. This has contributed to a greater vocational orientation of its participants. The growth strategy has been based on renewed and consolidated alliances throughout the 20 years of the project's life. Currently, *Artecorte* works with companies, universities, local government, and especially with the Office of the Historian of Havana and the broader community. *Artecorte* believes that synergy is sustained by the idea that institutions and people can contribute the following four resources: time, hands, knowledge, and money."
Contramuros	*Calle Tulipán*	*Cerro*	"*Contramuros* raises community awareness with art, working to rescue the artisan traditions of Cuba and raise awareness about the use of wasted materials through reuse, recycling, and love and care for the environment. Cultural improvement is a main objective of the Project, which incites artistic and technical growth of its membership and contributes to the formation of a comprehensive general culture. *Proyecto Contramuros* benefits children and adolescents from the special education schools: *Francisco Llacer* and *Noel Hernández*. Through this alliance, *Contramuros* helps break down the barriers of rejection that people with disabilities face as they awaken in a sector of the population that does not have the knowledge or the adequate resources to assimilate as distinct individuals within the society. Furthermore, the percentage of the population of both young people and adults with no employment in the municipality of El Cerro is high. Working with *Contramuros*, these people not only receive theoretical and practical knowledge about crafts – not only seen as a form of artistic expression – but also allowing them the possibility to become a useful workforce for the community and for society in general."
Fundamentac ión Cabildo	*Regla*	*Regla*	"… *Fundamentacón Regla* seeks to invigorate and maintain local religious traditions. The intention of reviving these processions pursued and continues to pursue objectives aimed at the recovery of one of the most popular and oldest traditions of the intangible heritage of *Regla,* contributing to the strengthening of the identity and sense of belonging of its inhabitants."

During the PhotoVoice project, we were also fortunate to have the expertise of Mitra Ghaffari, a U.S. born, Havana based photojournalist who helped cultivate the participants' photography skills as well as worked with the participants to edit and process the photos. We did not allow anyone to doctor the photos. Rather, the editing and processing that took place was basic and focused on cropping the image and enhancing lighting so as to create the best possible photo with what we had. Together, we (the community leaders, Mitra, and I) worked through two months of weekly meetings and participatory workshops (described below). Each team took a total of 25-35 photos of a wide range of scenarios to communicate three primary themes: (1) the greatest challenge(s) facing their organization; (2) the greatest opportunities their organizations had in terms of working with or improving their communities; and (3) the primary goal of their community organization. Each organization had to choose one photo for each of the project's three themes, making a final gallery of 21 photos.

While each organization determined their final set of photos for the gallery, each photo and its caption were discussed collectively to facilitate outside interpretations, observations and develop action-based responses. The captions were comprised of a title, analysis or description of the photo's contents, and a suggestion for how to improve the circumstances being depicted. Sometimes, the analysis and suggestion were brief inspirational messages, other times they were more direct ideas for instigating change (see Figures in Chapters 5 and 7 for examples). The participants were encouraged to be concise to allow future audiences time to think through all the photos, titles, analyses, and

suggestions in the gallery. For this dissertation, the themes are also included in the captions for each PhotoVoice figure.

Adapting the PhotoVoice methodology to address context-specific obstacles

We made several adjustments to fit the schedules of the participants and to account for some structural circumstances that hindered the project's completion. First, most the leaders had multiple responsibilities – like families and outside employment in addition to their director roles in their organizations – so they could not commit more than two months of their time. As such, we decided to host collective group meetings each weekend and 'one-on-one' meetings between me and the organizations during the week to revisit topics covered in the collective meetings. The benefit of these individual meetings were two-fold: (1) they helped improve the narrative focus of the submissions in order to critically and more concretely convey their central messaging; and (2) they allowed us to move the project forward despite the limited time of the participants (see also Cameron, 2007).

During our first meeting, it became apparent we had to make further adjustments to accommodate some broader structural issues in Cuba. Specifically, a few of the participants had severe difficulties travelling to the meetings because the Cuban government had significantly reduced public transportation due to an acute fuel shortage (Cubadebate, 2019). It took one group over four hours each way to get to and from this first meeting, a trip that would have normally taken 30 minutes to an hour on public transport. So, we decided to separate the participating organizations into two groups based on geography: one with organizations from the eastern side of Havana (n=4) and the other with organizations from Havana's center and west (n=3). To ensure that there was still a

degree of collective engagement with the separate groups, I took detailed notes of all our meetings and presented them to the other group at the start of our meetings. This permitted the participants to contribute analyses across the groups and maintained thoughtful interactions between everyone involved.

Eight formal meetings took place over the two-month period. Our first meeting – before we split into two groups – introduced the project and gave time for the community leaders to decide on the three themes their photo and caption combinations would address. As a group, we decided they would focus on their greatest challenges, opportunities, and primary goals. This was a shift from other PhotoVoice projects that allow for themes to emerge organically, often prioritizing a mission of social and policy change (see, e.g., Padilla et al., 2019). We also used the first meeting to discuss the importance of group cohesion, describe the ethical aspects of the project, as well as outline the project's timeline. In the separated second and third meetings, we did hands-on training on the technical basics of photography as well as the construction of concise written narratives (captions).

I loaned digital cameras to each team of PhotoVoice participants and the photography training mostly had to do with discovering the best composition of the photos, experimenting with different forms of lighting (e.g., natural light, light from a secondary source, or the camera's flash), and using different angles to convey certain messaging (e.g., top-down to convey inferiority or bottom-up to convey superiority). After the indoor workshops, the participants went to the 'field' (i.e., their own neighborhoods) and took photos for each of the project's three themes. Their assignment was to take as many photos as they could, and then choose 10 to present back to the group (roughly three per theme).

Though not everyone adhered to this restriction, it still encouraged them to think through their photos and their meanings, instead of presenting many photos that were under analyzed.

During the fourth and fifth meetings, the collective group – including the community leaders, Mitra, and I – reviewed, sorted, and analyzed the photos to make sure they attended to the projects' three themes and to provide feedback on them for photographic and analytic quality. We focused these meetings on the reasoning behind the image (i.e., what they wanted to communicate) as well as how to couple the photos with their captioned narratives to help explain any gaps left from the content (or lack of content) of the images. The participants were then given time to refine their photos and captions before meeting again for the sixth and seventh time to analyze the captions and curate the final gallery.

We exhibited the gallery (our eighth 'meeting') at one of the participating community organization's headquarters. Per a recommendation from one of the participants, we placed a flap over the captions, artists' names, and community organizations' name in order to let the audience take in the photo first before seeing what the author was thinking. This strategy had two advantages. First, it discouraged bias in case the viewer already knew the artist or community organization. Second, it helped facilitate meaningful discussion between the community members (audience) and the community leaders (artists). These two groups were often from different places, further diversifying the exchanges between audience and artist, which also encouraged new lines of inquiry for the community organizations to consider. I held ethnographic follow up interviews with each of the community organizations the week after the exhibition to talk about their

experiences with the project as well as write notes on the discussions that emerged around the hidden captions.

Throughout the project, I tried to cover all costs in order to ensure that money did not affect anyone's participation. I lent a camera and cable charger to each team for the duration of the project. I also provided lunch at each workshop meeting. I offered a small stipend to pay for public transportation to and from our meetings, but no one accepted this offer. I believe this was the case because public transportation in Cuba is very affordable (roughly four cents for each trip), even if it can be unreliable. Furthermore, I think the members who would have benefited from me paying for a quicker / more reliable form of transportation – like a collective taxi – would have made them feel uncomfortable as if I was paying them to participate in the project. For the gallery exhibition, I paid for high-resolution prints, purchased catering from a participating organizations' café, and rented a 25-seat bus to shuttle the participants, their significant others, and some community members who needed transportation to the exhibit.

Final comments on the PhotoVoice project

While we had initially hoped that *La Red*, by itself, would create the necessary infrastructure for the different organizations to draw from one another's experiences/expertise to resolve their individual problems, it became evident that *La Red* initially only provided resource or personnel support for some of the different organizations' initiatives. While this of course helped with problems of physical support, like finding volunteers for big events, it did not necessarily resolve other common challenges, as the member organizations had initially hoped.

The PhotoVoice project encouraged community leaders to critically analyze their opportunities and challenges in a workshop setting, where they could discuss and better conceptualize these circumstances together. Furthermore, it created the conditions for the participants to use a shared language – in this case photos and captions – to instigate critical debates around the situations, circumstances, or actions being «investigated» (Kemmis, McTaggart, Nixon, 2014: 5).

As a whole, the PhotoVoice process helped some of the original members of *La Red* reconceptualize some potentially overlooked challenges in their own communities, and to search for ways to manage them (see Vertovec 2020b). Below, in Chapters 5 and 7, I draw from the PhotoVoice contributions to discuss an array of circumstances that impact the opportunities and challenges that shape entrepreneurial behaviors in Havana, as well as some of the inequities and stigma that exist for some Cubans engaged in entrepreneurial activities. While this does not necessarily build upon the participants' own articulations of the success or utility of the project, many of the participants did find value in the project overall as it helped depict and reveal disenchantment or disconnection on the part of the community members with whom the community organizations worked (see Chapter 5). Furthermore, the PhotoVoice project and the exhibition we hosted also revealed the search for a coherent identity. This was especially true for one organization that initially had difficulty communicating their organizational goals but later, with the help of the other participating organizations, refined their organizational logic to better suit the needs of their community. Additionally, the PhotoVoice participants discovered that they could use the outcomes of the project – namely the photos / captions as well as the exhibition -to promote their organizational services (Vertovec, 2020b). The organization that hosted the

exhibition took pride in opening up their space to the other organizations – including some organizations that were members of *La Red* but did not participate in the PhotoVoice project – as well as community members from their own community, adjacent ones, and communities within which the other participating organizations resided.

Unequal Crisis Dimension

As I collected my initially planned data, especially under the framework of intersectionality, I became interested in discovering how people in different parts of the city were experiencing the economic crisis (see Chapter 3). The following questions guided this research dimension, and were within the scope of my broader dissertation research: how is economic crisis distributed among different groups of people in Havana and how does this distribution shape how different individuals experience and respond to moments of economic decline based on intersecting axes of social diversity like race, sex, age, and geographic location? My key objectives were to analyze the impact of inequality on socioeconomic experience, using personal characteristics and geographic location as lenses and to identify the patterns in the structural, demographic, or personal/individual factors that shape the outcomes of the current economic crisis. These goals fit perfectly within my focus on intersectionalities and hybrid expressions of entrepreneurship, and seemed an ideal opportunity to deepen my ethnographic experience. What I found is that the recent crisis is distributed unequally among different sectors of the population even if there was more socioeconomic homogeneity in the beginning of the 1990s in terms of how Cubans experienced the 'post-Soviet' economic crisis as well as how people responded to said crisis.

In order to carry out research in this dimension, I worked closely with Tamarys Bahamonde (see acknowledgements) who became both a research collaborator and a key informant. We met eight times over a four month period to discuss interviews and participant observations we were doing separately. In those meetings, we discussed our interview notes but did not share the audio files we had recorded during our separate interviews. I took additional notes of experiences shared with me by Bahamonde. As such, I envision those interview notes and our discussions of them as one of the different ways I obtained ethnographic data beyond the interviews I conducted myself. The analysis I formed from those ethnographic moments are the focus of Chapter 3's conclusion.

Specifically, I employed a comparative case-study of two municipalities in Havana: *el Cerro* and *Plaza de la Revolución* (often referred to *Plaza* for short). I chose these spaces because they are similar in size, population, and population density (see **Table 2.3** and **Map 2.1**), as well as share a border (see **Map 2.1**), and therefore ostensibly provide a similar set of lived socioeconomic experiences.[6] Though, after speaking with Bahamonde, who lived in *Plaza,* as well as personally spending 15 months in *el Cerro* and spending much time in *Plaza*, I knew they were actually very different in terms of economic opportunities and social experiences.

[6] The statistical data in this chapter is from 2016 because, at the time of this writing, it is the most recent provincial data offered through *La Oficina Nacional de Estadística e Información* (The National Office for Statistics and Information).

Table 2.3 2016 Statistical Information for Havana, Plaza de la Revolución, and el Cerro

	Havana	***Plaza de la Revolución***	***el Cerro***
Consejos Populares	15 (municipalities)	8	7
Territory (Km2)	728.26	12.26	10.19
Population			
Total	2,127,700	145,687	104,286
Men	1,017,759	66,530	58,586
Women	1,109,941	79,157	65,692
Age: 0-14	311,037	16,163	17,186
Age: 15-29	424,123	26,473	23,939
Age: 30-49	418,658	37,266	34,358
Age: 50+	464,725	65,785	48,795
Density (hab/km2)	2,925	11,883	12,196

(Source: Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas de Cuba, 2017)

In order to draw comparisons between each site, as well as between significant personal characteristics like age, race, and sex, I utilized an extended case method where each personal characteristic and each municipality served as different cases and were understood by investigating the larger forces shaping the conditions of the case. 'Extended' refers to investigating the society at large to determine its impacts on the case at hand (Small, 2009). Within each case, I combined participant observation and systematically diversified semi-structured interviews carried out by Bahamonde and myself with other ethnographic research on inequalities in Cuba (1990-present) (e.g., A. Cabezas, 2009; Nadine T. Fernandez, 2010; Perry, 2015; L. K. Roland, 2011). Systematic diversification allowed for commentary on sub-categories – such as race, sex, and age – within each geographic location.[7] This permitted analysis of how each sub-category experienced the current economic conditions in Havana.

[7] These are the same intersections I use throughout the dissertation.

In total, Bahamonde and I interviewed 22 people who lived in *el Cerro* (n=11) or *Plaza* (n=11). Bahamonde conducted all the interviews in *Plaza* and I conducted all the interviews in *el Cerro*. As you will note in **Appendix B** which documents all the participants from all portions of this dissertation project, there is some overlap with the initially planned interview participants and the participants in the 'Unequal Crisis Dimension' because, if the person worked in the private sector, we asked them questions that directly benefited my initially planned research. Indeed, the interview guide I used with Bahamonde was built to address unequal experiences with the current economic crisis, including how people's main sources of income have been affected by their positionality (geographic and social) in Cuban society.

Dance Instructors Dimension

As a means to capture the different opportunities, challenges, and strategies that arose in the tourism industry – an extremely pertinent industry for this dissertation considering its importance to the national economy and the possibilities it creates for Cubans to earn lucrative incomes – I also draw from a collaborative project I conducted with Michel Stein (see acknowledgements). This collaboration led to an article titled "The Transformative Dynamics of Self-employed Dance Instruction in Havana, Cuba's Tourism Industry" (Stein & Vertovec, 2020), and which contributes a significant portion of the analyses formed in Chapter 6. Our research questions / goals revolved around discovering how disempowered and socially marginalized people confront political-economic challenges and discover opportunities to participate in the global economy. We used dance instructors as the lens to discuss these findings. In Chapter 6, I added research I conducted with front-

of-the-house employees of tourism focused businesses (e.g., boutique hotels and restaurants in tourism zones) to broaden this analysis and align it with my initially planned research initiatives.

Stein and I met for roughly 10 article writing meetings which, much like the collaborative work I carried out with Bahamonde, were geared towards discussing our findings through our separate participant observation and interview practices and transformed Stein from a colleague to a key informant of my work. Participant observation provided insights into both personal and working lives of dance instructors as well as front-of-the house employees, thereby allowing more intimate access to their ideals, dreams, and struggles. Interview questions inquired on work backgrounds and experiences, families, future hopes, leisure activities, and living situations. Beyond the ethnographic methods I carried out in all other dimensions of the broader dissertation project, I conducted 5 interviews with dance instructors as well as went out with dance instructors and their clients to clubs on 3 separate occasions. As you will see in Chapter 6, I drew upon the ethnographic data from this dimension to provide an intimate view of tendencies and local knowledge, and to situate these ethnographic discoveries within broader cultural, political, and economic contexts.

In our fieldwork, Stein and I did not encounter white instructors teaching popular dance to tourists, though of course this does not mean it does not happen. However, this ethnographic finding did help support our claim that the recent legalization of dance instruction – in addition to the analyses I arrived at after carrying out observations of front-of-the-house employees – opened new economic possibilities for disempowered or socially marginalized people. Unless otherwise stated, all the research participants for this 'Dance

Instructor Dimension' were Black Cubans, ages 23-35, and from socially marginalized, lower socioeconomic neighborhoods of Havana (see **Appendix B**).

All Participants

56 participants total made this research possible. As you'll see in **Appendix B**, all of them were interviewed or observed across the five research dimensions; notated with a number that associates them with dimension of the broader project. For this section, though, I simply describe them as the full participant pool since they were all integral to the analysis drawn out in the full dissertation project.

The full participant pool was made up of 28 small business owners, 10 employees in private businesses, 6 public sector workers or university students, and 12 community organization directors. Some of the directors had their own businesses (n=5). The others worked in the public sector but funded their initiatives through infrequent social entrepreneurship ventures, had a spouse whose private sector income provided funds, received membership dues, or donations. In **Appendix B**, the participants are designated by the type of work they had, and private business owners are in bold, informal work is italicized, and community organization directors are underlined if they had other full-time private sector employment.

I used theoretical sampling (Strauss and Corbin 1998), snowball sampling, and systematic diversification to gain access to such a diverse range of people (see **Appendix B**). I used the participant matrix below (see **Appendix B**) to look for participants from various sociodemographic backgrounds and who were involved in entrepreneurial activities. Whenever I discovered a willing participant, I also asked them to introduce me

to people who might interested in participating in this study (snowball sampling). As I got deeper into my field research, I began to ask my key confidants (gatekeepers) if they knew anyone from the matrix cells I was missing (also snowball sampling). Snowball sampling was particularly useful in this research because it helped me gain rapport and trust quicker with new participants; critical topics considering I was often talking to research participants about their informal entrepreneurial strategies which could also be considered illegal behaviors, with varying degrees of legal prosecution.

Of all the business owner participants, only three had one or more employees, meaning the vast majority (*n* = 25, 89%) had no employees or contracted employees only rarely. A majority of all the participants had a license for their primary activities (i.e., the job types listed in **Appendix B**) (*n* = 47, 84%). This figure includes public sector workers and students who would automatically be 'licensed' – for lack of a better term – to engage in those activities. The others did not have a license (often times *choosing* not to have one – see Chapter 4) (*n* = 9, 16%). Furthermore, all the participants used informal economic strategies, though none were involved in strictly *illegal* activities (e.g., the production or sale of illicit drugs) (see Chapter 4).

Table 2.4 shows the breakdown of the personal identity characteristics of my participants:

Table 2.4 *Identity Characteristics of Participant Pool*

Identity Characteristic		Number	Percentage
Sex	Women	24	43%
	Men	32	57%
Race	Black	19	34%
	White	25	45%
	Mixed-Race	12	21%
Age	17-30	18	32%
	31-50	24	43%
	51+	14	25%
Home and / or Work Area	Tourist Zone	24	43%
	Urban Residential, Non-Tourist	20	36%
	Rural or Peripheral	12	21%

As you can see, 24 of my participants self-identified as women, 32 as men. 19 were Black, 25 were white, and 12 were mixed-race. 18 were between 17 and 20 years old. 24 between 31 and 50 years old, and 14 were 51 years old or older. 24 lived in tourism zones, 20 lived in urban residential, non-tourist areas, and 12 lived in rural or peripheral areas.

There is some slight discrepancy between my sample and the statistics of the national and provincial levels, however my focus was on the ethnographic diversity of the perspectives I was able to obtain. **Table 2.5** shows some demographic information provided by *la Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas de Cuba* (the National Office for Cuban Statistics) (ONEI). It should be noted, ONEI bases its racial identification on self-identification. Being black in Cuba carries stigma, therefore the data on skin color is skewed towards the more socially desirable *blanco* (white) category. Skin color is according to the most recent census in 2012. The other statistics are from 2019.

Table 2.5 Official Demographic Statistics, Havana vs. Cuba

	Cuba		Havana (province)	
Sex	Women	52.3%	Women	50.3%
	Men	47.7%	Men	49.7%
Skin Color	Black	9.3%	White	15.2%
	White	64.1%	Black	58.4%
	Mixed	26.6%	Mixed	26.4%
Age	15-29 years	18.9%	15-29 years	18.5%
	29-49 years	27.6%	49-49 years	27.1%
	≥ 50 years	37.6%	≥ 50 years	39.9%

(sources: Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas de Cuba, 2012a, 2019b)

I chose the age ranges to reflect youth (17-29), middle-aged (31-50), and elderly (51+). I began my age ranges at 17 because that is the legal age to work in Cuba. I do not include statistics for the "home/work areas" because those are my distinctions (see above) and the official office of statistics in Cuba considers all areas of Havana as urban.

Importance of 'gatekeepers'

Ethnographic methodologies are most useful when rapport and trust is built, whereby the researcher can ask provocative personal questions, and expect truthful, thoughtful answers (Bourgois, 2002, pp. 12–13). For outsiders, though, it can be challenging to acquire the local social capital or cultural understandings to integrate into the community and develop these sorts of meaningful relationships (Venegas & Huerta, 2009). In an urban context, this can be even more difficult because cities are often comprised of unequal spheres; each one with their unique history, local/global connections, and codes of conduct (see Pardo & Prato, 2012). Therefore, 'gatekeepers' – i.e., well-respected insiders who could open doors to valuable ethnographic opportunities in different communities – can be critical to gain access to additional participants and ease the transition into the local setting (Venegas & Huerta, 2009). For this research, I was fortunate to meet and develop deep friendships with

10 gatekeepers, one of which I lived with for the 15 months I was in Havana. They showed me their version of Havana and introduced me to many of the other research participants. I was fortunate to know these 10 people while conducting my research because if perhaps I was bored or felt like my research was stalling one day or one night I could always show up at their house or place of business and they would talk to me about whatever topic I was interested in.

Positionality of me, the researcher

I think two factors contributed to the success of my research in Cuba. First, I am so obviously foreign that I think people trusted me when I explained my research goals and, because of my blatant foreignness, did not think I was some sort of Cuban-American CIA operative driving for political-economic change in Cuba. Foreigners, and particularly Latino-looking – or at least foreigners without foreign accents – may raise those concerns. However, I found that my foreignness (accent included) helped ease my interactions with Cubans as I raised questions about their (potentially informal) entrepreneurial behaviors.

To this end, I was also fortunate to have the help of some friends and interlocutors who helped 'train' me on acceptable language to use during my ethnographic interactions. For example, during an interview with a close friend and 'gatekeeper,' I thanked him for being my *informante* (informant). He quickly reprimanded me and told me never to use that word. He said, "In Cuba, all informants are rats. If you use that term, people are going to think you are working for state security. It's better to use another word, like collaborator or participant" (interview, September 2018). In another instance, another friend told me to leave my little notebook at home. He said, "You look like a cop. Leave that at home and

take notes on your phone if you need to… If you really want to blend in, pull out a map. That way they'll think you're a tourist." These 'trainings' helped me learn the 'correct' ways to conduct research in Cuba; in ways that would help me blend in and not raise suspicion.

Second, time and perseverance were on my side. Yearly trips to Havana (from 2012-2014) became two times a year trips (from 2014-2016) to three or four times a year trips (2016-2017). Eventually, people began to ask *when* are you coming back as opposed to *are* you coming back? I became a common face in certain neighborhoods, and those repeated interactions helped me gain rapport with my gatekeepers and the individuals I snowballed sampled throughout my seven plus years doing different research in Havana. While I was dealt my fair share of blows to my research agenda – like any ethnographer experiences in any other place in the world or any other topic of study – I fell back on my dependability as a person and my willingness to be there for the people I was living / observing / working with.

Reflecting on my positionality as a foreign researcher – and one from a capitalist imperialist country with such a long and complicated, even confrontational history with Cuba (i.e., the United States) – I knew that my outsider gaze was bound to influence the questions I asked and the way I presented my analysis in this dissertation (Bourgois, 2002; Venegas & Huerta, 2009). It also influenced the relationships I had with my interlocutors because some of them saw me as a potential source of material items from abroad or, in some cases, financial help while I was in Cuba. I tried to avoid these sorts of relationships because I realized they could impact the information people were giving me, especially if they thought certain answers would lead to me helping them. Nonetheless, I knew these

interactions would happen, but I tried to remain cognizant of them and navigate them on a case-by-case basis.

My whiteness and positionality as a 30-year-old heterosexual man also shaped the ways I arrived at my conclusions and the research goals I set out to achieve in the first place. That is, my worldview and the things I considered important to study were all shaped by my racial, gendered, aged, and other positions in society. These intersecting positionalities did benefit me in certain ways. For example, my race made it so I could travel around Havana without being worried I would be stopped and harassed by police (see, e.g., Allen, 2011; L.K. Roland, 2011). My age to some extent also helped me pass as a tourist in situations where I wanted to blend in with the tourism industry as opposed to raise concerns as to my reason for being in particular areas of Havana (see, e.g., Simoni, 2013).

Nevertheless, again, I realized that these positionality circumstances would likely shape my research in profound, perhaps even unforgivable ways. Therefore, I made it a point to listen closely to the important questions that my key confidants raised and followed their lead for the answers they so desperately sought – such as why certain entrepreneurial ventures succeeded, and others did not, or how they could navigate the inequities and inequalities that were so critical for the success of their activities. My goal thus became to utilize my positionality – sometimes as a naïve foreigner asking what would have been considered 'stupid questions' had they been asked by a Cuban – to discover answers to those questions and regularly communicate those findings to my interlocutors so as to try to remove my positionality from my analyses.

For these reasons, participatory and collaborative research became ever more important for my dissertation research in Cuba. The PhotoVoice project, in particular, became a priority for me because I knew that my time in Cuba should be used, as Pauwels (2015) explains, "to helping solve problems of communities without thinking primarily about [my] own professional gains" (96). When possible, I offered my time to the different Cubans I was researching – whether it be pushing a broom in their shop or using my computer to help them develop budget sheets or write up / print documents that would help formalize their initiatives – realizing that my own research questions / objectives would be attended to in the process.

According to many conversations I had with different community leaders at different community organizations, my positionality as a foreigner was also beneficial or desirable to them for a couple of reasons. First, I was able to impart new perspectives to their organizations, being that I came from a different political, economic, and historical context. For example, Papito repeatedly acknowledged that the "answer" for how to instigate / sustain positive social change was not socialism or capitalism. It was instead in the middle between the two and the continual meeting of his and my perspectives would help discover how grass-roots community development could be achieved. Second, the community leaders frequently asked for my opinion on what might be attractive to potential foreign visitors, who they hoped would become future donors (of time, money, and know-how). What this revealed to me was that they saw my positionality as a foreigner as someone who was attuned to foreigner desires and as someone who could impart valuable intel on how to satiate foreign expectations. Since the financial stability of an organization was often predicated on foreign contributions, or so they thought, I discovered that many

organizations in Havana began to court me as someone who could reveal the 'key' to their financial woes. Of course, I did not necessarily have said 'key,' and did not think that one actually existed.

Data Analysis and Management

All interviews were conducted in Spanish. All my interviews conducted in the "Unequal Crisis Dimension" with Bahamonde were digitally recorded (n= 11). All the individual interviews for the PhotoVoice project (before and after the project) were also audio recorded (n= 14). The group discussions during the workshops were not recorded, but I did take detailed notes of those interactions. Of the 41 semi-structured interviews within the initially planned dimension of the project, only 20 were audio recorded. The other 21 were not recorded because they took place around other people or the interviewee did not feel comfortable with the recording device. I also did not audio record the topical conversations I conducted informally with my different research participants. For those unrecorded interviews and conversations, I handwrote jottings during the interactions and expanded those jottings immediately to full field notes of the interview using standard ethnographic note taking techniques (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011). I also did jottings during all my participant observation sessions which I turned into full field notes when I arrived back to my house in the evenings (or in the morning if my observations took place late at night).

Using NVivo qualitative data analysis software and based on the grounded-theory approach, I carefully open coded and analyzed all interviews and ethnographic notes and organized content to create categories and subcategories related to themes of interest, such as entrepreneurial activities, intersectional identities, or local knowledge about economic

strategies (Saldaña, 2015; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I used text word queries and conducted thematic analysis to sort and analyze the documents and media types that were pertinent to my research. I looked for repetition, changes, similarities/differences, acts, behaviors, and consequences to find patterns in interactions among state policies/regulation, social/demographic factors, and formal/informal economic strategies in an array of entrepreneurship types (Bernard, 2015; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). While no software can do ethnographic analysis, NVivo was useful for studying intersectional variations in entrepreneurship, given the range of identities and entrepreneurial forms I recruited. Coding and all analysis were guided by the theoretical insights summarized in the introduction, namely: (1) that intersectional identities were likely to reveal a range of entrepreneurial responses as a product of intra-categorical diversity and hierarchies of power and inequality; and (2) that entrepreneurial activities tended to diversify and hybridize during times of economic change and/or uncertainty. Informed by these theoretical insights, my coding strategy was to develop systematic comparisons of the range of ways that structural conditions shaped entrepreneurial opportunities and challenges, and the range of and reason for the formal/informal strategies used by a spectrum of people engaged in entrepreneurship. This permitted a rich and comparative dimension to the analysis.

All data was stored on a password protected laptop. I destroyed handwritten field notes and audio-taped interviews after they were transferred to my laptop. I used multiple layers of password access as well as encrypted all computer files to secure all audio files and field notes. No personal identifiers (e.g. name, home/business address, etc.) were used in any process of this investigation to ensure confidentiality of all participants. The only

exception to this rule was the name of the participating organizations in the PhotoVoice project. The organizations agreed to have their organizations' names tied to their photos – as a means to give them credit for their contributions – and the photos were made publicly available because they were installed in a gallery in Havana, Cuba, by the artist-participants themselves. Papito's name is used at some points in the dissertation (mostly in Chapter 7) for topics that he gave me direct permission to quote him on and which he is already known for through some of his other writings and presentations.

Limitations

Perhaps the biggest limitation of this study is that it was performed in Havana, where most research on Cuba is conducted. Initially, I had a research internship with the University of Cienfuegos where I was going to compare entrepreneurship in Cienfuegos with entrepreneurship in Havana. However, just one month before I was to leave to take that position, the University of Cienfuegos' administration contacted me and said that that position was being revoked. Their official response was, "We sent your project proposal to Havana [the government] and they do not have a specialist for you to conduct this research with us." This was a shock but I knew I had to continue with my proposed plan, just focused on Havana because I already had research contacts there and it would have been very difficult to implement my project plan in another place without contacts or resources already secured. This is the reason the project is focused exclusively on Havana. To be clear, this is a case study of the intersection between entrepreneurship and social and economic changes in Havana. I do not make the case that these findings extend beyond Havana, as life in other parts of the country is very different. For simplicity, I have used

phrases like “Cubans engaged in entrepreneurial activities,” when in fact I mean “Cubans in Havana who are engaged in entrepreneurial activities.”

CHAPTER THREE | Background: Economic crisis, Entrepreneurship, and Socioeconomic Disparities in Havana

When the Soviet Union disappeared in 1989/1990, so too did the package of generous subsidies the Soviet trading bloc (Comecon) provided Cuba. This thrust Cuba into a terrible economic crisis. The economy shrank by more than 40% between 1989 and 1993 and Cubans faced rampant energy and foodstuff shortages (Pérez Jr., 2015), regardless of socioeconomic status. Indeed, the GINI coefficient, a common statistical measure of income inequality, at the beginning of the crisis was a remarkable .24 (Zabala Arguelles, 2015), one of the lowest in the world at any point in time (Central Intelligence Agency). In the face of this economic catastrophe, Fidel Castro announced the "Special Period in a Time of Peace," a new moment in Cuban history marked by severe shortages and austerity measures. The primary goals of these measures were to: survive an economic crisis thought to be brought on by non-structural, external factors and preserve Cuba's unique brand of socialism. However, by 1993, the Cuban government realized that their economic woes were much more structural than previously thought and began to implement a series of economic reforms like permitting foreign investment and international tourism, and, later, allowing legal self-employment (entrepreneurship).

Towards the end of 1993, the government found that the initial reforms were not generating the desired economic growth. The government also acknowledged the pervasiveness of the underground economy and informal entrepreneurial strategies which acted in response to supply shortages and other austerity measures. As such, Fidel Castro and the national assembly significantly liberalized the domestic economy and decriminalized activities that the government was unable to deter since underground

entrepreneurs had found ways to effectively pick up the slack left behind from the failing state sector. By early 1994, the Cuban government increased access to foreign remittances, legalized the use of the US dollar (eventually implementing a dual currency system), and authorized and significantly expanded self-employment – the latter of which reached nearly 400,000 new applications by just 1995 (Ritter & Henken, 2015, p. 86; Sorhegui Ortega, 1997).

While the economic reforms helped alleviate the effects of the economic crisis on a national level, inequities and inequalities began to emerge at the micro level. The GINI coefficient rose to .38 by the end of the 1990s, with some scholars suggesting that current income inequality could be much worse (Zabala Arguelles, 2015). What is more, the Cuban economy worsened recently because of a series of other internal and external factors, like the centralized government's unwillingness to significantly liberalize the domestic market, worsening political-economic relations with the US, and Venezuela reducing the amount of oil it sends to Cuba by nearly 40 percent. As such, the current economic circumstances are experienced in much more drastic ways than a statistical analysis (e.g., GINI model) could express. Indeed, as I discuss in the second part of this chapter, in recent years, scenarios of privilege and oppression have coalesced around personal/individual factors like race, sex, age, and geographic location and have shaped access resources, opportunities (or challenges) to find gainful employment, and social network opportunities.

The goal of this chapter is two-fold. First, to give a detailed explanation of the economic circumstances in Cuba since the economic crisis began in 1990 and to describe the tumultuous unfolding of legal entrepreneurship which became a popular, though still

persecuted, strategy to survive the economic crisis. Second, to describe the diverse inequalities in Havana that exist in large part because of the economic reforms that are saving Cuba from utter economic collapse. To achieve the latter goal, I first describe some intersecting inequalities and their relationship to entrepreneurial opportunities and challenges in Havana. Then, I draw from an ethnographic comparative case-study of two adjacent municipalities in Havana: *el Cerro* and *Plaza de la Revolución* in order to describe how socioeconomic experiences are indeed different depending on where you live in the city. The overarching purpose of the chapter is to describe the broader structural conditions in Cuba – like the economic crisis, the political/regulatory framework of entrepreneurship, and the maintenance of strict centralized state control – and what those conditions mean for lived socioeconomic experiences in Havana.

Economic Crisis and the Rise of Entrepreneurship in Cuba

Initial economic crisis (1989-1993) and associated structural transformations

From 1989 onward, the Cuban economy began to unravel due to external and internal factors. Consequently, two fundamental conditions shocked the Cuban economy: (1) commercial stability disappeared and (2) principle mechanisms for national-level financial support were suppressed (Sorhegui Ortega, 1997). Externally speaking, changes in Eastern Europe and, more notably the USSR caused Cuba to lose its traditional export markets, of which Eastern Europe and the USSR represented some 85% (Pérez Jr., 2015, pp. 304–305). Furthermore, “Cuba lost all financial aid from Comecon countries, resulting in a 50% reduction in the capacity to buy imports as well as a 25% reduction of imports,” in just four years (1989-1993) (Bahamonde Pérez, 2004: 75, translated by author). Overall, Cuba was

left with certain instability and uncertainty as it faced unavoidable participation in the global capitalist market.

An array of internal factors inexorably linked to the external factors shaped the 1990s economic crisis and ensuing socioeconomic experiences in contemporary Cuba. The Cuban economy lacked diversification which limited their effectiveness in participating in the global market. Production and distribution inefficiencies dominated and continue to persist currently (Fernández Estrada, 2014).[8] And, the highly centralized nature of the economy was based in material balances that Comecon countries were able to satisfy; however, the dissolution of Comecon forced Cuba to internally rectify imbalances which it was never able to fully manage (Fernández Estrada, 2014, p. 33). Furthermore, internal and external factors were and are still aggravated by the United States' economic "blockade" (aka embargo) on Cuba.

In an attempt to mitigate or reverse some of this economic downturn, the government adjusted sections of the constitution in 1992 to validate foreign investment, adapt the state monopoly to exterior commercial markets, and redefine the state's role in providing basic needs to everyday Cubans (Sorhegui Ortega, 1997). From this point forward, the very strategies that the government enacted to rectify the economic crisis – such as transformations in the overall food production/distribution program, international tourism, and an enhanced focus on biotechnological, mineral, and pharmaceutical production – greatly impacted the state's capacity to continue carrying out many of its social welfare programs (Zabala Arguelles, 2015). By the time of this research, for

[8] Indeed, Cuban industry remains severely under-funded after years of relying on external machinery and financial sources (Torres Pérez, 2014).

example, the Cuban government had drastically reduced the number of subsidized goods it offered in the ration system. The government also reduced the amount of imports, promoted the growth of exports and pursued the following goals, among others, in order to improve the balance between the external and internal sectors: elevate the added value of traditional exports; promote the exportation of services like medical missions and international tourism in Cuba; and, consolidate foreign investment (Triana Cordoví, 1999).

All the while, the government implemented austerity measures in the early 1990s to resist the brunt of the economic crisis and preserve the homeland, the Revolution, and their unique brand of socialism (Partido Comunista de Cuba, 1993). Together, this phase became known as "the Special Period" and the measures were carried out through the following actions: (1) reduction in importations and reduction in economic development priorities; (2) reduction in individual consumption levels through government-led reductions in importations and social expenses; (3) cutting jobs in oversaturated sectors; and (4) implementing energy saving plans (Casanova, Zuaznabar, & Pérez, 1993). These strategies were adopted alongside the new political-economic ideologies which promoted the growth of the tourism industry as well as technical-scientific advancements in biotechnology, mining, and pharmaceutical industries. The government also began to prioritize directing funds towards recuperating production volumes that were impacted by the 1990s crisis (Fernández Estrada, 2014). This included focusing funding on traditional exports like sugar in addition to developing domestic foodstuffs production to satiate the needs of the general Cuban populace. Nevertheless, the internal and external factors listed above hindered this recuperation process.

Since the Cuban domestic market had production difficulties – largely because of the lack of external partners who previously provided the machinery necessary to achieve their output goals – importation and exportation realities suffered and greatly affected quotidian Cuban experiences. The general population saw consumerism decline 31% due to an under-production of Cuban products, a 75% drop in imports, and cost-prohibitive prices of items that did make their way into Cuba either through formal or informal avenues. The 75% drop in imports was in conjunction with a 79% reduction in exportations from 1989 to 1993 (Togores González & García Álvarez, 2003). Ultimately, these circumstances as well as the external and internal factors listed above collapsed the Cuban economy by 1994 and there was a 35% decrease in GDP in relation to the 1989 level (Benzing, 2005).

Economic survival strategies, entrepreneurship, and regulatory transformations

The combination of resource shortages, job cuts, energy saving plans, and the reduction of social welfare programming, forced most Cubans to employ underground economic survival strategies to satisfy their needs and desires. For example, many Cubans began pilfering (i.e., stealing) items from their state-sector jobs to later re-sell on the black market or trade for other pilfered items (see Roland 2011: 51-52) (known colloquially as *la búsqueda* or 'the search'). Many Cubans also developed innovative and flexible entrepreneurial strategies to survive these difficult times. There are many examples of these entrepreneurial strategies, but some common and lucrative activities were families who rented rooms in their houses to other Cubans or foreign visitors or someone using his or her private car as a taxi. For people who had less luxurious resources, they did things like

sew for their neighbors, make soda or other beverages in their homes, or peddle agricultural products that they themselves had either grown or which they acquired or purchased from a local grower.

Ultimately, these sorts of behaviors forced the state to make some significant adjustments with regards to what was permissible or authorized. For example, since black-market interactions mostly involved foreign currency – and given the impossibility of controlling their overwhelming presence – the Cuban government finally legalized foreign hard currency in 1993 (Kildegaard & Orro Fernández, 1999). According to my interlocutors this was significant because being caught with US dollars could send you to jail for the same amount of years as the amount of dollars you had (e.g., 1 dollar equaled 1 year, 10 dollars equaled 10 years, etc.). As one interlocutor explained, "How crazy, man. Everyone was scared, but everyone was also walking around with dollars. You had to have them to buy anything, and it was like guys hiding them in their shoes, giving you a sweaty dollar to buy something."

In an effort to gain access to these hard currencies, and effectively undercut the prevalence of the black market, the state introduced stores – known as *Tiendas de Recuperación de Divisas* or TRDs – that sold commodities found all around the world but which were previously unavailable in Cuba (e.g., Coca-Cola, Nutella, or Adidas clothing). While black market exchanges continued to occur in Cuba, the legalization of foreign currency and then the introduction of TRDs provided Cubans with alternative means to obtain free market goods. Eventually, the state would take it a step further and implement a second 'foreigner' currency (the Cuban Convertible Peso or CUC) that operated next to regular 'local' currency (the Cuban Peso). One CUC was worth 24 Cuban Pesos and, until

recently, the local's currency was generally only good for buying small items such as fruits and vegetables from a farmer's market while CUC was useful for buying any item that one would find in many other countries across the world.[9] Most Cubans who worked for the state (with the exception of those employed in the tourism sector) were paid in Cuban Pesos. This created serious inequalities with regards to who had access to CUC incomes. People who earned salaries in CUC almost always earned more and many people I knew whose salaries were paid in Cuban Pesos changed it to CUC almost immediately to buy the products they wanted.

With regards to entrepreneurship, the government ultimately legalized and legitimized an array of previously underground economic survival strategies – with Decree Law 141 – because of their uncontrollable prevalence. (T. Henken, 2002, 2008; A. Ritter & Henken, 2015). However, because private-sector activities went against the main tenets of the state's political-economic ideology, the government rejected a full transition to a free market and never fully committed to supporting the private sector's growth. For example, while the government supported private business from 1993 to 1996, allowing a gradual rollout of some self-employment ventures (e.g., sales of industrial, artisanal, and agricultural products; bed-and-breakfast-style rentals, and small restaurants), the private sector was restricted with strict labor laws and harsh taxes in 1997 (Ritter and Henken 2015). From 1993 on, the self-employment sector also encountered nearly insurmountable

[9] On January 1, 2021 the Cuban government began implementing substantial monetary reforms (which they had been discussing for the better part of the last decade) (Ministerio de Justicia, 2020). Perhaps the most significant was doing away with the dual currency system, in favor of one solo currency that is valued 1-to-1 with the US dollar (Gonzalez, 2021). I discuss the significance of this change in Chapter 8, the conclusion of the dissertation.

competition with the state because of unfair exchange rates when buying inputs, among other bureaucratic hurdles (Ritter and Henken 2015).

From the early 1990s on, the Cuban economy underwent oscillating phases of apertures and closures that in some ways mirrored the ebbs and flows that took place in Cuban entrepreneurship. In 1994, the economy began to recover as a result of the measures taken from 1989-1993, including the legalization of foreign currency and the possibility for people to start their own businesses. The economy also began to diversify. The sugar industry went from being 80% of the exportation market share in the 1970s/80s to 60% in the 1990s to just 27% in 2000 (Bahamonde Pérez, 2004). The tourism industry also became a key pillar to Cuba's economy, as well as an important source of hard currency (CUC) income for individuals who either chose to work in state-owned hotels or in the private sector as small bed-and-breakfast or restaurant operators. However, international tourism was / is unstable for economic growth (both nationally and individually speaking) because it suffers from high and low seasons, much like the sugar industry does with cultivation and harvest seasons. Nevertheless, by 1994, the tourism industry had overtaken the sugar industry in Cuba, and to date has mostly continued to rise both in sheer numbers of foreigner visitors, income, and investment.

Since 1990, the Cuban government has also searched for new economic partners to absorb some of the shock effected by the disappearance of the Soviet trading bloc. Since Hugo Chavez took power in 1999, Cuba received much needed aid from Venezuela. Most notably, Venezuela traded barrels of oil (reaching up to 90,000-barrels per day in 2005) for technical support in the fields of education, health care, sports, science, and technology (Frank, 2017). This agreement eventually reached a value of $5.1 billion dollars before the

Venezuelan economic crisis proved too much in 2014 and they had to stop sending so much oil to Cuba (Frank, 2017). Cuban-Venezuelan agreements also helped secure an importation and exportation market for the Cuban economy, and led to invaluable investments, loans, and grants for various Cuban industries/sectors (Corrales, Erikson, & Falcoff, 2005).

In an attempt to build on these macro-economic improvements, Raul Castro – Fidel Castro's brother / successor who took over as president in 2006 – and the Cuban government loosened bureaucratic control and lessened regulations on Cuban entrepreneurship in 2010 in order to rectify a redundant state workforce (see Partido Comunista de Cuba, 2011). They permitted more private-sector activities, allowed small businesses to form by permitting employee hiring across all authorized activities, and allowed private businesses to sell to state-owned businesses (Forero-Nino, 2011). From 2011 onward, the state has also liberalized foreign travel for Cuban citizens (see Pérez Jr., 2015, p. 350) and granted more access to the internet, both of which have helped private businesses by increasing connectivity and giving more opportunities to access material inputs from abroad (either via visiting friends or family or through personal travel).

Since the government announced market-driven reforms in 2010-2011, they have since talked about ending "excessive subsidies," saying, "[they would eliminate] undue gratuities and excessive subsidies, under the principle of compensating people in need and not subsidizing products, in general" (see, e.g., Castro Morales, 2021). At the time of this writing, however, there were no such plans I heard of to compensate people in need. According to many of my interlocutors, the removal of key foodstuff subsidies had made survival much more difficult, and without compensation for key marginalized communities

the transformation may prove fatal. Furthermore, the 2010-2011 reforms committed to firing some 500,000 people who occupied positions that were deemed "redundant" (see Partido Comunista de Cuba, 2011). While they have not fired that many people from state sector employment, the people who were let go from redundant positions were forced to look for work in the private sector whether or not they found immediate opportunities to do so.

In 2012, the state again created hurdles as if to acknowledge that they were indeed *not* okay with the roots of capitalism taking hold in Cuba. It increased tax rates on items brought into the country with individual travelers and then – in 2013 – outlawed the private sale of foreign products (e.g., household items, clothes, or food) (Ritter and Henken 2015, 160, 164). These regulations forced small-business owners to buy their supplies in state stores, where markups could be more than 240%, or on the black market, which is problematic because owners must provide proof that they legally acquired the items (Mesa-Lago et al. 2016, 38).

In 2014, the tides again turned in favor of the Cuban private sector. US President Barack Obama and Cuban President Raúl Castro announced the beginning of a normalization process between the US and Cuba. This agreement catalyzed a flux of international tourism from the US to Cuba and helped spark growth in Cuba's tourism and self-employment sectors. People who could access foreign visitors either because they lived in tourism zones or found private employment in tourism facing ventures discovered increased incomes and the possibility to develop meaningful, sometimes lucrative relationships with foreigner people and foreign entities. During my time going back and forth to Cuba during this period, I also observed many Cubans who took pride in their

private sector work because Barack Obama made it a point to emphasize the entrepreneurial ingenuity that Cubans had demonstrated both in Cuba and in Miami (Obama, 2016). Many Cubans I knew loved Obama and they felt celebrated; they felt like their hard work and dedication was finally getting some recognition instead of being constantly burdened by the state's regulatory apparatus.

These positive changes did not last long, however, as internal and external factors once again hindered the growth of formal entrepreneurship in Cuba. For example, when Trump became the US president in 2016, he began to reverse many, if not most, of the changes Obama had made towards Cuba. He implemented increasingly tough sanctions, like discouraging travel to Cuba for US citizens, placing a cap on the amount of remittances people could send from the US, and, ultimately, closing all Western Unions in Cuba. Internally, the Cuban government announced new restrictions in 2017 to "control excesses and illegalities" (Ministerio de Justicia, 2018). For over a year, the state debated the new changes both in 'closed-door meetings' and with a group of entrepreneurs (Recio 2018). However, when it finally enacted the new changes in December 2018, the state chose *not* to address the important hurdles laid out by the entrepreneurs (e.g., lack of wholesale markets and a desire for flexible tax treatments) (Mesa-Lago et al. 2016; Recio 2018). Instead, it added more challenges, such as requiring successful businesses to declare finance origins, increasing penalties and fines for any infraction, and giving more authority to local powers to inspect and punish Cuban business owners as they saw fit (Díaz, 2018b).

In December 2018, the state came out with a new list of acceptable activities, which was actually smaller than the previous list, though it did broaden some categories to be more inclusive (CiberCuba, 2019). Previous lists had required people to get separate

licenses for manicure/pedicure and hairstyling, for example. After the 2018 list, people could get one license as a "beautician" and conduct all those services under the same license. Furthermore, after many successful businesspeople complained, there was some backtracking on a law that would have disallowed people from holding more than one license or doing multiple activities in one location (e.g., renting a room *and* operating a restaurant). Nevertheless, the authorized activities almost exclusively remained service oriented, and most of the legal categories continued to be senselessly specific (Sweig & Bustamante, 2013). For example, there was a specific license for "spark plug cleaner and tester," which would have prohibited someone from working on, say, a muffler under said license. The acceptable activities were also still confined to low-skilled jobs that did not reflect the educational level of most Cuban workers (Torres Pérez, 2014), forcing many Cubans to stretch existing licenses to cover their entrepreneurial activities.

Until recently, activities that were not explicitly permitted were prohibited (Ritter and Henken 2015, 86). There was a list of authorized private-sector activities, and anything *not* on the list was not allowed (Díaz, 2018a).[10] This differed from almost all other entrepreneurial environments where entrepreneurs follow a list of prohibited activities and everything else is acceptable. In those settings, entrepreneurs can operate their businesses with much more innovation and flexibility, so long as they follow broader political-legal frameworks. Private businesses in Cuba also currently lack legal identity. This means they cannot act as true business enterprises, and while Cubans can take out licenses as self-employed people, they are forced to operate more as freelancers. This, according to Henken

[10] As I discuss in the following Chapter, this issue has since been addressed by the government (see *Mesa Redonda* 2020).

(2019), forces small-business owners “to remain largely powerless [legally speaking] against arbitrary state power” (152).

The authorization and significant expansion of self-employment (i.e., entrepreneurship), even despite the hardships that have remained, has fundamentally changed the Cuban political economy. The reforms gave Cubans more opportunities to increase their quality of life after the ration system grew less effective and inflation caused state wages to become nearly useless (R. R. Betancourt, 2019). Nevertheless, I would argue that the success that the non-state sector achieved also led to some unintended consequences. First, many Cubans realized that professional work was not nearly as lucrative as self-employment work, leading to “brain waste” as many Cubans decided to forego higher education in favor of pursuing work in, for example, the lucrative private tourism sector. Second, self-employment incomes proved much more valuable compared to state sector incomes, thereby augmenting some socioeconomic inequalities while undermining previous advancements in social equity in Cuba that, for example, had put women and people of color in leadership roles in the state sector. Third, corruption increased as self-employed people increasingly found ways to entice/bribe officials who were paid low state-sector wages (only up to about $40 USD per month). These are examples of some social crises, which I describe in more detail in Chapter 5.

Despite all the negative consequences of the growth of the private sector within this uniquely Cuban context – in addition to the socioeconomic inequalities that I describe below – the state has, in recent years, attempted to adopt or coopt the language of entrepreneurship itself. This is an interesting transformation because, during the US-Cuba political economic thaw in 2014-2016, the state media (i.e., the state itself) treated the idea

of entrepreneurship as a possible Trojan horse that the US was using to effect social, economic, and political changes within Cuba (T. A. Henken & Vignoli, 2015). Later, anxieties remained – I argue because state actors were aware of the negative consequences that grow with unrestrained private sector growth – but the state also began to celebrate entrepreneurial initiatives or resourcefulness within state-sector businesses and with regards to private sector actors who pushed for socially responsible entrepreneurship. For example, state-sector businesses were urged to act more entrepreneurially in order to continue producing despite recent resource shortages (e.g., del Sol González & Castro Morales, 2019). Furthermore, the University of Havana (a state-run institution) recently implemented *La Red de Emprendimiento de la Universidad de La Habana* (the Network of Entrepreneurship at the University of Havana). The network's name is enough to demonstrate the state's newfound interest in entrepreneurship, especially entrepreneurship that is socially or environmentally conscious (see University of Havana, 2021). Since COVID-19, state officials have even celebrated creative, 'entrepreneurial' responses to the pandemic by the private sector (Frank & Rios, 2020). All in all, this cooptation of language suggests that the state has found certain value in entrepreneurship because of its usefulness as an innovative and flexible economic tool capable of withstanding some of the most difficult challenges.

The current state of the economy and entrepreneurship in Cuba

While the Cuban economy somewhat recovered after building favorable trade relations with Venezuela, followed by important gains instigated through bi-lateral relations with other countries in the region (e.g., the US and Brazil), Cuba again faces economic turmoil.

Venezuela has reduced its oil contributions by 40% since 2014, Trump's arrival in the US has significantly undermined Cuban tourism and self-employment tied to the tourism market by making it more difficult for Americans to visit Cuba,[11] and Brazilian president Bolsonaro has ended *MaisMedicos* – a medical personnel exchange program that generated as much as $300 million USD per year for the Cuban government (Frist, 2015). Throughout the past few years, the Cuban government has also created more obstacles than opportunities for potential foreign investors, as bureaucracy remains at extremely cumbersome levels (LeoGrande, 2017, p. 239). Moreover, there have been a wide range of resource shortages over the past two years (during this research), including building supplies and food stuffs, making it more difficult to execute a new construction project or manage a business there. Despite a new constitution, the Communist Party of Cuba remains the only political party possible, raising another red flag for any would-be foreign investment. Finally, the Cuban government often focuses their investment search on mega projects, like the port in Mariel, which are less appealing to many investors across the world because of the sheer size of the risk involved (Bahamonde, 2019).

The external and internal factors described throughout this section have stunted economic growth in Cuba. In 2018, the economy grew at a dismal 1% and it seems that it may get even worse. Specific to entrepreneurship, the political regulatory hurdles were piling up at the time of this research. For example, the state had barred the majority of wholesale markets (A. Ritter & Henken, 2015). Cubans were often denied state-financed credit opportunities (Carmelo Mesa-Lago et al., 2016). And, state policies disallowed

[11] Indeed, visitors from the US declined by nearly 70% after Trump's sanctions on Cuba took effect, and Cuba received 95,856 fewer visitors (from all across the world, including the US) (Pentón, 2020).

directly importing commercial items to sell in the non-state sector (Castro Morales & Sánchez Serra, 2014). These circumstances intersected and constrained access to resources for Cuban entrepreneurs and createed unfair competition with lower state prices (A. Ritter & Henken, 2015). These circumstances also drove many Cubans to operate businesses without the correct license either because they did not see the immediate value in paying for a license when accessing necessary resources remained uncertain, or they wished to operate some sort of entrepreneurial activity that did not fall within a legal license category. Furthermore, Cuba faced a serious emigration problem, with much of the prime labor force having already left the island. Thus, two viable back-up plans were less feasible over time: (1) relying on the private, non-state sector to salvage the economy or (2) continuing to rely on young people to bail the economy out.

Despite all these negative circumstances, it is estimated that more than 1.2 million Cubans work in private businesses (Cuba Emprende Foundation, 2017). Officially, in fall 2018—when the on-site portion of this research began—there were 580,800 licensed self-employment workers (employees and business owners), nearly 13% of the total Cuban labor force (Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas de Cuba, 2019a). By May 2019, this number had expanded to 605,908 (Tamayo Batista, 2019), and in summer 2020 the total was 617,000, or over 13% of the total labor force (Oficina Nacional de Estadística e Información 2019). These statistics show that the Cuban private sector continues to grow despite the hurdles and risks involved. Furthermore, likely more than five hundred thousand Cubans operate private businesses without licenses, meaning that what would otherwise be considered formal private-sector activity could actually involve more than one-third (33%) of the Cuban labor force (Cuba Emprende Foundation 2017). My personal

observations make me believe that more than half, maybe even over 75%, of all Cubans are engaged in other (private) side hustles, meaning that private-sector activity is more prominent than we could ever officially recognize (Feinberg 2018).

According to an article published in the state-owned newspaper *Trabajadores* (Pérez, 2019), "[of the nearly 606,000 licensed self-employed workers in May 2019,] 32% [were] youth, 35% [were] women, 10% [were] retired, and 14% [were] also salaried workers [in the state sector]." In 2016, there were 154,506 self-employed people in Havana; and although this number is not up to date (i.e., the Cuban government has not released statistics for this sector in Havana since 2016), Havana likely accounts for over 25% of all self-employed licenses in Cuba (Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas de Cuba, 2017). This reveals just how significant the Havana socioeconomic landscape is to private sector experiences in Cuba (since Havana accounts for less than 20% of Cuba's total population), and therefore helps justify studying the phenomenon of entrepreneurship in Havana as opposed to other spaces in Cuba.[12]

Contracted workers (i.e., employees) account for roughly 27% of self-employment licenses (Caro Montero, González Espinosa, Rosabal Otero, & Barrera Soto, 2019), meaning roughly 440,000 people are legal small-business owners. Though, as I cover in the next section of this chapter and subsequent chapters of the dissertation, entrepreneurship is not necessarily experienced the same across the socioeconomic spectrum in Cuba, nor is it conceptualized in the same light with regards to how it could or should be utilized for personal gain and as a way to improve communal conditions.

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[12] Again, this is a still a limitation of the study (see Chapter 2), and reveals an area of potential further investigation in the future (see Chapter 8).

Intersections of Social Diversity in Cuban Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship in Cuba has grown amidst an array of political and economic reforms addressing domestic and international issues. These include Cuban policy shifts that encourage more foreign investment in tourism infrastructure, permission for Cubans to privately own and sell homes and automobiles, and an increase in foreign remittances after the U.S. government removed limits to the amount of money people could send from the U.S. to Cuba. These reforms ostensibly enhance opportunities for entrepreneurship. For example, more foreign remittances allow Cubans better resources to buy or fix up homes or automobiles, which can be used to attract the increasing number of foreign clients visiting the island more with progress in tourism infrastructure. These reforms help make entrepreneurship seem like the best option for personal economic survival in Cuba, and something that is critical in growing Cuba's suffering economy (Feinberg, 2016; Carmelo Mesa-Lago et al., 2016; Pérez Villanueva, 2016; Pérez Villanueva & Torres Pérez, 2015).

However, certain policies also hinder and constrain entrepreneurship. The Cuban state bars most wholesale markets (A. Ritter & Henken, 2015). Cubans are often denied state-financed credit opportunities (Mesa-Lago et al., 2016). And, Cuban state policies prohibit directly importing commercial items to sell in the non-state sector, constraining access to material resources and creating unfair competition with lower state prices (Castro Morales & Sánchez Serra, 2014).

While state policies and regulations are ostensibly designed to maintain equity, inequalities continue to grow since the disappearance of the Soviet trading bloc, and recent political economic reforms are contributing to the growth of social and demographic

inequalities, particularly with regards to race. For example, the majority of Cubans living abroad are white and disproportionately send remittances to white Cubans (Clealand, 2017, p. 146; Katrin Hansing, 2017). Tourism employers also exclude many Afro-descendant Cubans because they supposedly lack *buena presencia* (good appearance) (de la Fuente, 2001b). Consequently, Cubans of more visible African descent disproportionately represent public aspects of the informal economy -- like street hustling or sex work -- and are policed as such (see, e.g., A. Cabezas, 2009; L. K. Roland, 2011).

The expanded racialization of inequality in Cuba impacts entrepreneurship outcomes in several important ways. First, recent research in Cuba acknowledges that the greatest opportunities for social mobility revolve around personal social networks, and business owners with stronger or more reliable social networks receive more aid to develop their businesses (Romanò & Echevarria-Léon, 2015). My own observations support this perspective. Stronger social networks almost always lead to more opportunities for employment in lucrative private businesses. Indeed, all but one of my interviewees who were employees in the private sector found their current employment from a friend or family member. The lone interviewee who did not find their *current* employment from a friend or family member had built a robust resume working for friends and family members in every position before their current employment.

So, while the Revolution brought important advancements for racial equity (e.g., more opportunities for black Cubans to access more prestigious professional positions), and some Cubans I spoke with argued that everyone, regardless of their skin color, had

equal opportunities to start a business,[13] there were certain challenges related to race. Indeed, as Queeley (2015) explains, "'Todos somos iguales' (We are all equal) is a popular refrain rooted in the ideas of José Martí that reinforces the notion that the 1959 revolution eliminated social hierarchy and all forms of discrimination. In practical terms, however, acceptance of and adherence to this ideal have been less than perfect" (166). For a private business, in particular, the combination of disproportionate remittance patterns and past housing trends that gave white Cubans better access to contemporary spaces of lucrative entrepreneurship, leave many darker-skinned Cubans without the strong social networks needed to operate lucrative entrepreneurial ventures. Second, recent studies show that people who work in more lucrative private businesses -- like home rentals or small restaurants -- are markedly whiter (Gámez Torres, 2017; Hernández, 2017). This is likely because more lucrative businesses are in areas where the general population is whiter. However, considering hiring trends in tourism, which coalesce around the notion of good appearance, we can also glean that hiring trends in entrepreneurship also indicate a preference towards a particular phenotype.

While the racialization of inequality in Cuba is undeniable and increasingly important, there are additional social differences which shape specific entrepreneurial experiences. There also exists unequal age patterns of private sector employment. While 31% (and growing) of total licenses are held by young persons (~ages 17-25) (Carmelo Mesa-Lago et al., 2016, p. 33), and more lucrative ventures geared towards tourism are hiring younger employees at higher rates (Hernández, 2017), the vast majority of private

[13] Many of these interlocutors, though, did admit that geographic location and access to remittances would improve or hinder the chances for a business's success.

businesses are owned by people over 30 (Carmelo Mesa-Lago et al., 2016). According to a business consultant who works with entrepreneurs in Cuba (name omitted for confidentiality), the most lucrative ventures in Cuba -- often requiring a staggering $200,000 USD or more in investment -- are owned by people age 40-55. This complements observations by Díaz-Briquets (2014) and Pérez-López & Díaz-Briquets (2006) who found that Cubans over 50 were receiving the most remittances -- better positioning them to own and grow their businesses. As for older Cubans (60+), researchers (including myself) have found that private sector work can prove exhausting because of the long hours and a constant search for resources (Strug, 2017).

The Cuban population is aging at a rapid rate, which is an effect of higher life expectancy, persistent low fertility, and high emigration rates (Díaz-Briquets 2015). Currently, Cubans over age 60 make up 20 percent of the population, and will make up more than 30 percent by 2030 (Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas 2012). The majority of older workers (60+) work for the state, with salaries that often do not cover the costs of basic needs (Brundenius & Torres Pérez, 2014). Social security pensions have lost significance because of rising food prices and limitations in the ration system (Carmelo Mesa-Lago & Pérez-López, 2013). While the private sector is a viable alternative source of income for this cohort, when older Cubans do open their own businesses, they often do so in small-scale operations like phone card sales or small-scale cafeterias because these operations are less physically demanding. However, attracting a consistent clientele stream can be difficult because of oversaturation in these specific types of businesses.

Sex is another category with divergent experiences in entrepreneurship. Currently, 34% (and growing) of the self-employment licenses are held by women – with a clear

concentration on more “feminine occupations” such as manicurist or nanny (Díaz Fernández & Echevarría León, 2015). According to some sources, women who work in higher end restaurants are often young and without children -- revealing certain structural discriminations in Cuba’s private sector (Hernández, 2017). And, even though new regulations directly address workplace discrimination (see conclusion), gendered social expectations continue to present challenges for Cuban women.

Scholars have documented socially constructed gender expectations of feminine domestic responsibilities across the Caribbean, where women often face second or even third shifts as their work and private lives conflate (see, e.g., Barrow, 1996; Freeman, 2000). Despite efforts to redistribute domestic responsibilities more equitably during the Revolution (see H. I. Safa, 1995), Cuban women are often still expected to manage household duties. As one self-employed woman’s husband told his son, “you know, in this house, your mother does everything,” explaining to me later that his wife cooked, cleaned, cared for children (frequently hers and the neighbors’ at the same time), and shopped, all the while trying to maintain a small-scale food sales operation out of her own kitchen. While a second or third shift is common for many Cuban women, in this ethnographic example, third-shift is even an understatement.

Location is perhaps the most obvious factor shaping entrepreneurship in Cuba. A business’s location determines its access to clients and potential for growth. In Cuba, if a business is in a tourism zone or an area where it can access visitors with means (e.g., Cubans visiting from abroad) the business is more likely to generate an influx of revenue/profit. If the business is in a more impoverished or peripheral area the prospective

clientele is less likely to contribute substantially to the *growth* of the business, even if they do help maintain its operation.

While the previous discussion describes some of the more salient social differences that shape entrepreneurship, intersectionality helps discover greater complexity in it, and how some axes of social diversity shape certain outcomes. There are too many intersections to cover is this chapter. Instead, to make the simple case that there are, indeed, 'entrepreneurial intersections' in Havana, I describe two different intersections of race, sex, age, and location and their potential effects on entrepreneurial experiences. The following two sub-sections expand on the separate differences listed above and demonstrates how entrepreneurship has nuanced diversity depending on how various social factors intersect and interact. This opens the conversations that take place throughout the dissertation.

Race and location

The axis of race and location is an important intersection for entrepreneurship, producing both opportunities and challenges for an array of people engaged in entrepreneurial behaviors. Looking specifically at Havana's metropolitan area, the areas of the city that are in better condition are whiter (e.g., municipalities: *Plaza* and *Playa*). This is historically contingent as, after Cuba gained independence in 1902, new infrastructure encouraged wealthier (whiter) Cubans to move from congested neighborhoods in the city's core to more upscale and spacious neighborhoods like *Vedado* (municipality *Plaza*) and *Miramar* (municipality *Playa*). Thus, whiter descendants who live in these upscale neighborhoods are better placed to engage in the most lucrative contemporary forms of entrepreneurship, namely rental of rooms in their homes or small restaurants called *paladares*. Poorer and

darker skinned residents are often concentrated in sectioned housing in central zones -- known as *solares* -- that are not conducive for private, home-operated businesses.

Large scale housing projects, built during the 1970s, also added to the racialized residential patterns of housing in Cuba, as well as contemporary racial patterns in entrepreneurship. To end homelessness and eradicate slum areas, populated mostly by black people, the government constructed large housing projects on the outskirts of Havana, where former slum residents were relocated, leading to physical marginality for many black Cubans. According to Eckstein:

> [The housing projects are] large, isolated, and impersonal, and some distance from where most people can find work. The prefabricated apartment units do not allow residents to modify their dwellings as their family needs change and their income allows, or to easily use their quarters for income-generating rental and commercial purposes (2003, p. 159).

The outcomes of these housing trends are two-fold. First, black Cubans are overrepresented in areas with the worst housing conditions. As such, prior housing trends force many black Cubans to operate more public-facing *mobile* ventures (e.g., street vending or bicycle taxis) if they wish to legally access coveted foreign currency. In turn, mobile ventures can subject black Cubans to more surveillance, adding to the persecution they already face based on racial prejudices (see below).

Second, and a possible but rare opportunity, is that while black Cubans are marginalized based on past housing trends, some black spaces have become "authentic" cultural centers which regularly attract tourists. For example, *Callejón de Hamel*, a section of a predominately black neighborhood called *Cayo Hueso* located in municipality *Centro Habana*, has become what Lonely Planet and Trip Adviser describe as a "high temple of Afro-Cuban culture." That is, this small alley located between *Habana Vieja* and *Vedado* (two epicenters of Cuban tourism today) has itself become a popular tourism destination,

common for people who are interested in observing Afro-cultural or even religious events. Indeed, *Santurismo,* a form of religious tourism centered on Santería, an African-derived religion in Cuba, draws a large number of religious practitioners as well as tourists who are interested in the "mysterious" elements of this "exotic" religion (see Hagedorn, 2001). As such, *Santurismo* and *Callejón de Hamel* both coincide with what Jean and John Comaroff refer to as “the empowerment of culture.” That is, “in the case of ethnic groups, [the empowerment of culture] is frankly associated with finding something essentially their own and theirs alone, something of their essence, to sell. In other words, a brand” (2009, p. 15). This so-called brand has enabled many Cubans the ability to access cultural resources that entice clientele and self-employed people who live in or nearby *Cayo Hueso* can generate income from visitors, especially during the Sunday rumba (a weekly event focused on Afro-Cuban rhythms/dance) (see also Chapter 6). *Callejón de Hamel* has also become so common on the tourism circuit that homeowners are finding great success utilizing the cultural center as a tool to rent their living quarters to foreigners. Indeed, a quick keyword search in AirBnb results in a plethora of rentals within one block of the alley, or homeowners who use *Callejón de Hamel* as a marketing strategy to entice prospective clientele.

Of course, not every black neighborhood has the same privileges and the success of *Callejón de Hamel* comes from its central location in Havana. What is more often the case – and a topic I focus on in more detail in Chapter 5 – is that black areas, including *Cayo Hueso*, are stigmatized, discriminated, and imagined as spaces of crime and promiscuity. This is a sequel of colonial era racial discourse which fashioned black people

as hypersexual, hyperviolent, or simply socially deviant (de la Fuente, 2001a). Indeed, racialized imaginations remain in the contemporary moment. As Anguelovski explains:

> In 1987, 31 percent of the areas officially classified as delinquency centers were in the three municipalities with most Afro-Cubans – Centro Habana, Habana Vieja, and Marianao – even though they comprised only 20 percent of Havana's population and studies demonstrated that crime rates in these areas were not above the average rates in Havana as a whole. (2014, p. 85)

Since the disappearance of the Soviet trading bloc in 1990, the ensuing economic crisis during the 1990s known locally as the Special Period, and permission for Cubans to access and spend coveted foreign currency, racial conditions have worsened for black Cubans. Again, they are often excluded from lucrative jobs in the tourist sector. They are also hindered from accessing formal, legal, and lucrative private business opportunities because of their physical marginality. Even worse is that blackness has also become synonymous with informal activity in Cuban tourism, thereby creating a potential barrier for them to access this lucrative industry (cf. Chapter 6).

In Cuba, the term *jineterismo* (jockeying) is colloquially used to refer to sex work as well as a wide array of street hustling techniques used on foreign visitors. Typically, this term is reserved for the informal sector of the tourism industry, as it generally refers to Cuban-foreigner interactions where material goods are exchanged without government regulation. While scholars have found that Cubans engage in these practices at similar rates regardless of race (A. Cabezas, 2009; Clealand, 2017; L. K. Roland, 2011), black Cubans have become the face of *jineterismo* because they are more visible in their interactions with predominately white foreign visitors and social imaginations, prejudices, and, ultimately, stigmas of blackness render these sorts of behaviors plausible.

In years past, the state enacted a sort of “tourism apartheid,” leaving already marginalized and discriminated black people further criminalized by way of strict government regulations. As Taylor and McGlynn describe it:

> Thus, the government adopted a strategy, popularly called ‘tourist apartheid,’ as a way of immunizing Cuban society from the evils of international tourism, while simultaneously protecting *turistas* from crime. The most conspicuous dimension of this policy was the harassment of Cubans, especially young black men, publicly seen with tourists: police would ask for identification and sometimes, even arrest them. (2009: 409)

This control mechanism has intensified surveillance and permitted police, particularly in tourist zones, to stop and detain anyone they want, reminiscent of the stop and frisk procedures in New York City or the "show me your papers" provision of Arizona law, both of which also result in rampant racial profiling and the unnecessary criminalization of young people of color. Racialized imaginations of black Cubans severely impact the possibility for them to move freely about Havana or to participate in public facing cuentapropismo because they are often surveilled and harassed, particularly when they conduct business in tourism zones.

Race, sex, and age

Depending on the sex, the aforementioned trends in locale and race can have different implications for black Cubans who own or work in private businesses. According to a survey conducted by Clealand (2017) (n=385), 58 percent of men, compared to just 33 percent of women, acknowledged they had experienced discrimination from racial profiling by the police or felt criminalized by the broader population. Indeed, Clealand also notes that black, white, and *mulatto* (mixed-race) interviewees all admitted that the police stop black Cuban men much more frequently than those of other racial groups. My own

research in Cuba confirms these observations, as black male friends have been stopped on multiple occasions while walking in Havana with me, something that has never happened to my lighter-skinned Cuban friends. Moreover, I have watched as many black Cuban men are denied entry to tourist spaces like hotels or boutique restaurants. When I asked the doorman why they did not let the black person in, I have been told outright that they were *jineteros* and thus were not allowed to come in and "bother" the guests.

Meanwhile, black women are often stereotyped as sex workers when interacting with foreign visitors and are surveilled at higher rates than their white counterparts. Indeed, much research has been done on the sexualization of Afro-Cuban women (see, e.g., Berg, 2004; Facio, 1999; Nadine Fernandez, 1999; Fusco, 1998; L. K. Roland, 2011). Consistent throughout these texts are racial imaginations of sex work as a black vocation, even though it is frequently observed across races. Indeed, Roland comments, "while white women were often conceived to be 'dating' foreign men, black women who associated with foreign men – because of their visibility and the sexualized stereotypes of them – were understood to be *jineteras* [(read: prostitutes)]" (2011, p. 56).

Together, these circumstances create inequitable barriers in entrepreneurship, particularly in tourism areas. Black Cubans who carry out their daily business activities in public -- essential to most entrepreneurial ventures -- must factor in surveillance, police harassment, and public stigma into their daily routines. Black Cubans must also act with care while interacting with foreigners, for fear of being perceived as hustlers (men) or sex workers (women).

Age further complicates this. According to Clealand's survey -- where the age of the respondents was divided into five cohorts: those born in the 1990s, 1980s, 1970s,

1960s, and 1950s or earlier -- black Cubans born in the 1970s and 1980s are most likely to report an experience with discrimination (2017, p. 155). These individuals were in their teens or twenties when economic reforms took shape during the Special Period. Therefore, these respondents were old enough to experience, and remember, a rise in racial profiling as well as employment discrimination, as opposed to the younger generation (1990s cohort) who were under 18 years old when the survey was conducted (2008-2009), and who did not report statistically relevant experiences with discrimination. Of course, this does not mean that the 1990s cohort did/does not experience or is not aware of racial discrimination. It simply means they are less likely to report it on the survey, possibly because they have normalized it in their minds.

This narrative fits with one of my key findings of field work I conducted in 2012 that indicated that younger Cubans were more willing to engage in Cuban-foreigner interactions because they had grown up after the dissolution of the Soviet trading bloc, had only known economic crisis, and, therefore, were less molded by socialist values established during the golden years of the Revolution (1970s and 1980s). Furthermore, I found that Cubans raised during the Special Period or later, were more accepting of Cuban-foreigner interactions given the prevalence of international tourism throughout their lifetime, and were less concerned about the repercussions they faced when interacting with foreigners because police harassment had become part and parcel to their quotidian experiences, especially in tourism zones (see Vertovec, 2012). Interestingly, the license to operate a business has also given some of the younger Cubans I worked with more courage to engage in these interactions, even if it means police officers may harass them (see

Chapter 6), meaning that perhaps legal entrepreneurship has some added benefits in shielding these Cubans from unnecessary harassment.

Two instances stand out from my prior ethnographic research which reflect the new importance of these licenses. First, in 2013, a close friend (23 years old and black) and a sort of informal tour guide (i.e., unlicensed) told me before showing my brother and me around Havana that he was sure that police were going to stop us since we were two (white) foreigners with one black Cuban. As we left the house, he assured me it was not a problem and that we would just need to pick him up from the local precinct -- as if this was a normal occurrence. As foreseen, we were stopped in Vedado and I had to speak with the local police chief before my friend was released. Second, in 2017, when I asked a research participant (24 years old and black) why he liked being a doorman for a *paladar* in Havana Vieja, he responded that he loved the possibility of meeting foreigners and spending time with them later. When I asked if he was ever afraid of being "caught" with them outside of work he replied: "Afraid? Why? They are my friends, there's no crime in being with your friends… Plus, I have this," he laughed as he pulled out his private sector license.

Chapter Conclusion

The consequences of the economic crisis, and the reemergence of socioeconomic inequities and inequalities, can also extend beyond entrepreneurial experiences, revealing pockets of Cuban society that are much better positioned when compared with others. I end this chapter with the ethnographic comparative case-study analysis of two municipalities in Havana – *Plaza de la Revolución* and *el Cerro* – to describe how the economic crisis and

entrepreneurship can be experienced differently in Havana depending on where one lives in the city.

Prior to the start of the economic crisis in 1989, the government had secured advantageous market exchanges with other Comecon countries. This provided stability to the Cuban market and permitted the Cuban government to distribute social benefits across the Cuban population, regardless of any socioeconomic position. When the economic crisis struck in 1989, the same equitable distribution of social benefits ensured an equitable distribution of economic turmoil (Zabala Arguelles, 2015). Cubans faced the same resource shortages, job cuts, and energy saving plans across the Cuban socio-economic spectrum.

In the years that followed, however, structural adjustments to the Cuban economic model (described above) revealed embedded inequalities in the Cuban socio-economy. In terms of personal incomes, work in the non-state or tourism sectors often prove much more lucrative than most state-sector employment. Furthermore, tourism zones of Havana have seen important increases in income, thereby giving residents of those communities potentially more interactions with hard currency influxes. According to **Table 3.2**, *Plaza de la Revolución* received more than half the total tourism income for Havana in 2016 – an impressive 1.4 million CUCs. While that share has likely dropped since 2016, with *Habana Vieja* probably cutting into *Plaza's* share, it is worth noting that *el Cerro* did not have enough of a tourism income for it to even be recorded. As Bahamonde and I note: this is likely still the same, as the municipalities of *Plaza*, *Habana Vieja*, *Centro Habana*, and *Playa*, to some extent, receive the most foreign visitors in Havana – for lodging but also restaurants and entertainment activities – while residents in *el Cerro* are not privy to the same economic benefits of tourism, unless they find work in other parts of the city. Indeed,

the average income can be dramatically different in these two areas. In *Plaza*, the authors found that personal incomes can be up to 1,000 CUC per month whereas the interviewees in *el Cerro* consider themselves lucky if they make 40 CUC per month.

Table 3. 1 *2016 Industry and Employment information across Havana, Plaza, and el Cerro*

Industries and entities	**Havana**	**Plaza de la Revolución**	**el Cerro**
Public Enterprises	621	123	49
Public Budgeted Units	536	162	32
Cooperatives (total)	336	1	2
Total Income from Tourism (CUC)	$2,316,351.80	$1,366,079.70	N/A
Goods & Services (CUP)	N/A	$767,773,900.00	$390,693,500.00
Employment (2014)			
Total	935,899	107,684	35,734
Industrial workers	349,891	17,502	10,139
Technical workers	247,521	63,002	15,833
Administrative positions	76,068	1,771	807
Services workers	210,925	17,094	7,059
Managerial positions	51,494	8,315	1,896

(Source: Oficina Nacional de Estadísticas de Cuba, 2017)

Another interesting statistic provided in **Table 3.1** describes the number of employees in different job types in each municipality. Notably, *el Cerro* has only a third of the total number of employees as *Plaza*, despite having a very similar population (see **Table 2.3**). There are two explanations for this: First, many working age people in *el Cerro* commute to other municipalities to find more gainful employment. Indeed, all but two of our *Cerro* research participants (out of those whose main source of income was from legal employment, n=7) worked in *el Cerro*. The rest worked in *Plaza*, *Habana Vieja*, *Centro Habana*, or *Playa* (n=5). This is still a precarious position to be in considering acute fuel shortages which have paralyzed the public transportation system from time to time (see Cubadebate, 2019). Second, many people in *el Cerro* only work in the informal,

underground economy. They engage in things like consumer item production/sales or services which are not recorded in official statistics. Of our *Cerro* sample, this type work accounted for 4 out of 11 interviewees, and *all* 11 explained that they had side hustles in order to make ends meet.

Our research participants in *Plaza* participated in informal economic activity as well, which is typical for most people in Cuba, though they rarely emphasized *the necessity* to have a side hustle or rely on informal activities as their main source of income. This was often because their formal employment was sufficient enough to cover the costs of their basic needs. So, they often participated in smaller, more insignificant things like only keeping the bonus they received on a large recharge for their phone and simply selling the rest to recoup their money.[14] For *el Cerro* residents, though, they used informal, underground activities – like buying or selling consumer items – to (1) make up for the income disparities described above and (2) to access consumer items because they lived far from shopping centers. That is, *Plaza* respondents found informal transactions much less 'mandatory' because they had legal shops nearby.

Bahamonde and I found that the major expenses and challenges in both areas regarded a constant search for foodstuffs. Since the end of 2018, there have been a series of food shortages and price increases across Cuba, including cooking oil, bread, chicken, and pork. However, residents in *Plaza* had an easier time securing food across the board because of two factors: (1) there are more smaller markets in *Plaza* which have a more

[14] In Cuba, the cell phone plans are pay-as-you-go plans. Every few weeks, there are "international recharges" where you can pay 22 CUC and receive bonuses (e.g., pay 22 and receive 40 or pay 22 receive an hour of talk for free).

diverse selection of products, albeit at higher prices and (2) because residents in *Plaza* typically have higher salaries or are more likely to have family members abroad who can help with these expenses. The latter factor also allowed some *Plaza* residents to pay more for food, whether it was to make at home or to eat out.

Housing conditions is another significant discrepancy between *Plaza* and *el Cerro*. Most of the interview respondents from *el Cerro* explained that the overall condition of their home was one of the biggest challenges they faced in their daily lives. Specifically, many of the interviewees described how water would drip through the ceiling when it would rain. For most of the *Plaza* residents, this was not a problem. Even in *Plaza's solares* – sectioned housing, known for being in worse condition regardless of municipality – leakage was not frequently the first problem that came to mind for their house. According to our respondents, *solar* roofs in *Plaza* are typically made of higher quality concrete and roofing panels that are longer lasting, while in *el Cerro*, many of the *solares* were once multiple story buildings where the second and higher stories were removed because of structural weaknesses. However, when these procedures were done, the construction teams did not change the second floor to a roof. Rather, they left the building how it was, leading to rampant leaks across these structures. When we asked Cerro residents if they planned on fixing their roofs, they admitted that it was unlikely because their incomes barely covered the cost of their basic needs and, perhaps more importantly, the building supplies were unavailable due to shortages.

Of note, there have been instances where residents of dilapidated buildings, again, mostly Black Cubans, have been moved to large scale housing projects on the outskirts of Havana, like *Habana del Este*, *Arroyo Naranjo*, or *Guanabacoa*. While it is positive that

these individuals no longer live in buildings that are at risk of collapsing, this process has also led to physical marginalization for these individuals. These housing projects are isolated and impersonal. They are also far away from the most common business districts in Havana – especially more lucrative tourism zones like *Vedado* (*Plaza*) and *Habana Vieja*. The apartments are prefabricated and do not allow much modification to the dwelling, especially when trying to convert the quarters into an income-generating rental or commercial space (Eckstein, 2003, p. 159). Most pertinent here, however, is that when people are moved from their home neighborhoods to new areas, they are often forcibly disconnected from their social networks that prove vital for survival during any economic downturn. And, not only are the residents who moved away disconnected, but also the social networks that once depended on their support face new gaps in resolving their greatest needs.

The contents of this chapter are important points of departure for the rest of the dissertation. The next chapter discusses a simple question: why do Cubans choose to engage in entrepreneurial strategies in the first place? It is a nice follow up to this chapter because it describes how entrepreneurship is a valuable opportunity to make up for some of the hardships that have come from the economic crisis and subsequent reforms while also providing a response to some of the centralized state's strictest policies and regulations. Chapter 5 analyzes and describes some social "crises" that were direct and indirect outcomes of the economic crisis, as well as the ways that racial, gendered, aged, and locational inequalities are wrapped up in those crises. Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 describes ways that Cubans use entrepreneurship as a means to respond and resist the recent economic and social crises. Chapter 6 does so from a more individual perspective, looking

at how young Black Cubans employ the stigmas and stereotypes that surround their identities as viable means to generate income and search for global connections. Chapter 7 raises the level of abstraction and looks at how some Cubans have used a wide range of (social) entrepreneurial strategies to instigate positive outcomes in their own communities.

CHAPTER FOUR | "No trabajaré pa' ellos": Entrepreneurship as a Form of State Resistance in Havana, Cuba[15]

The robust entrepreneurialism that exists in Cuba today is often a celebrated feature of the country's economic transformations over the last twenty-five years (e.g., Amerise, 2019; Editors of Negolution, 2018; Guttman, 2017; Jervis, 2016). Nevertheless, the Cuban government still maintains strong control over the economy, firmly regulating access to resources and restricting entrepreneurial ingenuity (Carmelo Mesa-Lago et al., 2016; A. Ritter & Henken, 2015). This differs from liberalized political-economic situations in other countries, where entrepreneurship surges because resources are accessible or individuals have more opportunities to flexibly innovate new or enhanced products and services to fill market gaps (e.g., Beresford, 2020; Lundy, Patterson, & O'Neill, 2017).

Before the Cuban Revolution in 1959, the private sector dominated the island's economy, though it depended almost entirely on North America and caused rampant socioeconomic inequalities (Pérez Jr., 2015). After 1959, the revolutionary government nationalized all key private industries and, as the Revolution was institutionalized (particularly with the new constitution in 1976) and supported by the Soviet trading bloc (in the 1960s to 1980s), socialist redistribution policies—like heavily subsidized health care, free education, social security, and rationed food—helped reduce the need to work privately (Pérez Jr., 2015, pp. 282–283). The revolutionary campaign also dedicated itself to forging a new consciousness based on selflessness and sacrifice, and moral incentives were supposed to take the place of material incentives (Pérez Jr., 2015, p. 270). During this

[15] The majority of this chapter was originally published in *Economic Anthropology* in December 2020 under the same title.

time, centralized control over the economy helped the Cuban state divide economic production into two distinct spheres: state and nonstate (private) work. Predicated on appeals to unity and unanimity, the state has since constrained private-sector activities (see Fernández, 2000).

The Cuban state often suggests that private-sector activities generate corruption, concentrate wealth in the hands of just a few, push for a return to capitalism, and drive the black market (see Díaz, 2018c). All of these suggestions are counter to the state's political-economic ideology and thus make it easier for it to justify constraining entrepreneurship. Provided that there is so much friction between the state and the private sector, I investigate why Cubans choose to engage in entrepreneurial activities in the first place, and how entrepreneurial strategies might help Cubans resist their current circumstances.

Entrepreneurship is often studied as a critical means of poverty alleviation (Sutter, Bruton, and Chen 2019). Recent work also proposes that entrepreneurship is central to micro- and macroeconomic growth and development (Lundy, Patterson, and O'Neill 2017), as well as a potential source of social transformation (Beresford 2020). The central question for many entrepreneurship studies is whether entrepreneurship is done out of necessity or voluntarily by opportunity seekers (Achua & Lussier, 2014). Many social scientists have also identified how flexibility and innovativeness—sometimes done so illegally—are important traits to elevate one's business (Carla Freeman, 2014; Valdez, 2011). However, these studies are from sites where the government generally accepts and promotes entrepreneurship and, therefore, can overlook how barriers to success—like strict state policies or resource shortages—may have an impact on entrepreneurialism.

This chapter examines how entrepreneurial strategies are driven not just in spite of but also because of challenging political and regulatory environments. While many sociocultural studies examine the strategies entrepreneurs use to navigate their challenges (Clark, 2013; Carla Freeman, 2014; Turner, 2013; Valdez, 2011; Williams et al., 2013), this chapter considers how restrictive circumstances can spur entrepreneurship and adds to the limited body of literature that considers the ways that entrepreneurial strategies can be forms of state resistance (Clark, 2013; Little, 2013; Milgram, 2011; Turner, 2013). Cuba's recent history makes it a particularly interesting site from which to examine these processes since *transformation* characterizes the shifts in Cuban political, economic, and social apparatuses, as opposed to a *transition* to a free market economy.[16]

The entrenchment of entrepreneurship in Cuba is driven by personal micro-transformations that respond to overarching macro-dynamics, such as the different practices and processes that government institutions utilize to govern society or the global circulations of people, wealth, and ideas that shape the opportunities people have in the local private sector (Stein and Vertovec 2020). The Cuban institutions that most directly oversee the private sector are the Ministry of Labor and Social Security, the National Office of the Administration of Tributaries, and the Administrations of Councils of each municipal government. The National Assembly and the Communist Party of Cuba guide local processes and procedures, and Cubans are surveilled and disciplined by law enforcement agencies and justice departments, such as the police, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry of Justice.

[16] I reject the teleological nature of the term *transition* in favor of a more nuanced explanation of Cuba's economic "transformation" (Williams, Round, and Rodgers 2013).

Together, these institutions make up "the state," and *the* state—as a conglomeration of separate entities—ultimately produces hierarchies and boundaries of acceptable behaviors, a "vertical encompassment" of sorts (Ferguson & Gupta, 2002). The different delimitations of the nation-state—whether it is clear national boundaries or distinct public–private economic spheres—also provide the economy with its boundaries and forms (T. Mitchell, 1999), as well as the possibility to resist those dynamics.

To this end, I argue that entrepreneurship, and particularly informal entrepreneurial strategies in Cuba can be sites of state resistance. The chapter is organized in three-parts. First, I describe how informal entrepreneurial activities are possible forms of resistance. Then, I present the chapter's main ethnographic evidence, focusing on why Cubans *choose* to engage in entrepreneurial activities and how they *utilize* those activities as forms of state resistance. I conclude with a brief discussion of how state resistance through entrepreneurial strategies has catalyzed recent changes in the Cuban economic system.

The Possibilities to use Informal Entrepreneurial Activities as Resistance

When the Cuban government legalized formally underground activities in the 1990s, it transformed what were previously "second economy" activities (Pérez-López 1995) into a division of formal and informal entrepreneurial activities. "Informal entrepreneurial activities" are unregistered or unauthorized activities that occur for entrepreneurial purposes. They can include "off-the-books" paid employment (e.g., working without a license or a permit) or the underground, unlicensed production, acquisition, or sales of goods and services that would otherwise be considered licit but are hidden for tax or labor law purposes (Williams, Round, and Rodgers 2013, 107). In Cuba, this includes accessing

or developing products or services that are outside the ones provided by the state. Informal entrepreneurial practices are not always illegal and are different from the production and sale of goods and services that are considered strictly illegal, contextually speaking. They also differ from formal activities, which, in Cuba, often pertain to "state-managed production and distribution and the executive planning of it" (Fernández 2000, 105).

Informal entrepreneurial activities are often subtle and under the radar and are used to maneuver regulations and their enforcement (Turner 2013). They are techniques of everyday resistance, done for a range of reasons, like cutting corners to more intentional forms that try to effect policy change (Kerkvliet, 2009; Scott, 1985). They also enact new possibilities and help discover feelings of self-determination (Sabella & El-far, 2019). Informal entrepreneurial activities can threaten the state's control over the economy when civilian producers and consumers circumvent official avenues to satisfy their wants and needs (Clark 2013, 32).

The Cuban Revolution organized its institutions to promote a revolutionary consciousness. The goal was to make a new revolutionary ethic, where people were "motivated not by expectation of personal gain but by the prospects of collective advancement" (Pérez 2015, 270). Cubans were promised certain material goods in return (e.g., housing, food rations, education, and health care). However, this "agreement" became untenable, especially during and after the economic crisis in the 1980s and 1990s. So, Cubans sought out alternative strategies to make ends meet and as a way to circumvent the demands of the state (Fernández 2000, 29).

People use informal entrepreneurial strategies—like moving their business activities regularly or adjusting their schedules so as to hide their businesses or make them

less identifiable (Milgram 2011; Turner 2013), in addition to the ones described in this article—to resist the state and reclaim their flexibility and autonomy. According to Scott (1985, 296), "when such acts are rare and isolated, they are of little interest; but when they become a consistent pattern (even though uncoordinated, let alone organized) we are dealing with resistance." It is through these resistance measures that social changes can occur (see, e.g., Beresford 2020). This resistance is also political, contributing to the ways that resources are controlled, allocated, produced, and used (Kerkvliet 2009).

Resistance must also be understood contextually. As Fernández (2000) identifies, "if a state defines a certain behavior and a specific way of being as 'counterrevolutionary,' as the Cuban state does in the case of myriad [informal] activities and identities, the pursuit of those actions and those life spaces then constitutes a form of resistance." Many Cubans with whom I worked did not explicitly state that they were acting in resistance; in fact, some thought their punishment for getting caught—for example, a fine or losing their business—might strengthen state control through increased revenue or by deterring others from doing the same thing (Heyman and Smart 1999). However, their informal entrepreneurial activities still undermined the government's executive control over the economy, in addition to defying the state's desired revolutionary consciousness, and revealed how Cubans are adapting the ways they interact with (or resist) state policies and what the state defines as "acceptable behavior."

Choosing to Undertake Entrepreneurial Activities

Reinier was twenty-five years old when he graduated from university with a computer science degree. At first, he wanted to work for the government as a cybersecurity specialist.

However, after working for some state-owned agencies, he changed his mind. "Quickly, I realized I wanted to own my own business, that I didn't want to work for the state anymore. Working for the state was more problematic than it was beneficial," he told me. "*No trabajaré pa' ellos* [I won't work for them]" (Interview December 2018).

He bounced around to four different state-sector agencies, but his salary never surpassed 25 CUC per month (roughly the equivalent value in U.S. dollars, and a little less than average [30–35 CUC] for many state-sector workers). To "survive," as he called it, he stole computer parts and software programs and opened an informal IT business out of his home to help pay for his necessities:

> I didn't want to steal, but you have to do those things to survive as a state worker. There's a lot of necessity. Cubans are adapted to taking something from their work. Cubans don't worry if the salary is ten, fifteen, twenty dollars. They don't count on that. They count on going to work and in that work, they're going to find a "daily income." If it's in the sock factory, they're going to take a sock every day. Because when you get home you have to eat. You can't wait until the end of the month for just twenty-five dollars. (Interview December 2018)

When he gathered the required materials, he fixed computers, copied/updated antivirus programs, and installed or fixed operating systems. But he was still dependent on items he stole from his work and could never buy other supplies because the equipment cost too much in Cuba, and he did not have foreign connections who could bring him cheaper supplies.

After his last state-sector job, doing data entry, he decided he had to switch to work in the private sector to advance his IT business. He was beginning to lose money because the data entry job only paid US$15 per month, there was nothing to steal, and he had to use his savings to help pay for his family's necessities. "One day, thank God, a neighbor needed someone to cover his shift at the restaurant where he worked, so I went and worked for

him. The owner saw I was young, serious, that I performed well, so he gave me a job. I made ten dollars that first day. Now, I make thirty dollars a day. I mean, it's not *that* great because sometimes I work eighteen hours, but at least now I have opportunities."

Reinier worked at the restaurant six days a week and spent his time off running his IT business. His goal was to license and legalize the IT business once he bought some better equipment. Then, he would focus all his energy there. "It's hard work, going back and forth, but, really, it's for my future; to not be so dependent on the state and own my own business. Once I can put all my attention there, I'm not saying I'll make a ton of money, well definitely more than working for the state," he laughed, "but at least I'll be my own boss. I won't have to answer to anyone, and I'll have the freedom to make my own decisions" (Interview December 2018).

Reinier's story is not unique. Working for the state to pilfer supplies for his side job is ubiquitous for Cuban state-sector employees. His drive to earn a livable wage is common for anyone leaving the state sector to work in the private sector. His desire to make his own choices, have freedom of decision— "be his own boss"—was also commonplace in Cuba. Most important, though, is that Reinier's story encapsulates a view that emerged among all my research participants: that entrepreneurship allowed them the possibility to distance themselves from the state and pursue incomes via their own innovation and creativity. In the next section, I outline the three most common areas where my research participants used entrepreneurial strategies to resist state policies: (a) accessing material inputs, (b) satisfying clients, and (c) using, or not, business licenses.

Entrepreneurial Strategies as Acts of Resistance in Cuba

Accessing material inputs

"I've been an entrepreneur for sixteen years," a metal worker named Rafa told me one afternoon while we talked in his workshop (Interview September 2018). "You see this?" he asked, holding up a TV mount. "I made a lot of money with this. In 2004, 2005, the Chinese sent [Cuba] a bunch of TVs. We had to exchange our old TVs for the Chinese ones because they were more energy efficient. They were all the same size and I remember thinking, 'hmm.'" He winked. "I made one, then another, then I was making as many as I could, knowing I could sell them quickly. Back then, there was metal everywhere." "But now?" I asked. He laughed. "Now there's nothing."

The biggest challenge for my research participants was getting their supplies. Since mid-2018, there have been many resource shortages, including of building supplies (e.g., cement, metal tubing, and rebar) and foodstuffs (e.g., cooking oil, bread, and chicken). Additionally, the Cuban state bars most wholesale markets (Ritter and Henken 2015), an obstacle that has been repeatedly protested by business owners in Havana (Recio, 2018). Cuban policies also prohibit directly importing commercial items to sell in the nonstate sector (Castro Morales & Sánchez Serra, 2014). This has led many entrepreneurs into informal—sometimes illegal—innovations to make up for these challenges. "If the state's not going to import the materials we need," Rafa said, referring to a state announcement that Cuba would begin importing less and manufacturing more (García Santos & Tamayo León, 2018), "then I'm going to find them somewhere else" (Interview September 2018).

At the time of this research, Rafa, forty years old, worked with Ivan, fifty-four years old. They combined their unique styles to make furniture together. They came from

different backgrounds, but Cuba's history with resource shortages and omnipresent state regulations forced both to innovate and be flexible. Rafa learned how to take scrap metal or discarded wood and fuse it together to make bigger, more usable pieces. Ivan was an installation artist who discovered how to make a product very similar to clay—but much more durable—by mixing water, discarded paper, and a little glue. This was useful because clay was very difficult to find and, because of the lack of availability, had very high costs.

One day, I asked them how resource shortages affected them. Rafa replied, "Shortages are so common that when you see there's glass to make a table, you better buy it the first time you see it because, if not, you will probably go back, and it's all gone. Then you have to buy it from someone who is hoarding it and it costs more" (Interview November 2018). Ivan chimed in:

> This is a problem because of the state. The state puts limits on how much people can buy to "protect" the consumer [he says with air quotations]. But there are people who can go to the store with two or three friends and buy two or three times what they are supposed to. Or, you know a guy at the store who can help you get what you want from the back door. We [Rafa and he] don't want to deal with that. We have our ways to handle it, Rafa with his welding and me with my [clay] mixture. We don't go to stores. If we must, we go to the black market. (Interview November 2018)

Satisfying consumer desires

Rafa's TV mounts were where his furniture-making business took off. "After some time, [though], I had sold TV mounts to almost all of Havana. I had to find the next big thing" (Interview September 2018). One day he was window-shopping in one of the main

shopping centers in Havana when he saw exorbitant, almost unbelievable prices in the furniture store. "A lamp, you know, one of those basic standing ones, was like one hundred and eighty dollars! I knew I could make the same thing and sell it easily for twenty-five, thirty dollars. I went over to the beds and saw that they were three, four hundred, five hundred dollars. I said, 'I'm going to sell that for one hundred fifty, and the client can even design it themselves'" (Interview September 2018). I went to the same store he was talking about and found a basic standing lamp at the same furniture store for 243 CUC (observation, February 20, 2019). Later, Rafa showed me a catalog he made from photos of the state-store items – with their prices in plain view – mixed in with different versions he had made over the years. He told me his newfound niche was in providing something the state could not: affordable products and options.

In Cuba, one or just a few state-owned companies control what enters the state-owned stores (Fernández Estrada 2014, 29). This has homogenized many of the available products—at least the ones available through formal channels—limiting consumer options and increasing the prices because of a lack of competition (Fernández Estrada 2014, 31). Even in areas designated for self-employed people to sell their items, the options remain limited because the state has banned selling products not made in Cuba (Ritter and Henken 2015, 164). Recent resource shortages—caused by internal policies like importation limits as well as external affairs like the ongoing U.S. blockade or dissolving relations with Brazil—have also severely limited the available products. Therefore, Cuban stores can be desert-like, and markets run by self-employed people usually contain the same item sold by many different vendors. This has effectively made the informal economy the go-to "location" to find diverse products.

I was sitting with Yennifer in her house when the phone rang. Yennifer answered, "What's up?" The other person was inaudible, but I could tell they were placing an order. Yennifer was going to Panama the next day to buy consumer items (e.g., electronics, household goods, perfume, or clothes) under a Panamanian visa for Cubans to do "shopping tourism." The person who called was a friend, a client of Yennifer's who paid her a delivery fee of sorts to bring back what they wanted. After Yennifer hung up, she smiled at me and said, "There is nothing in Cuba. But outside, you can find whatever you want. That woman wants a TV. She'll bring me the cash today and I'll bring it to her in a week" (Interview January 2019).

Technically, this was considered illegal under government rules that prohibited Cubans from buying items abroad to sell in Cuba. But the way Yennifer saw it, "We don't have a provider we can deal with directly and everything with the state is either too expensive or the same thing. So, people [who want diversity or want to pay a fair price] come to me. People want what they want, but the state doesn't have it. So, I go and get it for them" (Interview January 2019).

Using (or not using) licenses

Rafa does not have a license for his work. If he wanted to, he could get a license for welding, but he tells me he would be unable to use it for selling furniture:

> Selling basic products is persecuted. People need basic things like a table, a lamp, a bed. You can get rich quick selling those items. It is commercial warfare between businesspeople and the state. The state allows us to sell really small items like a frying pan or some shoes—only if they are made in Cuba—but the state wants to control all higher priced things, like furniture. They're the only ones that pull the strings of the economy, the government, the state. You understand? And everything goes into their pockets. For that reason, I decided not to be a part of the group that enriches the state [through taxes and licensing fees]. (Interview December 2018)

He thought the system was unfair and that his business was persecuted. So, he operated his business in secrecy:

> If you don't have a license, you need to worry about the police. If you have a license, you need to worry about the state. You can hide from the police, but the state is worse. If you have a license, you can't hide [because the business is registered to a particular location]. They know where you are, then they're always on top of you. I've had one before, it was awful. State inspectors came to my shop whenever they wanted, asking for receipts, where'd you buy this, what're you doing with that? (Interview September 2018)

He told me he had to be flexible while operating his business. He only ran his equipment every other day, from 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM, because the equipment was loud, and he did not want to be discovered.

Rafa was conscious of hiding his tracks because he had a history with the authorities. Around 2008, he had a large plot of land where he operated a legally licensed welding repair business. However, three run-ins with police forced him into hiding. The first time, his materials were confiscated because he had no receipts for them. In response, he bought a large sewage tube, buried it, and hid all his materials there. When the authorities returned to check on him, they did not find the materials, but they took his tools because he had no receipts for them either. He bought new tools and, mockingly, secured them to the floor with leashes. When the authorities returned for a third (and final) time, they were not amused. They confiscated everything and seized the workshop, and Rafa was jailed for a month. His ultimate response: he stopped paying for his license and hid himself in his current workshop on his roof. This was a covert resistance measure that helped him stay "under the radar" and away from regulations and their enforcement (Turner 2013).

While Rafa chose not to have a license, other Cubans chose to creatively stretch licenses to cover their innovative activities, products, or services. For example, a group of former lawyers and business professionals operated a business consulting agency using

"messenger" licenses. They said they were "delivering" information—like laws, policies, or regulations—to their clientele. Other people with whom I spoke used translator licenses to become pseudo tour guides for groups of visiting foreigners. According to one of them, "I'm not a tour guide, I don't have a license for it. But, I know English and Italian. I got a translator license and now I work giving lectures and short tours to groups visiting with their university, church, or some other organization" (Interview September 2018).

These are but two brief examples of the myriad ways Cubans have innovated new usages for permissible activity types. Legally, this was unauthorized, but the two groups of entrepreneurs thought their specific license categories were just ambiguous enough to cover their activities. As one of the consultants explained to me during an informal conversation, they hoped that by stretching the licenses, the government would see they were not doing anything harmful or damaging to society and would expand what is permitted.

Chapter Conclusion

At a certain point, the state is forced to reconcile with the resistance measures that people develop through their (informal) entrepreneurial strategies. On one hand, the state can leverage its authority and penalize private entities through issuing fines, seizing property, closing businesses, or even sentencing jail time. On the other hand, the state can be pressured into liberalizing or decentralizing private-sector activities. So was the case when the Cuban state recently announced new economic reforms that favor entrepreneurship.[17]

[17] This announcement came in Fall 2019 and is still just an announcement; i.e., no significant policy changes have been made.

First, in July 2020, the Cuban government announced that it would allow private restaurants to buy wholesale for the first time. In just four days, more than two hundred restaurant owners signed up to buy an array of products at a 20% discount from the Mercabel wholesale market in Havana, and by the end of July, Mercabel announced the opening of a second branch because demand was so high (Rendón Matienzo, 2020). In the same series of reforms, the state announced that private businesspeople could also sign contracts to import and export goods through select state-run companies (Granma, 2020). Just a few weeks later, in August 2020, Cuba's minister of labor and social security announced that the finite list of acceptable activities would be eliminated, explaining that the previous list did not promote or develop Cuban creativity (Mesa Redonda, 2020). Once implemented, this will be a huge victory for the private sector, because the finite list has often been considered one of the biggest constraints to private-sector growth (Recio 2018).

New legislation is presumably on its way that will officially execute these changes. The state is aware of the amplitude of informal entrepreneurial strategies that Cubans use, in addition to the serious implications that entrepreneurial resistance can have socially, economically, and politically. Economic informality diverts resources from the state and undermines the redistribution of goods. This can also proliferate discontent as people consider the state both inefficient (i.e., unable to distribute sufficient social welfare) and burdensome (through its policies and regulations) (Fernández 2000). Economic informality also demonstrates how networks are forged that act as independent units outside the state's centralized control. Through these networks, Cubans have demonstrated their capacity to resist constraining state policies and—given the economic reforms of late, in addition to

the initial opening of the private sector in the 1990s—the possibility to generate meaningful change.

Clearly, informal entrepreneurial strategies will continue to exist in Cuba. People will still choose not to license their businesses, or they will continue to circumvent state planning to access materials or satisfy their clients. Nevertheless, informal entrepreneurial activities are gainful for many Cubans. As I have outlined above, they permit the possibility to earn a decent income and help innovate new opportunities in entrepreneurship (even if they might stretch what the state finds acceptable). But that is not all. They are also a means of critical—even if indirect—dialogue with the state, indicating what is burdensome (i.e., where the entrepreneur has applied some resistance) and what needs to be changed.

CHAPTER FIVE | "La crisis económica no es la única": The Social Consequences of Economic Crisis

The tensions between informal entrepreneurial strategies and state policies and regulations, and the ways that these behaviors can be interpreted as forms of resistance, helps reveal how Cubans have reacted when pitted against both the political economic ideology of the state and the realities that come with severe economic crisis. However, these resistance measures are not the only consequences of economic crisis and limited freedoms. Since 1989, many Cubans have lost faith in the Cuban socialist system because the social welfare they were once promised (e.g., housing, food rations, education, and health care) have been severely undermined by the economic crisis in the 1990s and later (see, e.g., Fernández, 2000). Furthermore, the paternalistic tenets of the Cuban Revolution, like the Revolutionary consciousness based on selflessness and sacrifice and which promoted moral incentives over material incentives (see Pérez 2015, 270), have become untenable. So, Cubans have sought out alternative strategies to make ends meet and as a way to circumvent the demands of the state (Fernández 2000, 29). In total, this has driven many Cubans to become disenchanted with the Cuban socialist system, and many Cubans have chosen to disconnect themselves from broader community aspirations.

According to a close mentor and successful Cuban social entrepreneur – Gilberto "Papito" Valladares, "this has been tremendously damaging on the social fabrics of Cuban society… [And,] the harm that the economic crisis did was much more damaging socially than economically. Economically speaking, you can recover if they [the government] commit to economic reforms, but, socially, this could take 100 years to undo." Specifically, the social damage that he was referring to were two interconnected social crises; in his

words, "*la crisis económica no es la única…* (the economic crisis isn't the only one). There are two more. One," he said, holding up his index finger, "a crisis of values – a loss of passion, commitment, motivation, or, in some cases, perseverance. And, two," he said, adding his middle finger to his index finger, "a spiritual crisis but not something religious; spiritual because people have stopped believing, they've lost hope" (interview June 16, 2019).

This chapter draws from the PhotoVoice project conducted with seven community organizations in Havana in order to trace these social crises, asking, what are the consequences of these social crises in light of growing inequities and inequalities in Havana, how do stigmas and stereotypes relate to this intersection, and, ultimately, what can this mean for entrepreneurship? I argue that while some stereotyped groups of people have been able to craft resilient responses to more personal circumstances (see Chapter 6), or others have utilized (social) entrepreneurship as a means to respond to the consequences of these crises at the community level (see chapter 7), there are still many people who are caught in desperate circumstances where they are at once dispossessed of their belonging and stigmatized by their supposed failures. When we look at these social crises in light of growing inequities and inequalities – like the ones I discussed in Chapter 3 – some concerning patterns have emerged, which I describe below.

The PhotoVoice contributions are valuable visual ethnographic data because they highlight, in artistic form, some primary challenges as well as opportunities facing different communities in Havana and which are shaped by stigma and inequality. As a Community-Based Participatory Research strategy, the workshops and individual meetings that enabled the PhotoVoice project also helped the community leaders critically analyze their current

circumstances and, though it was not a primary focus of the project, the social crises that have emerged in Havana after years of economic crises and the growth of inequities and inequalities. When layered onto interviews and participant observation I conducted throughout my field research, the PhotoVoice contributions reveal the consequences of intersecting social crises, economic crises, and stigma and discrimination. Through my own analysis, I also describe what that means for entrepreneurial activities and interactions in the contemporary moment.

The chapter is outlined as follows. After identifying and examining some of those patterns in the next section, I turn to the social stigmas that have emerged alongside these social crises and impacted the ways that people imagine themselves and others, and what that means for resource management and entrepreneurial opportunities. In the conclusion, I briefly describe how economic and social crises together have impacted feelings of belonging for certain people in Havana, and how those feelings of belonging intersect with other stigmas and stereotypes and shape the entrepreneurial possibilities people have in the current moment.

"Habana [en] Pedazos" (Havana [in] Pieces): Contemporary Social Crises in Havana

PhotoVoice Photo 5.1, a submission from the PhotoVoice project, entitled "*Apatía*" (Apathy), is a powerful framing of the social crises alluded to in this chapter's introduction. It makes explicit connections between the material deficiencies in Cuba and expressions of disinterest in "integrating and participating." Though your eye may be drawn to the flower in the foreground, the person with the backpack walking away from the photographer is the actual subject. After a few analytic discussions about this photo, the artists-community

leaders decided that the flower was a metaphorical reference to the community organization or society more broadly, and that the person was unaware or at least unconcerned with the flower. As the title suggests, the person was supposed to be apathetic towards the plights of society. The caption helps us understand that material and spiritual deficiencies in their society have led many people to become disinterested in integrating or participating with broader social initiatives.

PhotoVoice Photo 5.1 *Apatía / Apathy*
Theme: Challenges
Analysis: *El contexto de una sociedad con carencias materiales y necesidades espirituales expresa un desinterés en integrarse y participar.* / The context of a society with material deficiencies and spiritual needs expresses disinterest in integrating and participating.
Suggestion: *¡Basta, no te detengas no dejes de soñar!* / Enough, don't detain yourself, don't stop dreaming!

This was a common theme for most community organizations who participated in the PhotoVoice project. For the organization from **PhotoVoice Photo 5.1**, there were indeed many people in their neighborhood who simply did not know the organization existed or were uninterested in the goals laid out by the community. While the reasons for this

certainly varied across all the community organizations, material deficiencies or growing socioeconomic inequalities had driven many people to focus on their own familiar unit to manage their hardships. That is, many people were apathetic to the community at large because they faced so many of their own problems at home. Thus, getting people to integrate and participate in the community or society was a difficult challenge facing most communities in Havana.

The economic crisis in Cuba has had severe effects on individual socioeconomic experiences in Havana, Cuba. Through the case-study comparison of two municipalities in Havana (see chapter 3), it is apparent that the economic crisis is experienced differently depending on where one lives in the city. Individual economic participation in the private (non-state) sector, the sector of the economy with the best opportunities to make a legitimate and decent living wage, are also governed by a series of inequities and inequalities surrounding different intersections of race, sex, age, and geographic location. So, while Cubans can utilize informal entrepreneurial strategies to resist strict policies and regulations, like I discussed in the previous chapter, disparate circumstances have created more opportunities or hindered the possibility to engage in lucrative entrepreneurial activities.

PhotoVoice Photo 5.2, entitled "*Habana Pedazos*" (Havana Pieces) is a valuable representation of these variations. In the photo, we are looking over the remnants of one building towards a 14-story building that is well maintained. Together, the two buildings are metaphors of the inequalities that have reemerged in Havana since the economic crisis of the 1990s. One building (read as one person, one neighborhood, etc.) is discarded or left to waste while the other building (another person, another neighborhood, etc.) is developed

and maintained. The artist-community leaders who created this photo/analysis briefly but nonetheless impactfully describe and illustrate contemporary trends across Havana. The mitigation of inequalities was once of utmost importance to the Cuban government and Cuban society more broadly. Now, however, the economic crisis has become a central concern for the Cuban government and different development tactics, such as the increased focus on international tourism, have shifted the focus from socialist welfare to capitalist accumulation. This has led to certain privileges and exclusions in Cuba as the economy transforms and political-economic ideologies liberalize.

PhotoVoice Photo 5.2 *Habana pedazos / Havana pieces*
Theme: Primary Goals
Analysis: *Se reconoce la existencia de clases sociales, la fuente de privilegios y la dicotomía en el discurso oficial. Las dos edificaciones representan las desigualdades sociales que existen en la habana contemporáneo.* / One recognizes the existence of social classes, the source of privileges and the dichotomy in official discourse. The two buildings represent social inequalities that exist in contemporary Havana.
Suggestion: *Promover el empoderamiento barrial para lograr un poder de autogestión que nos permita diseñar estrategias de cambio dentro del proyecto colectivo de nación.* / Promote neighborhood

empowerment to achieve the possibility for self-management that permits us to design strategies for change inside the national collective project.

In their caption, the artist-community leaders mention "the dichotomy in official discourse [of late]."[18] The government has helped solve many social problems, and it certainly celebrates those achievements, but it also seems to overlook current inequalities that have reemerged in Cuban society. In the suggestion, we learn how different neighborhoods have become so excluded from the broader plan that they are now looking for ways to manage their own problems; a nod to the individualism described above. They call for "[a promotion of] neighborhood empowerment to achieve the possibility for self-management…" However, the benefits of tourism and other development projects have not reached some of them and now they must turn inward to create solutions. This perpetuates the inequalities as some people or neighborhoods have more connections to remittances, tourism, or gainful self-employment. Furthermore, the possibilities for self-management of the economic crisis is now guided by local and global systems that structure the conditions of different spaces or people (Keene & Padilla, 2014, p. 394). These systems are influenced by racial, gendered, aged, or spatial tropes which I describe below in the section on "spatial stigma" as well as in Chapter 6.

While the artists-community leaders seemed to have focused their image and caption on geographic inequalities, conversations with them revealed that their interpretation also applied to other axes of social diversity even within some areas of significant capital accumulation (where they came from). For example, they told me that

[18] This is a good example of the high education levels I mentioned in Chapter 2 that were documented by the phrases or analyses drawn out in the PhotoVoice captions.

PhotoVoice Photo 5.2 is also a snapshot of the inconsistencies of life within the heart of *Centro Habana*, where the photo was taken. *Centro Habana* receives some of the most foreign visitors in all of Cuba – and, therefore, sees some of the highest influxes of foreign currency. Yet, the artists who took the photo – and the community members with whom they work – are mostly cut off from gainful opportunities because their buildings are in such terrible disrepair that it would be impossible to house a lucrative business. Furthermore, these two artists live on the inside of large apartment buildings, like many other residents in their community, and therefore find it difficult to attract prospective customers/clients. When they go to the streets to discover sources of employment they are often stereotyped as street hustlers or sex workers because they are mostly Black Cubans and they come from an area of the city that is stigmatized as a delinquency center (see also A. Cabezas, 2009; L. K. Roland, 2011). Furthermore, Cuban regulations also require Cubans to take out licenses for any would be money generating activity. These licenses cost money and most of them are severely restricted by different state policies (A. Ritter & Henken, 2015). So, many Cubans, especially the community members that work with the community organization from **PhotoVoice Photo 5.2**, choose not to license their activities and are therefore at even more risk outside of the general discrimination and prejudice they face in their day-to-day lives. Or, they simply lose motivation in terms of trying to start some lucrative economic venture in favor of simply surviving.

These sorts of economic circumstances have led many Cubans to become disinterested in the local political economic system. As one interlocutor explained, "Man, anywhere else in the world I'd be a millionaire. But here, I have nothing. I work like a bull and have nothing to show for it. I'm leaving Cuba, I need to escape. You'll see, when I get

to another country, I'm going to come up!" (Conversation September 2019). Indeed, many Cubans imagined that their lives would vastly improve if they somehow managed to "escape" Cuba (escape being a common verb to describe leaving Cuba).

In **PhotoVoice Photo 5.3**, entitled "*En el borde del camino hay una silla*" (At the edge of the road there is a chair), a young person looks out of a dilapidated building towards *el malecón*, a seawall that borders Havana. In the distance, we see the ocean's infinite horizon. **PhotoVoice Photo 5.3's** title refers to a song by the famed Cuban singer / songwriter and pro-revolutionary Silvio Rodriguez. The song – "*Historia de las sillas*" (History of the chairs) – promotes pursuing one's dreams even if there are obstacles in the way. The chair in the song is a metaphor for the temptations in life that urge you to stop and take a break.

PhotoVoice Photo 5.3 *En el borde del camino hay una silla / On the edge of the path there is a chair*
Theme: Challenges

Analysis: *Las opciones de vida en nuestro barrio oscilan entre la violencia como discurso relacionado y la emigración como solución.* / The options of life in our neighborhood oscillate between violence as a relational discourse and emigration as a solution.
Suggestion: *Ayudar a construir nuevos caminos de gestión económica con los cubanos y cubanas como protagonistas.* / Help build new paths of economic management with Cubans as protagonists.

The artists-community leaders who submitted this photo explained that the ocean – or what is beyond the ocean in another country – is the metaphorical chair for many young Cubans. They expressed that the photo was a representation of the young people who are disenchanted or disconnected from Cuban society, and who often think of leaving Cuba in search of better prospects in another country. Indeed, this photo was taken close to the place where thousands fled Cuba in hand-made rafts during the Cuban rafter crisis in 1994. According to the photographer, this young man was supposed to be thinking of leaving Cuba.

This represents a big challenge for many community organizations in Havana; that is, that they work for many Cubans who are considering leaving and are therefore apathetic to the notion of participating in or helping develop local community initiatives. The same argument can be made for Cuban society as a whole. Many Cubans I spoke with looked past the geographic boundaries of Cuban society and considered foreign opportunities – like falling in love with a foreigner, moving to another country, or at least getting the opportunity to travel to another country to buy items to later resell in Cuba – as the best opportunities for advancement. **PhotoVoice Photo 5.3** also illustrates how without significant economic development in Cuba – and according to our conversations in the PhotoVoice workshops: "development that is inclusive and equitable" (PhotoVoice Workshop September 2019) – people will continue to feel detached from Cuban society.

Furthermore, the artist-community leaders who submitted this photo also talked about violent behaviors being one of the only options in their neighborhood. When I asked them what they meant by violence being a "relational discourse" they described the ways that people in their neighborhood acted in violent ways, not just physically but also in terms of substance abuse or the ways that they emotionally responded to their greatest hardships. Again, they explained that development needed to be inclusive and equitable in order to combat these violent circumstances.

Ultimately, many Cubans I spoke with had lost hope for their future (in Cuba). They also often engaged in a constant comparison of what their life would be like outside Cuba. According to some of the community leaders I spoke with increased internet freedoms may have also exacerbated these feelings. Though they were also explicit is saying that they were *not* suggesting that increased connectivity permissions were a bad thing, per se.

PhotoVoice Photo 5.4, entitled "*Te convido a creerme cuando digo futuro*" (I invite you to believe me when I say future), describes how "the ability to obtain information… [and] easy access to information generates autonomy." Increased internet freedom over the years has indeed allowed Cubans legal access to information outside what was once only offered by the state. According to a discussion surrounding this image, "For a long time, the government didn't even permit private libraries. They had the official libraries, but no one could open a library for the rest of their community. That was considered anti-Revolutionary. They wanted to control the information people had access to" (PhotoVoice Workshop September 2019). Now, according to another participant from the PhotoVoice group, "not only can Cubans access some privately run libraries, they can also search for information via the internet. This has opened up information streams that

were once prohibited and this generates autonomy" (same PhotoVoice Workshop September 2019).

PhotoVoice Photo 5.4 *Te convido a creerme cuando digo futuro / I invite you to believe me when I say future (Image blurred by Vertovec)*
Theme: Opportunities
Analysis: *La capacidad de obtención de información no significa saber, cómo, qué y para qué utilizarla. En la actualidad el fácil acceso a la información genera autonomía y aunque los niños guían su propio futuro *como a la goma* nosotros tenemos que acompañarles en ese proceso.* / The ability to obtain information does not mean knowing how, what, and why to use it. Nowadays easy access to information generates autonomy and although children guide their own future – like the tire – we have to accompany them in that process.
Suggestion: *Generar análisis crítico y creativo sobre la información que se consume. /* Generate critical and creative analysis of the information consumed.

The increased internet freedom in Cuba has of course driven better access to information as well as better connectivity between friends and family inside and outside Cuba. Even if they have to use a VPN to circumvent government censorship, or the cost of mobile data or internet-by-the-hour is still restricted because of how costly it is, Cubans are now more than ever able to access things they are interested in and participate in online social media

communities. However, according to some of the artists-community leaders, there are some caveats.

Increased internet usage also means that people can feel less connected to their physical surroundings and turn to their online activities as potential solutions to their problems. According to one of the artists-community leaders, named Roxana, who made **PhotoVoice Photo 5.4**, “kids are always on the internet.” “Everyone, adults too,” added the other artist-community leader, named Yasmani. “Yes, you’re right,” Roxana responded and continued, “That’s their world. They have all their friends on Facebook, on WhatsApp, and who knows what they are reading, learning there. We would like to help them think critically about what they see. Hopefully that’s the way we can get them *back into* our community” (Individual PhotoVoice meeting October 2019).

Roxana and Yasmani were clear that many people in their community had effectively distanced themselves from their physical community as their online activities increased. While they advocated for free internet – as a useful tool to discover new information – they also expressed concern with how it affected the relationship between people, young ones in particular, and their home communities. “I know for some, it makes them think that everything is broken [in Cuba], that there is no way to fix it,” Roxana told me. “I don’t blame them,” Yasmani smirked. Roxana gave him a side eye and continued, “But we must help them see that it’s not always so easy to just leave; that there are still things we can change here” (Individual PhotoVoice meeting October 2019).

Indeed, increased internet access not only helps facilitate travelling abroad – through easier access to embassy sites, airline tickets, etc. – and it also creates a constant stream of information between Cubans inside Cuba and those outside in the diaspora. This

opens the inevitable discussion of the "opportunities abroad" and the "broken system back in Cuba" (quotes from informal conversations). As one interlocutor explained, "I knew that life was better outside of Cuba. My uncle had travelled, he had lived in other countries and he told me. I also had friends who lived in other countries who I talked with frequently [on social media]. They were improving… I just needed to get out" (Interview March 2020). This interlocutor had moved from Havana to Montevideo, Uruguay at the time of this interview. Through this conversation and others, I observed that as this compounded – as one friend leaves, then another, and then someone's brother, etc. – that many Cubans have begun to feel utterly disenchanted with their home community and have begun to focus almost exclusively on their own "escape."

Many community organizations and social entrepreneurs continue to fight against the outward flow of their community members, searching for ways to engage their community members (see chapter 7). "I know they are apathetic," Roxana said while we stood in front of **PhotoVoice Photo 5.1** at the exhibition. "But we must be critical and creative in how we look for solutions. It is not enough to tell them that we will make changes, we need to show them that they should want to stay here and help us." (conversation at the PhotoVoice Gallery Exhibition, October 21, 2019). Their community organization's goal was to reach young people through sports and give them a sense of pride in their community. "I hope," Yasmani said, "we can change the stereotypes that people inside and outside [their community] have of our barrio – that it is dirty, full of criminals, drugs, prostitution. We hope that as people change their minds, people [in their barrio] will not feel like their only solution is to leave" (Conversation May 2019).

In addition to feeling like their only solution is to "escape" Cuba, which of course is not a possibility for every Cuban because of foreign immigration policies or, simply, the financial or emotional costs it would take to do so, many Cubans have developed certain activities or behaviors to survive the economic crisis. These included, but were certainly not limited to, a wide range of street hustling techniques used mostly on foreigners as well as the ubiquitous pilfering of state supplies that workers "obtained" from their state-sector employment (see also Roland, 2011). The social interpretations of the activities that supposedly defined this side of the values crisis were often a combination of intolerance and understanding. Many interlocutors would describe how these activities were dishonest or, for activities like sex work, indecent but they would also usually defend these activities by saying that the economic situation in Cuba made many people do things they probably would not have done had they had any other opportunity. When I would ask about these sorts of "indecent" or "dishonest" activities, many interlocutors would often shrug their shoulders or put up their hands up as if to say, "What are you going to do?"

Street hustling – which is often also associated with sex work because of the shared vernacular term, "*jineterismo*" – often seemed troublesome or indecent to older generations who grew up in the 1960s to 1980s because it was counter to the revolutionary consciousness that government so adamantly promoted. This revolutionary consciousness was emboldened through social welfare programs, such as rationed food, universal healthcare, free education, and public housing programs that made individualistically focused income generation unnecessary. Younger generations who grew up after the fall of the Soviet trading bloc in Havana (1990s onward), however, engaged in street hustling activities more often because they had only known a Cuba with many foreign visitors who

consumed luxury items much more openly and freely (Vertovec, 2012). To these younger Habaneros, street hustling was a means to participate in similar activities that foreigners participated in, in addition to giving them opportunities to make much more money than they ever could make working in the state sector (see, e.g., Allen, 2011; L. K. Roland, 2011). Nevertheless, according to one of my older interlocutors (51-year-old white man), "these sorts of behaviors probably start out innocent but can get more severe, especially if drugs or alcohol are involved" (Conversation March 2019). This interlocutor was specifically referring to a young, 24-year-old Black man he worked with who had gone to prison after threatening someone with a (home-made) firearm following a drug and alcohol filled dispute.[19]

Street crime, such as theft, robbery, and assaults, have also become significant concerns in Havana. Often times, people compartmentalized these sorts of behaviors into certain pockets of Havana, areas that were considered full of *guapería* (confrontative macho behavior; see also Lubiński, 2020). Typically, these places were long considered delinquency centers (see Anguelovski, 2014) or recently emerging squatter settlements (referred to colloquially as "*lleg-y-pons,*" an abbreviation for the Spanish translation of "arrive and put" (*llega y pon*)). Nevertheless, I discovered that violent activities occurred across the city, and likely at similar rates. As one interlocutor explained, "In Cuba, there's everything. It [violence and other street crimes] happens everywhere. Just the other day a guy was stabbed to death during a party just a few blocks from here." I suggested that perhaps it was just in tourism zones (areas of the city with heightened police presence)

[19] Thankfully, this young man is now out of prison, does not use drugs or hard alcohol anymore, and has found lucrative employment as a barber.

where the country was safer, referring to an oft-quoted phrase by tour guides, travel agents, even Cubans who worked outside of tourism, that "Cuba was the safest place on earth.". The interlocutor shrugged, saying, "I don't know, what about Javier?" (Conversation February 2019).

The interlocutor was referring to a mutual friend who was badly beaten and robbed in *Habana Vieja* – the epicenter of Cuban tourism. He was walking to the bus stop after work one night when he was violently attacked by two young men. "*Palestinos"* (people from the Eastern side of the island), he told me, drawing from a common trope in Havana that the most violent crimes were committed by internal migrants from the other side of the country who had come to Havana because of even worse socioeconomic conditions outside of Havana. The violent attack took place in the heavily trafficked, and highly policed, area surrounding *Parque Central*. They shoved him down, kicked him, and stomped on his head until he was unconscious. When he was awoken by someone who lived nearby, he discovered that his wallet was gone, and he was rushed to the hospital because he showed signs of serious brain trauma.

Likely as a result of the intersecting economic and social crises, some Cubans have resorted to harmful coping mechanisms when they feel like they have no opportunities inside Cuba. **PhotoVoice Photo 5.5**, entitled: "*Halar*" (Pull), is a powerful representation of the unhealthy instances of stress and coping. The image comes from a community located on the periphery of the city. The people in that community, like so many others who face the discrimination and prejudice that stems from the moral and spiritual crises particularly for people from marginalized communities – have resorted to drugs and alcohol to manage the anxieties they felt from being "trapped" in Cuba without many

opportunities to improve their socioeconomic statuses (quote from conversation with resident of this community, July 2019). Therefore, the community leaders found it paramount to describe alcoholism as the primary challenge they face in their work with their community counterparts.

PhotoVoice Photo 5.5 *Halar / Pull*
Theme: Challenges
Analysis: *El alcoholismo es un tema generacional que frena el desarrollo familiar. Crea una violencia no solo física sino también psicológica y ambiental.* / Alcoholism is a generational issue that slows down family development. It creates violence that is not only physical but also psychological and environmental.
Suggestion: *Halar a estas personas que están en ese mundo y mostrarles que sus acciones dañan a sus seres más queridos.* / Pull the people who are in that world and show them that their actions harm their loved ones.

Within our PhotoVoice project, they were not the only ones to consider submitting an image that discussed alcoholism. Another organization from a separate socially marginalized community had also presented photos to the group with bottles in them, describing how alcohol was their biggest challenge because many of their community members were more focused on “their buzz than on the goals of the community”

(Individual PhotoVoice meeting August 2019). However, they explicitly decided to submit a different photo because "[they were] afraid that it would worsen their neighborhood's reputation" (Photovoice Workshop October 2019). Upon hearing this, the community leaders from **PhotoVoice Photo 5.5** acknowledged that they too were aware of the stereotypes about their neighborhood, and that they were also afraid that this photo would "confirm" those stereotypes. However, they found it critical to call attention to this problem and, as they explained, "to act like AA and identify the problem, to call it by name, before working to resolve it" (same Workshop October 2019).

Another concerning pattern that has emerged in recent years is what some of my interlocutors referred to as feelings of abandonment or feeling like they have been forgotten. **PhotoVoice Photo 5.6**, entitled "*Mecamorfosis*" (Meca-morphosis), is a blatant call to action regarding this issue. The artists-community leaders, named Rafa and Ivan, operated a community organization consisting of several artists who trained young people – children, adolescents, and young adults – with developmental disabilities in different forms of art and artisanal product creation. According to the suggestion for their image, "[They] search for people who feel abandoned or forgotten and transform them into feeling useful and direct them."

PhotoVoice Photo 5.6 *Mecamorfosis / Meca-morphosis*
Theme: Opportunities
Analysis: *Es la transformación del obsoleto en una obra de arte. A pesar de lo burdo de la materia puede ser cambiable.* / It is the transformation of the obsolete into a work of art. Despite the unrefined nature of the material, it can be changed.
Suggestion: *Buscar las personas que se sienten abandonados u olvidados y transformarlas en ser útiles y encaminarlas.* / Search for people who feel abandoned or forgotten and transform them into feeling useful and direct them.

According to Rafa and Ivan, in Cuba, when a person with developmental disabilities turns 18, they usually have nowhere to go. There is no room for them in the school system and it is unlikely they will be hired in either the public or private sectors. Their families become solely responsible for them and this familial burden serves to deepen the stigma people with developmental disabilities face. This also further marginalizes them even in their home settings. In essence, these young people are, as the image's description indicates: "abandoned [and] forgotten."

Additionally, this community organization's neighborhood is made up of mostly Black residents and located outside Havana's key tourism zones. The neighborhood is also

plagued by poor housing conditions and rampant unemployment. Most of the neighborhood's residents earn their incomes through the black-market. Whenever possible, the leaders of this community organization employ their community counterparts to help with events or to develop and maintain the organization's workspace – an old dilapidated building that has been unused since the 1990s.

Like many other predominately black neighborhoods in Havana, this neighborhood is stigmatized, discriminated against, and imagined as a space of crime and delinquency (see Anguelovski, 2014). The leaders of this community organization are trying to change the image of their community and its members by linking them to their organization. During one of our PhotoVoice meetings, I asked one of the leaders to elaborate on the suggestion they provided. He said: "you know, it is not just the kids we are working with, it is also the people who live in our neighborhood. They feel abandoned, they feel forgotten, and we are trying to help them feel useful, like they mean something to our neighborhood" (PhotoVoice Workshop October 2019).

The social crises – what Papito referred to as spiritual and values crises – have driven many Cubans to search for resolutions to their problems in individualist ways, like trying to leave Cuba, engaging in street hustling behaviors, or engaging in harmful coping mechanisms. They have also revealed how some Cubans are more apathetic to the trials and tribulations of other Cubans outside their immediate familial and social circles. When I asked one interlocutor who lived in an upscale neighborhood if he worried about the growth of inequities and inequalities in Havana, he responded bluntly, saying, "Of course I don't want that to happen but I already have so much else to worry about in my own life" (Interview November 2018).

Spatial Stigma amidst Social Crisis: An Intersectional Analysis of Perceptions of Self and Access to Opportunity

When we map on some of the current circulations of stigmas and stereotypes in Havana, the patterns described in the previous section indicate that there are people who have lost, or in some cases have been dispossessed of their sense of belong, which is also critical for outcomes of some entrepreneurial opportunities. In this section, I mostly draw from the notion of spatial stigma (described below) because I find it an interesting analytical tool that incorporates intersections of other stigmas – like racial, gendered, and aged stigmas. For example, I repeatedly observed civilians in 'better-off' parts of the city discriminate against people from socially or geographically marginalized places. Indeed, during my field research, I resided in two socially marginalized spaces within the oft-discriminated, though still central municipality of *el Cerro* (*calle Tulipán* and the favela-like neighborhood of *San Martín*). I also regularly worked with community organizations in geographically peripheral neighborhoods (*Vieja Linda* and *Los Pocitos*). Friends, confidants, and colleagues from other parts of the city frequently referred to all these spaces – including the ones I resided in – as "dangerous," "complicated," or, even, "dirty."

It was difficult to separate racial stigma from these discriminatory descriptions because, as I mentioned in Chapter 3, these sorts of areas are often stigmatized for being "delinquency centers" or "spaces of crime and promiscuity," which are definitions largely based on racial tropes that equated Blackness with criminality. In fact, before the economic crisis in the 1990s, these classifications were officially recognized (Anguelovski, 2014, p. 85). With the economic crisis, alternative strategies – like street hustling and other informal

economic behaviors – became survival tools, across racial, gendered, or locational identities, while also helping concretize stereotypes of criminal behaviors in these marginalized communities. This included aggressive or violent behaviors like *guapería* (confrontative, violent machismo) (Lubiński, 2020) or promiscuous sexuality (see, e.g., A. Cabezas, 2009; L. K. Roland, 2011), even if the state removed those official designations.

These sorts of discrimination have coalesced and created significant instances of "spatial stigma" (Keene & Padilla, 2014). As Keene and Padilla (2014) argue, "those who reside in or relocate from vilified and degraded locales may come to embody the perceived negative characteristics of their environment" (393). Keene and Padilla's work builds on other literature demonstrating how places are socially constructed and therefore become "geographic representations of social inequality" (Keene & Padilla, 2014, p. 392; Massey, 1994), and how symbolic representations of place can perpetuate the discrimination and denunciation of already marginalized individuals or places (Wacquant, 2007). Drawing from literature that discusses spatial stigma with regards to social determinants of health, I realized that the consequences of spatial stigma are critical to this dissertation in two primary ways: (a) exacerbating processes surrounding identity formation and management and (b) reducing access to material resources and entrepreneurial opportunities; beyond instances of harmful coping mechanisms for stress and anxiety, like I described above and below (in this chapter and Chapter 8) (see, e.g., Felner et al., 2018; Graham et al., 2016; Keene and Padilla, 2011; Tran et al., 2020). Together, these consequences perpetuated the challenges, and, in some ways, they impacted the opportunities that people face in both their own personal entrepreneurial endeavors as well as their community-oriented

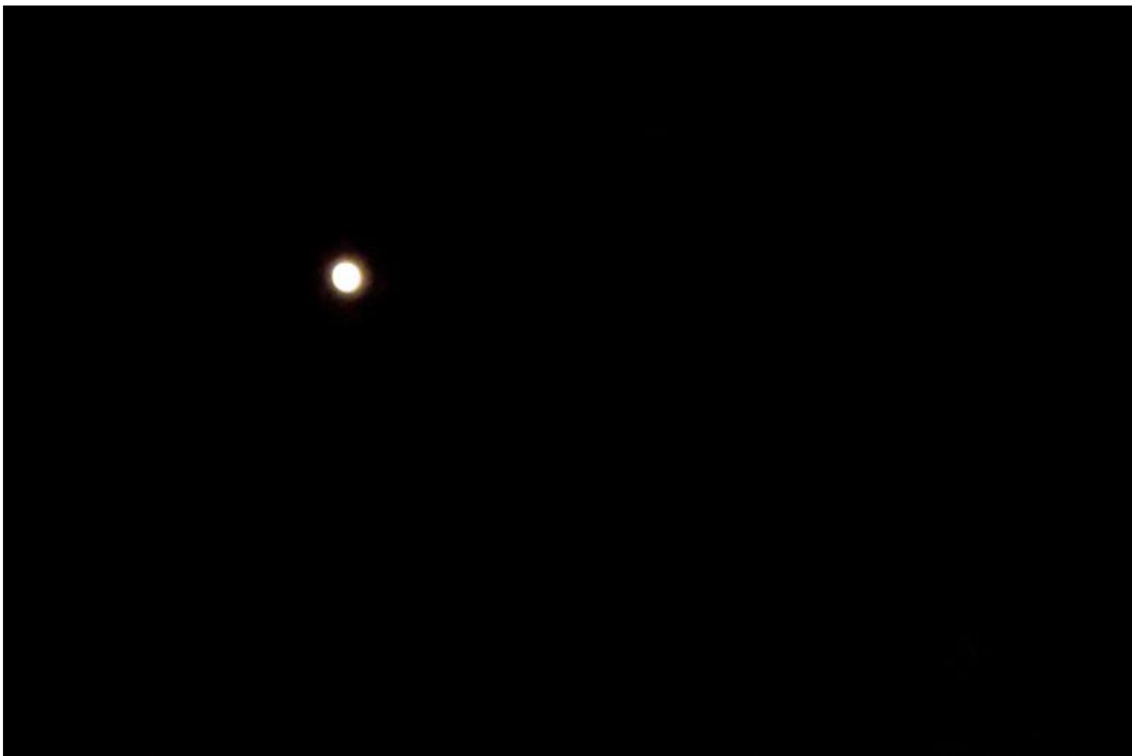
initiatives; topics I briefly describe here but discuss in more detail in the following two chapters.

There are also certain health implications of spatial stigma. While I do not cover these in detail in this chapter, and instead choose to tentatively describe them as future research topics in Chapter 8 (the conclusion to the dissertation), scholars have identified ways that spatial stigma can impact the processes of stress and coping (e.g., Keene and Padilla 2014; Tran et al. 2020), or other harmful / risky behaviors that can be linked to broader structural or political-economic circumstances (see, e.g., Colón-burgos et al., 2020). As I briefly mention above, in **PhotoVoice 5.5**, Cubans from that neighborhood and many others resort to alcohol as a means to cope with their difficult socioeconomic surroundings. When coupled with the images in the PhotoVoice gallery that pertain to disenchantment or disillusionment it comes into relief that alcoholism or other coping mechanisms can be ways that locals try to 'escape' their immediate surroundings, especially if they do not have the resources to leave the island.

Exacerbating processes surrounding identity formation and management

PhotoVoice Photo 5.7, entitled "*Una luz en la oscuridad*" (A light in the darkness), is a powerful representation of the first consequence having to do with identify formation and management. Indeed, some neighborhoods, like the one where this photo was taken, are stigmatized as "places that are full of delinquency and vice" (PhotoVoice Workshop October 2019). They typically lack the possibility for investment or development projects meaning they usually lack quality infrastructure in terms of buildings, water, and food security (Mesa-lago, 2002). They are often difficult places to live and residents face a

perpetual cycle of desperation. In Havana, neighborhoods like this are also often disconnected from public transportation systems meaning residents who try to work in other parts of the city first face long commutes (sometimes up to two hours each way) before encountering the different prejudices described in Chapter 3. From my observations, this meant that most people who lived in these communities found it very difficult to discover opportunities in the more lucrative areas of the city and were therefore forced to rely on the black market in their home communities in order to survive. This also resulted in people losing motivation or hope. Together, this also perpetuated and, in some cases, exacerbated the negative stereotypes of those communities.



PhotoVoice Photo 5.7 *Una luz en la oscuridad / A light in the darkness*
Theme: Primary goals
Analysis: *Queremos ser, en esta sociedad que está en tinieblas sumergida en conflictos y problemas, una luz que los alumbres con soluciones.* / We want to be, in this society that is in darkness, submerged in conflicts and problems, a light that illuminates with solutions.
Suggestion: *Enciende una luz y déjala brillar.* / Turn on a light and let it shine.

I observed that most marginalized community members were readily aware of these stereotypes and, in some cases, had agreed with them, internalized them, and applied them to themselves (or at least other people in their home communities). The caption and theme of **PhotoVoice Photo 5.7** exemplifies this observation. While the artist-community leaders who presented this image were trying to describe their primary community organization's objective – "a light that illuminates with solutions" – subtle undertones revealed an agreement with the broader stereotypes of their community. They explained that their "society" – which I later discovered was actually meant to reference their specific community – "…is in darkness, submerged in conflicts and problems." This was a frustrating observation since I regularly observed them, inside and outside the PhotoVoice workshops, talk about other areas of the city – typically the wealthier neighborhoods (e.g., *Vedado* and *Miramar*) or the tourism zones (e.g., *Habana Vieja*) – as "places that were full of opportunities… places that were very beautiful and that [they] liked very much" (separate Conversations August-October 2019).

When compared with another PhotoVoice participant – a white community leader from a similarly geographically and socially marginalized neighborhood – it became even more apparent that indeed some of these stereotypes had shaped the way that **PhotoVoice Photo 5.7's** producers imagined/managed the interpretations of their own community. The white community leader consistently referred to his community – one with similar socioeconomic and historical circumstances – in positive ways; as a place that was ripe with opportunity even if it had a difficult past (Conversations during a site visit June 2019). Or, as we can see in **PhotoVoice Photo 5.8**, entitled "*Travesía*" (Passage or Traverse), that the people who inhabited this stigmatized place had opportunities that emerged from

notions of "solidarity," even if they encountered much external stigma and difficult internal circumstances, like we see with the large mound of trash the photo's subjects are traversing.

PhotoVoice Photo 5.8 *Travesía / Passage*
Theme: Opportunities
Analysis: *La instantánea muestra un gesto solidario en uno de los paisajes propios del barrio de Los Pocitos, enclave del proyecto Akokán.* / This snapshot shows a gesture of solidarity in one of the landscapes of the Los Pocitos neighborhood, an enclave of the Proyecto Akokán project.
Suggestion: *Analogía que alude al valor de la solidaridad promovido desde los objetivos y acciones del proyecto Akokán.* / This photo is an analogy that alludes to the value of solidarity promoted from the objectives and actions of the Proyecto Akokán project.

Admittedly, the young white male community leader who submitted **PhotoVoice Photo 5.8** was born and raised in a neighborhood with better overall conditions (in the municipality of *Playa*) – geographically, socioeconomically, and historically speaking – from where he worked and lived at the time of this research. Therefore, it is unlikely he had internalized the stereotypes his new community faced. This is especially true if we consider his social positionality in comparison to the Black community leaders from **PhotoVoice Photo 5.7** and the conglomeration of racial and spatial stigma they regularly encountered. As I discuss further in the next section as well as in Chapter 7, these depictions of each separate neighborhood played critical roles in how the individuals in those neighborhoods saw themselves. According to the leaders from **PhotoVoice Photo 5.7**, their community members regularly suffered from self-esteem issues while, according to the leader from **PhotoVoice Photo 5.8** had begun to reclaim their involvement in their own personal / communal growth, participating more and more in pubic facing events like annual festivals and forums on how to achieve positive local development (see Chapter 7).

Reducing access to material resources and entrepreneurial opportunities

The topic of spatial stigma is also useful to reveal how access to material resources or entrepreneurial opportunities can be diminished based on instances of self-stigma or other people's prejudice towards marginalized communities. Referring back to **PhotoVoice Photo 5.7's** caption, the artist-community leaders said, "we *want* to be… a light that illuminates…," instead of "we *are*… that light," revealing how spatial stigma can also waver someone's optimism in terms of the differences they think they can make. Indeed, the community organization that submitted **PhotoVoice Photo 5.7** had been around for

nearly twenty-five years when their director told me that they continued struggling to make a difference in their community. They thought it would be easier or that they would be more successful in another part of the city. When I asked why they thought they had not had their desired impact on their community, they explained that they did not have the resources to properly manage their initiatives and that it was difficult to find people who wanted to invest in their community.

Indeed, while they were searching for resources, or at least a small business to generate income for their organization, I discovered an acquaintance named Luis who had an ice cream machine that he was interested in renting to a businessperson. Remembering the struggle that the community leaders from **PhotoVoice Photo 5.7** had faced, I asked Luis if he would be willing to put it in *Vieja Linda* with the leaders of the community project. “They would of course pay you to use it and it would help them finance their community initiatives,” I said. He told me to give them his number and that they would talk. A week later when I saw Luis, I asked him if the leaders had called him. He said, “Yea, they called me, but I told them I decided I wanted to keep it closer to my home.” When I looked over his shoulder and saw the ice cream machine sitting on the ground, still unused, he caught my eye and said, “it’s just that I don’t think they’ll pay me on time, if at all” (Conversation October 2019).

Luis’s conclusion exemplified how stigmatized places encounter diverse entrepreneurial challenges that stem from “the global, structural and symbolic systems that shape the conditions of these spaces and the (often racialized) tropes that circulate widely about their ‘failings’” (Keene & Padilla, 2014, p. 394). His response, about them paying him on time, if at all, was directly related to common tropes in Havana about people from

these marginalized spaces being dishonest or, at the very least, incapable of running a successful business. Whether or not this was the case (it was not), was beside the point. Businesses in marginalized communities were thought to be caught in a cycle of failure.

These stigmatizations regarding failure can also be directed towards individuals. **PhotoVoice Photo 5.9**, entitled "*Árbol que nace torcido…*" (A tree that is born crooked…), illustrates a personal representation of how people can be imagined as failures. This is another photo from *Vieja Linda*, the same neighborhood of the organization that submitted **PhotoVoice Photo 5.7**, and which, again, faces significant spatial stigma. The quote that the artists-community leaders reference is a local idiom that means that a situation that starts bad will always end bad, or that a person who is thought to be "bad" will never be able to change.

PhotoVoice Photo 5.9 *Árbol que nace torcido… / A tree that is born crooked…*
Theme: Opportunities
Analysis: *Dicen que, "Un árbol que nace torcido jamás su trunco endereza." Pero, cuando se quiere mejorar se puede y un cambio para bien siempre es posible.* / They say, "A tree that is born crooked will never straighten its trunk." But when you want to improve you can and a change for good is always possible.
Suggestion: *¡Un cambio, si se puede!* / Change, yes you can!

The artists-community leaders who submitted the photo wanted to express that this fatalistic interpretation was wrong, and that people can improve, "[that] a change for good is always possible." However, it also reveals that these interpretations do exist and, through a conversation I had with the organizations director (September 2019), that they can have real-life consequences in terms of how people inside and outside their community think about themselves or their neighbors. With regards to entrepreneurial opportunities, two ethnographic vignettes help express how this sort of spatial stigma can impact someone's

self-esteem as well as the ways that the business community think of people from this neighborhood in particular.

First, *Proyecto Vida,* the organization that submitted **PhotoVoice Photos 5.7** and **5.9**, sent some of their young community members to apply to *Artecorte* in order to enroll in the barber/hairstyling or bartender courses. I describe these courses in more depth in Chapter 7 but, what is important here is that most of them didn't even enter the building because their self-esteem was so low. According to *Proyecto Vida's* Director, "This is a huge problem for this community. They [the residents of her community] come from a situation that they believe is a failure – economically, environmentally, all the trash in the streets, socially, with their friends doing drugs or their parents fighting at home – that they think they cannot succeed. They can succeed, they just need a chance" (Interview October 2019). Second, within that same group of students that went to *Artecorte* that day, one (who had the courage to enter the building) was accepted for an interview. Before their interview began – which I was privileged to help conduct – they were already stigmatized for their perceived unpunctuality. One of the other interviewers said, "Oh her. She's from *Vieja Linda* and you know how *they* are. She'll never arrive on time and will miss a lot of classes" (July 2019). During the interview we asked her if she would be able to make all the events, with one interviewer emphasizing, "you *must* arrive on time. We do not tolerate missing *any* courses or weekend events." The applicant responded, "Yes, I know. My husband's family lives in *Centro Habana* [a neighboring municipality to *Artecorte*]. We will stay there, and I'll visit my family in *Vieja Linda* when there is nothing to do for the program." Thankfully, that answer was sufficient, and she was accepted into the program.

These two vignettes help reveal how the social and economic crises have led to spatial stigma, with some members of marginalized communities feeling disempowered or like they do not belong, and people from outside these communities creating preconceived imaginations of failure for members of the stigmatized community. Admittedly, there is only one bus that passes through *Vieja Linda*. That bus takes over an hour to get to Havana's center. It is also infrequent, meaning people cannot rely on it if they want to work in more lucrative areas like tourism zones or the central business district. So, perhaps the *Artecorte* interviewer was correct in thinking it would be difficult for the applicant to arrive on time.

Nevertheless, since they might be given less opportunities for work in other parts of the city, residents of this community must use what they have readily available, which is not much. Since social welfare has all but disappeared, this means that many residents must also use the black market to survive. These circumstances exacerbate stereotypes of this community and, sometimes, residents of stigmatized communities project those feelings onto themselves; hence the reason why some of those younger applicants did not even enter *Artecorte* to apply for a position in the new cohort.

In response to many of these stereotypes of failure, many residents of stigmatized places frequently physically or symbolically distanced themselves from their neighbors or neighborhoods (see also Keene & Padilla, 2011). These distancing measures contributed to social isolation or community disintegration both within their home communities as well as the potential community with which people wanted to integrate. People from marginalized areas often found it unappealing to work in their home neighborhoods, or they engaged in potentially dangerous black-market activity because there were few

opportunities where they came from. Many with whom I spoke explained that they would much prefer finding a job in another part of the city, even if it meant a long commute. According to Ariel, a 42-year-old Black man who lived close to me in *el Cerro*, "*el Cerro* is only drugs, gambling, and drunks. There are no businesses” (Interview April 2019).

Like most of his friends and family, and most other people I knew from our neighborhood, Ariel only liked working in other parts of the city where there was more capital investment or a steady flow of tourism and, therefore, more money in circulation. He was a parking attendant who made most his living off of tips. He worked alongside a popular bar and restaurant across the street from a famous hotel in *Vedado*. He explained, “I won’t work somewhere where there is no money. I don’t care if I need to go very far. I’ll make my money and take two hours walking home in the middle of the night if I must” (Interview April 2019). Nevertheless, when Ariel and other Black interlocutors from marginalized spaces entered wealthier areas – to work, search for jobs, or simply enjoy their time – they often faced discrimination and stigma coming from several angles.

The police harassment that so many Black men in Havana have regularly come to experience was exacerbated when they came from marginal neighborhoods because these neighborhoods were often associated with illegal activities or violent behaviors (Lubiński, 2020). When they went to *Vedado* or *Havana Vieja*, two tourism zones, for example, my interlocutors from marginalized neighborhoods were often asked why they were in that area of the city, as if there were some unspoken rule that they were supposed to stay put in their own neighborhoods. On one instance, one of my interlocutors told me that he was denied entrance to a popular bar in *Vedado* because, after the bouncer looked at his ID and, according to the interlocutor, “saw where [he] was from,” the bouncer told him, “sorry, not

tonight, It's a private party and we don't want any fights" (Conversation May 2019). On other occasions, interlocutors were banned from tourism areas of the city because they had been "caught" by the police with foreigners and assumed to be hustling them, or they had "started" fights, which they vehemently denied. Indeed, throughout the fourteen months I lived in *el Cerro*, two different friends were unable to enter *Vedado* – a significantly sized area of Havana (approximately 15 x 20 city blocks) – because of such blacklisting. "If they catch me in *Vedado*," one told me, "I'm going straight to jail" (Conversation January 2019).

Chapter Conclusion

While the Revolution was ostensibly conjured as a means to protect and improve the lives of society's most vulnerable, this has been severely undermined by first, the economic crisis, and second, the growing inequities and inequalities in Cuba. Out of these circumstances, certain social crises have emerged. People have lost passion and commitment to the central tenets of the Revolution (see also Fernández, 2000), in some cases they have also lost motivation and perseverance (the latter of which is most obvious with people wanting to "escape" Cuba). At the community level, this means that there are now more Cubans who are less interested in integrating with and participating in the community in meaningful ways; as the interlocutor stated above: "… I already have so much else to worry about in my *own* life" (author's emphasis).

Though, perhaps the worst social crisis that has occurred since the economic crisis began in the 1990s has to do with feelings of belonging. The inequities and inequalities that emerged after the fall of the Soviet trading bloc and the subsequent economic reforms have led to pockets of Havana having more economic opportunities than others. Even

within certain lucrative geographic spaces (i.e., tourism zones), there exist people who feel like they do not have the opportunities to succeed because they are stigmatized based on their racial, gendered, or aged identities, or they live in abodes that are not easily converted into income generating spaces. Outside the more lucrative areas of Havana (i.e., tourism zones) life becomes much more desperate as the only opportunities for financial survival lie in the very activities that stigmatize those places in the first place – like black-market activities. In turn, people who do not have access to viable (legal) livelihood opportunities have been effectively dispossessed from belonging to the dominate forms of economic inclusion taking place as the economy is ever more entrenched with tourism focused income generation or macro-level development initiatives (see also Chapter 6).

These feelings of belonging have worsened as people began to sit at home feeling like they had no immediate opportunities, or that their only opportunities were dashed by state failures. For example, according to Fernández (2000):

> [The process of reforms in the Soviet Union post-1986,] awoke interest and hope among Cubans who expected a similar course of reforms at home… Instead the leadership opted for *sociolismo o muerte* (socialism or death), at most gingerly tinkering with reforms. The cost to the regime in terms of support was considerable, especially among *los jóvenes* [the youth], who increasingly felt that there was no way out for them, except to leave the island. (88)

Beyond wanting to leave the island, since this was not an option for all Cubans, this caused many people to become apathetic, disenchanted, or, at the very least, to begin experimenting with alternative forms of survival (like I have discussed here and in the previous Chapter).

However, there was never a (legal) opportunity for Cubans to truly innovate responses to their biggest challenges (see Chapter 4). They were bogged down by burdensome policies and regulations or they lacked access to material resources. So, it was

only the most desperate, who were willing to engage in (informal) alternative strategies. During the Special Period, nearly everyone was desperate enough (see, e.g., T. Henken, 2005). However, as certain areas of Havana improved socioeconomically speaking, islands of increased possibilities began to emerge. There, in areas like *Havana Vieja* or *Vedado*, someone could ostensibly still engage in lucrative informal strategies and still be able to more feasibly conceal their activities since they were closer to home. For Cubans who lived outside these areas, though, they were forced to make ends meet in their disadvantaged home communities or engage in much more risky behaviors in other parts of the city. The riskiness of these behaviors was exacerbated because they had to occur much more in the open (since they did not have their homes to retreat to) as well as because some of the stigmas and stereotypes that placed Cubans of color (sometimes from marginalized neighborhoods) under stricter surveillance.

Thus, the question became, how did Cubans from stigmatized positions adapt to the contemporary circumstances, or how did other people in society begin to rectify these conditions? These are the topics for the following two chapters.

CHAPTER SIX | "Mecániquiar con lo que tengas": Entrepreneurial Responses to Stigma and Crisis[20]

This chapter explores how young, marginalized people in Havana negotiate social and economic transformations within Cuba's emergent mixed market economy. The primary aim is to better understand how disempowered or stigmatized people adjust to shifting local and global forces and gain access to livelihood opportunities through one of Cuba's economic pillars: international tourism. The contents of this chapter describe how global circulations of people, capital, and ideas shape micro-economies, cultural traditions, and personal local/global encounters.

Until the 1990s, most Cubans made ends meet working for the state sector and by utilizing the robust social welfare system to make up for the prohibition of directly participating in the global capitalist economy. Now, however, the dual monetary system, gradual price liberalization, and the elimination of state subsidies in addition to the ongoing economic crisis and curtailment of welfare assistance, has made state salaries insufficient for the rising cost of living and has contributed to the decline of the real purchasing power for most Cuban households (Mesa-Lago, 2012). Consequently, Cubans have come to rely on alternative and diverse ways of generating hard-currency incomes to survive (J. Pérez-López, 1995). While the Cuban government's state-run economy and social policies were once the main social elevators for marginalized people in socialist Cuba (Hansing &

[20] This chapter is an adaptation of the article, "The transformative dynamics of self-employed dance instruction in Havana, Cuba's tourism industry" (Stein and Vertovec 2020). Below, I denote Stein's participation in the data gathering and presentation when appropriate. In the article, Stein and I elaborate on how (mostly) Black Cubans utilize dance instruction – specifically instruction based around "authentic Cuban salsa" or the ways that they have intentionally incorporated other dance styles like Orishas or Rumba as profitable cultural resources.

Hoffmann, 2019), the recent economic liberalization and privatization processes have proliferated the exclusion of some Cuban citizens from hard-currency incomes. Furthermore, the moral and spiritual crises that I discussed in chapter 6 have resulted in the same Cubans who are excluded from hard-currency incomes becoming stigmatized and stereotyped with regards to the alternative strategies they use to navigate their current economic realities.

Patterns of intersecting inequities and inequalities determine the ability for different Cubans to generate sufficient hard-currency incomes. Often, Black Cubans from marginalized spaces are limited or even prevented from participating in the most gainful sources of hard-currency that have emerged under civic and economic reforms, namely, the international tourism industry and foreign remittances (see: Eckstein, 2010; Perry, 2015). While it may be against the law to discriminate, in the state tourism sector, black Cubans are often excluded from the best positions because they supposedly lack *buena presencia* (good appearance) (De la Fuente, 2001). This sort of quotidian stigmatization is related to racist ideologies and stereotypes that have re-surfaced in Cuba (Cabezas, 20091). Black Cubans also have limited access to material and financial remittances, as the majority of Cubans living abroad are white and disproportionately send remittances to white urban populations in Cuba (Clealand, 2017; K Hansing & Hoffmann, 2019; Orozco, 2002).

In recent years, the government has tried to address the growing inequities by significantly expanding the self-employment sector – at least when compared to the 1990s and prior – giving Cubans more rights to innovate market-oriented responses to a rash of austerity measures and resource shortages. Entrepreneurship has become a vital source of income/employment for a growing number of Cuban households (González-Corzo, 2015;

A. Ritter & Henken, 2015). However, participation in the more lucrative private sectors that involve foreign clients often require capital investment that usually comes from remittances (T. Henken, 2008; C Mesa-Lago, 2012) or they require advantageous locations in Havana's most popular tourism areas. Together, these prerequisites re-enforce socioeconomic stratification based on race and location. Interestingly, however, I observed many young Black Cubans from marginalized spaces who were fully aware of these stigmas and stereotypes and chose to engage with them in unique ways in order to gain access to better incomes and potentially valuable local/global connections. As Fernan, a young black man from *el Cerro* explained to me, "*Hay que mecániquiar con lo que tengas*" (you have to make do with what you have), referring to the creative ways that Cubans have had to adapt to the current social and economic patterns emerging in Cuba amidst broader social and economic crises.

In this chapter, I focus on the ways that Cuban dance instructors as well as other (socially marginalized) front-of-the-house private tourism employees (e.g., bartenders, doormen to private clubs, and security guards at boutique hotels) utilize what they have readily available to them – namely, their local connections, their good looks, and the local and global imaginations that surround their stereotyped identities – in order to access lucrative incomes and, perhaps more importantly, global connections. To this end, I argue that these entrepreneurial strategies are responses to and engagements with broader stigmas and stereotypes.

I have outlined the chapter as follows. First, I give a brief description of some pertinent theoretical considerations for this chapter. Then, I give a brief overview of the employment opportunities for dance instructors and front-of-the-house private sector

tourism employees, before getting into some of the more nuanced details of what it entails working in these employment types. For example, I discuss some of the patterns with regards to becoming a dance instructor or private tourism employee (the importance of social networks and other skills, etc.). Then I describe how these two types of workers recruit and satisfy their clients followed by some analysis on the intimate relationships that these workers develop with their clients and what those relationships mean for global connections and increased opportunities. In the penultimate section I examine how these two sectors are influenced by global patterns in entrepreneurship including how local cultures and identities can become commodified features of the global market. I conclude with a discussion of some of the fragmentary and unintended consequences of economic participation in the tourism market – what that means in terms of race and sex – and how it may also reveal the emergence of new subjectivities and citizen orders in Cuba and in connection to broader transnational networks.

Brief Theoretical Considerations

Post-soviet socioeconomic transformations combine socialist norms and global economic behaviors at the micro-level, opening spaces for the marketization of labor and autonomous decision making under a centrally planned economy (Brotherton, 2008; Hoffman, 2010; Nonini, 2008). These configurations of ‘market socialism’ shape individual participation in the market as hybridizations of socialist political-economies combine with capitalist techniques of self-governing, such as self-enterprising, professionalization (Hoffman, 2010), micro- and macro-economic efficiency, and (more) autonomous calculative choice (Collier, 2008). To tap into market opportunities individuals increasingly rely on

entrepreneurial knowledge of improvisation, mutuality, and social networks, all of which were acquired informally under previous modalities of the centrally planned socialist economy (Brotherton, 2008; T. Henken, 2002; Yurchak, 2002).

Individual and more quotidian adaptations of market practices and rationalities must be contextualized in their specific socio-historical settings. In places that face ongoing mechanisms of "coloniality" – i.e., less visible, more contemporary, but nonetheless just as dangerous frameworks of colonialism (Mignolo, 2011; Quijano, 2007) – cultural tourism has become an important market niche, defined by the processes of converting cultural practices into sellable commodities (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2009). "Authenticity," or the notions of tradition, originality, and representations of otherness or their past (Shepherd, 2002), is integral to the tourism industry as it is a central driver of local-foreign touristic encounters (Cary, 2004; Harrison, 2003; N. Wang, 1999), and are often what lead tourists to travel to specific destinations. What tourists associate as authentic are contingent on what they consider appropriate or legitimate to a region. These are also driven by certain hegemonic models of local culture (Klak, 2000b) and stereotyped images (Silver, 1993), and are constructed, advanced, and circulated globally by mass-media and tourism marketing materials. Insofar, authenticity is a projection of touristic expectations, preferences, and stereotyped assumptions (Bruner, 1994; Cohen, 1988). Furthermore, tourism in the post-colonial Caribbean, is mostly defined by sexually, environmentally, and culturally consumable spaces (Nixon, 2015; Sheller, 2003). These colonial imaginations are predicated on exoticizing, racialized, and sexualized stereotypes that were constructed in the colonial encounter and are replicated and reproduced in tourism marketing materials (L. K. Roland, 2010; Simoni, 2013).

Local participation in the tourism industry demands that individuals invest in managing, marketing, and performing the "authenticity" of their cultural products and practices (Klak, 2000a) - in addition to markers of race and sexuality - so that they match their consumers' expectations. For individuals participating in the commodification process, this can offer inclusion into the global market and thereby augment their economic opportunities (Cabezas, 2009). However, commoditization of culture and identity also often reinforces racialized colonial imaginations and global hierarchies (Sheller, 2003), offering only narrow participation in the global market. As such, socially marginalized people are often limited to very particular market niches that are shaped by Western (i.e., European or North American) desires (Klak 2000).

Cuban Dance Instruction and Front-of-the-House Employment in the Cuban Private Tourism Industry

Cuban dance instruction geared towards foreigners is a critical place to begin our conversation because it is a specific example of how local culture and stereotyped imaginations can become viable income opportunities, and which can also be cultivated in order to discover entrepreneurial opportunities in professional, marketable ways. Dance instruction was first authorized in 2015 under the broader self-employment category: "*profesores de musica y otras artes*" (teachers of music and other arts). It is a private sector opportunity that does not demand much financial or material inputs nor formal qualifications. Instead, dance instructors build on social skills and knowledge of popular dances that, being Cuban, they are often already encouraged to cultivate from an early age (Härkönen, 2016). Furthermore, there is a high demand from tourists to participate in

various socio-cultural activities they associate with Cuba, like dancing (Daniel, 1996). Dance instruction, therefore, has become an accessible self-employment opportunity that gives Cubans from a wide array of socioeconomic backgrounds greater possibilities to earn higher incomes (up to 75 USD in one day which is very high when compared to average state salaries of 40 USD per month).

Front-of-the-house positions in the private tourism industry in Cuba are other important opportunities to consider in this chapter because the people who work these positions also often navigate local dynamics and stereotyped imaginations while they search for valuable income opportunities. Tourism focused businesses were first allowed to hire front-of-the-house employees (outside their family) – such as doormen, waiters, and bartenders in private restaurants as well as public facing work in private boutique hotels – in 2010 under a broad loosening of self-employment regulations called *los lineamientos* (the guidelines) (A. Ritter & Henken, 2015, p. 324). These are valuable private sector opportunities that also do not demand much financial or material inputs – at least not for the workers themselves – nor formal qualifications. Instead, these front-of-the-house workers draw from their social networks and personal capabilities (e.g., language skills, physical appearance, and charisma) to access and succeed in these types of positions. Front-of-the-house work, therefore, has become an accessible income opportunity, offering up to 40 USD per day depending on (1) the tourist season (high or low) and (2) if they work for a successful business (often dependent on the area where it resides). Nevertheless, participation in the global market – whether as a dance instructor or a front-of-the-house private tourism employee – is still subject to local and global forces.

State polices toward the private sector has created a hostile business environment (González-Corzo, 2015; A. Ritter & Henken, 2015; A. R. Ritter, 1998). Arbitrary restrictions and abrupt changes have accompanied labor market liberalization which has limited business growth potentials, shaped the possibilities for employment in the private business sector, and created overarching economic burdens. Additionally, state institutions offer little to no support to private market participants, which means that self-employed people have to develop their skills independently to conduct their businesses or employees are on their own when the go to search for their own employment. Both sets of private workers are also subject to socio-racial discrimination and stigmatization (outlined below). These social and structural limitations conjoin with market standards, demands, and tourist desires and govern the participation of dance instructors and front-of-the-house tourism employees in the global market.

Becoming a dance instructor or private tourism industry employee: Utilizing social networks and expanding skill sets

For Cuban dance instruction, the movement from dancing in social events as a young kid growing up – how most of our (Stein and my) interlocutors "got their start" – to teaching salsa to tourists was not necessarily instinctive. Dancing in social events is based on participation rather than proficiency. In Cuba's private market, however, there is no official guidance or training. Therefore, Cubans who wish to work as instructors to tourists need to find alternative ways of acquiring the needed knowledge. Some dance instructors are professionals; that is, they were trained as ballerinas. However, this is not the norm for most dance instructors in Cuba, nor have they ever received formal training in how to *teach*

dance, especially not to foreigners. Our interlocutors often relied on their social networks for entering the self-employment sector and developing the skills necessary for success.

For example, Yiandro, one of Stein's research participants, relied on occasional work in the informal market until he learned about the opportunities of a self-employed dance instructor. Mercedes – a professional dancer and seasoned dance instructor, and who was also Yiandro's girlfriend at the time – shared her knowledge of dance instruction as part of their romantic relationship. She wanted to take care of him and help him gain access to hard currency. Yiandro had corporal abilities and was familiar with the popular dance rhythms he learned as a kid, though he did not know much more than the basic steps. Mercedes taught Yiandro how to become a successful dance instructor, including how to approach teaching, the importance of focusing on more straightforward styles as opposed to more complicated dance forms, and how to encourage students to continue taking classes. Mercedes also brought Yiandro to her classes to give him teaching practice.

For other private tourism employees, social networks were also critical. For example, Osmany discovered his bartending/doorman position at a popular local restaurant in *Havana Vieja* because he grew up with the owner's husband. Osmany was also a young charismatic Black man with conversational skills in English and French, even if he was limited to certain topics. As Tony, Osmany's boss said, "he was perfect for the job. He could help guests order in case they didn't know Spanish, and I've known him for a long time, I know I can trust him" (Conversation December 2018). For Patricia, the owner of the restaurant:

> This is a social business. The most important thing is that we have fun. We're all friends here and we get along. The clients see that and want to come back and have a beer or eat a meal. It [us being friends] is also a benefit for us, the workers, because if something

> happens – like something breaks or someone can't show up to work – we can work together to find a solution. (Conversation December 2018)

Patricia acknowledged that in other "more capitalist" restaurants, this would not be the case. "Like they say, 'friendship is friendship, and business is business'" (same Conversation December 2018).

Yiandro's and Osmany's cases are not unusual. These social networks build on trust, co-operation, and reciprocity. Often, within a network, opportunities are shared, which help facilitate access to the private sector. The greatest opportunities for social mobility in contemporary Cuba revolve around personal social networks, and self-employed Cubans with stronger or more reliable social networks receive more aid to develop their businesses (Romanò & Echevarria-Léon, 2015). The interplay between official paid work and informal economic behaviors – like helping a friend get a job or considering your business venture can still be amicable – is not new (Ritter, 1998; Pérez-López, 1995). Under post-soviet transformations, and in the absence of market supporting institutions, self-employed people are driven to rely on and develop networks to obtain market information, in spite of the state and with the intention to augment their success and build a meaningful reality for themselves (Yurchak, 2002; see also Chapter 7).

The art of recruiting and satisfying clients: Informal practices and legal licenses

In the private sector, small businesses must find their own clients. Government institutions rarely, if ever, collaborate with the self-employment sector in this capacity, and private tourism businesses like restaurants, boutique hotels, or dance instruction cannot rely on state tourism agencies to bring them clients, nor are they supposed to work directly with foreign tourism agencies. Of course, networks do develop between tour guides – both

Cuban and foreign alike – and it behooves small business owners to develop and maintain these relationships because of the possibility for repeat business. Before these sorts of networks develop, however, Cuban small business owners are on their own.

For dance instructors, the Havana nightclub scene has become an invaluable resource for recruiting clients. This is because Havana nightclubs have become key locations for interactions between Cubans and tourists (Fairley, 2006; L. K. Roland, 2010; Simoni, 2012). Dance instructors often go to nightclubs in small groups, dancing among themselves and inviting tourists to dance with them. This is a covert marketing technique that involves the professional instructor 'innocently' looking for 'friends' on the dance floor. Dance instructors do not approach tourists and offer classes. Instead, the instructors stand out with their remarkable performances; especially to foreigners who are unable to keep up with the fast and complicated movements and rhythms of Cuban popular dances (see Roland, 2010). Tourists are attracted to the instructors, wanting to dance with them and learn from them, even without realizing they are there for business purposes. In these moments, instructors encourage tourists to come the next day and take a dance class with them or to recommend their services to other travelers or friends.

In a similar vein, young front-of-the-house employees use nightclubs, and dance more generally, to increase the success of their employer and to deepen their relationships with visiting foreigners. As Reiner (a doorman/server at a tourist restaurant) explained to me:

> Always, *every time*, I invite the women who come to my restaurant to come with me to a club after I finish work. Sometimes they even stay at the restaurant until I'm done working. We dance while they drink beers and I attend to other customers. Then, we go to one of the nightclubs – on the boulevard, *la rampa*, or *Havana Vieja*. (Conversation September 2018)

I asked him what his bosses thought, and he replied, "They love it! She feels nice, comfortable, and continues to drink. If it's a good night, the foreigner usually comes back the next day. It becomes like their own personal kitchen." While dancing in the restaurant or when they are at the club, the front-of-the-house employee also gets valuable time with the foreigner. As I describe below, this can lead to potential future benefits.

Young Cuban tourism industry workers have learned experientially that this marketing practice is very successful. It involves the tourists' search for moments of connection with local populations through dance and can help them escape any strict definition of commercialization while fulfilling tourism imaginations of Cubans as happy-go-lucky dancers, as presented in many tourism promotional materials (see Simoni, 2013). The distinction between marketing and sharing pleasurable moments with foreigners in dance is blurred, producing seemingly spontaneous interactions between the two sides. From the tourist's point of view, these moments fulfill their expectations of mutual and noncommercial engagement with 'local' Cubans, thereby producing a sense of connection to a local authentic experience rather than a touristic one (see Harrison, 2003; Olsen, 2002).

Nightclub and other public interactions with foreigners can be tricky and precarious, though, especially for Black Cubans. Like I discussed at length in Chapters 3 and 5, Black Cubans are often stigmatized as criminals or sexually promiscuous. Blackness in Cuba has also become synonymous with *jineterismo*. Tourists coming to Cuba are usually informed of *jineteros* and can be hesitant to enter informal encounters with locals for fear that they may be getting hustled (Simoni, 2014). Though, other tourists also seek out black Cubans – especially in nightclubs – with hopes that they will be able to engage in sexual intercourse. For most of our dance instructors, and my front-of-the-house

interlocutors, these sorts of contradictory interpretations were challenging to manage because they wanted to find potential clients or potential intimate relationships but were also aware of the different intentions or hesitations tourist may have.

Racist stereotypes of Blackness also subject many dance instructors or other Black tourism employees who associate with foreigners to racial profiling by other members of Cuban society. In contrast to white tourists with money, black Cubans are often stereotyped as poor and immoral – what Kaifa Roland has called "a negrification" of Cuban identity (2006, p. 160) – and, thus, imagined to be scheming ways to hustle foreigners. On multiple occasions Stein and I observed that darker-skinned instructors or front-of-the-house employees were prevented from entering nightclubs, and thereby hindered from accessing potential clients or the women who had agreed to meet at said location. Other times, police harassed our interlocutors outside of clubs or even while walking in the street with tourists. This sometimes resulted in being detained for a few hours in a local police precinct.

Authorities strictly surveil interactions between foreigners and "every day" Afro-Cubans. Even spending a moment with a foreigner can be read as engaging in *jineterismo* (Simoni 2104). These are complicated dynamics to manage. Holding a legal license, therefore, is critical. Roberto – a 50-year-old dance instructor – explained the necessity of legal documents when he said, "If you are an instructor, you need documents. This authorizes you [to be] with foreigners for work" (Stein's interview). The dance instructor license gives black Cubans a reason to interact with foreigners and therefore provides a plausible excuse as to why a Cuban and a foreigner would spend time together outside of a dance class.

Legal licenses also allowed many of the young Black front-of-the-house employees I spoke with to engage in what they referred to as "*jineterismo autorizado*" (authorized street hustling). These young black men, again, mostly from marginalized communities, would use this tongue and cheek term to reveal how they were well aware of the stereotypes that surrounded their identities (both in Cuba and abroad) but that they would still draw from these stereotypes to gain access to better incomes and potentially valuable local/global connections. As Reiner explained, "It's *jineterismo autorizado.*" He laughed, "I get to hang out with foreigners and they…" he said tapping his shoulder with two fingers (a signal he was talking about authority figures) … they can't do anything about it." When I asked him, what does happen when he is stopped in the street with foreigners? He replied, "first thing – the *first thing* – I do is take out my license [to work in the private sector]. They quickly stop what they're doing and let me go" (Conversation January 2019, interlocutor's emphasis).

I also observed that legal licenses can help someone deal with personal moral conflicts. For some of my interlocutors, they legitimated Cuban-foreigner interactions in their own minds and helped themselves feel like they were engaging with tourism more professionally. Licenses also helped challenge stereotypes of Blackness as a marker of vagrancy and laziness, as well as officially recognizing the dance instructor as employed – something that state bureaucrats look upon favorably because tax revenues add to social welfare coffers and economic development (Berry, 2016, p. 42).

Extracurricular Cuban-foreigner interactions – though potentially risky – proved to be very beneficial for any Cuban willing to engage in them. While some of my interlocutors frequently traveled with their clients to other parts of the country, most would take them to

bars, restaurants, and nightclubs and, on top of receiving free entry, drinks, or meals, would also receive a commission. These activities were commonly used to describe *jineterismo*, though, again, the private tourism industry workers felt protected by their licenses. Furthermore, they prided themselves on their expertise or knowledge of "authentic," interesting, or fun cultural activities in Cuba, including the knowledge of how much these events would cost and when and where they would take place. As such, they acted as cultural brokers of sorts – since these interactions were often dependent on the notion of authenticity that foreigners so often seek – and these activities helped deepen their connections with their foreign counterparts, helping them develop meaningful relationships that would hopefully lead to other economic, material, or mobility benefits.

Intimate relationships: Building global social networks and expanding economic units across international borders

Private work in Cuba's tourism sector only opens some economic opportunities, though these workers are still subject to rising costs of living, declines in welfare assistance, and an overall economic precarity because the tourism industry is subject to ebbs and flows. Dance instructors and other public facing private sector tourism employees have therefore used their market interactions to build global social networks. For example, it was common for my interlocutors to meet a foreigner through their work and maintain frequent communication via WhatsApp or Facebook. If the foreigner returned to Cuba, they always had a Cuban friend to meet up with and show them around. If a friend of the foreigner travelled to Cuba – something I discovered to be a frequent occurrence, especially for European travelers – the initial foreigner would put their friend in contact with the Cuban.

During my time in Cuba, *all* of my interlocutors who worked in front-of-the-house positions or as dance instructors engaged in intimate relationships with foreigners they met through their work. These relationships almost always gave these individuals access to a greater abundance of resources or opportunities, such as receiving financial aid, some credit to use for their telephone, or commodities that could not be found in Cuba or that are too expensive even with the more lucrative self-employment salary, in addition to opportunities to go to exclusive clubs or restaurants that would have otherwise been inaccessible because of their astronomic pricing (when compared with local incomes). Indeed, there are some restaurants where the final bill for two people can easily exceed $50-75, which is almost insulting when considering that many average salaries in Cuba do not reach $50/month.

These Cuban-foreigner relationships can also create possibilities to travel internationally since now they have aid to meet the high financial conditions of accessing foreign visas. For example, Cubans need to obtain a valid Cuban passport, which costs a little bit over $100 and to meet the administrative entry restrictions that the authorities of other states place on Cuban citizens (R. R. Betancourt, 2014). These external conditions often demand high capital savings and property ownership, or someone in the host country who can meet these requirements. The implication is that traveling internationally is still often guarded for Cubans with capital, property, and family members abroad, or someone else who can financially support them during their travels. For the interlocutors that have traveled internationally, though, they repeatedly spoke of the great opportunities to hone language skills, continue building social networks that extend past Cuban borders and to

access coveted foreign goods that could be brought back to Cuba to use personally or to sell; not to mention the fun and memorable experiences they had while travelling abroad.

It was normal for my interlocutors to ask me for things, like items from the US or to recharge their cell phone. Furthermore, on a few occasions my interlocutors asked me to help them prepare documentation for potential trips abroad. I navigated each circumstance separately and, for the most part, 'followed my gut.' If I considered the person a friend, I would go further to help them with what they needed, but I would not engage in illegal activities if they were requested of me. For example, one interlocutor asked me to bring a WiFi antenna from the US but I knew this was illegal so I told him I could not help him with that. In all cases, I considered these behaviors as broader entrepreneurial strategies and so I analyzed them with regards to my study's research questions and objectives.

In Cuba, international long-term intimate relations are central in opening access to socioeconomic mobilities (Andaya, 2013; Simoni, 2015, 2016). My interlocutors consistently expressed their desire to find compatible foreigner partners with who they can build a better life with outside Cuba. In North America and Europe (see Zelizer, 2005), and even in socialist systems like Cuba (see Andaya, 2013), the discourse on partner choice holds that it should be based on personal compatibility and 'love' rather than concerns around economic or social mobility. Dance instructor expectations on international relationships – that consider emotions and personal choice, *in addition to* economic and social mobility – are therefore blurring the boundaries between affective commoditization and notions of 'loving' intimate relationships (Allen, 2011; A. Cabezas, 2006; A. L. Cabezas, 2004; Simoni, 2012).

Often these intimate relations have led to marriage and even emigration for the Cuban partner. Although dance instructors and other private sector tourism employees have had economic and social privileges most Cubans aspire to (e.g., being able to make more money or frequently interact with foreign visitors), they are confronted with the limitations associated with being Cuban citizens, especially in contrast to tourist privileges. This desire to leave is connected to shifting socioeconomic trajectories in Cuba. The state often reinforces transnational hierarchies that favor wealthy tourists over Cubans, the latter of which are treated as second-class citizens (Roland, 2010). For example, many Cubans are not allowed to interact with foreigners unless sanctioned by the state (e.g., unless they are tour guides), and which are often mediated by stereotypes and stigmas that suggest that Cubans are only engaging in these activities as a means to hustle foreigners (as previously described), and higher quality products and services are made more readily available to tourists; that is, their prices and points of sales often make them very difficult to access for Cubans who do not have access to financial remittances or who live outside of tourism zones. Tourist privilege also makes Cubans more critical of their government, at the same time as constructing more desirable images of Europe and the US (Simoni 2015). Instead of accepting this subordinate position, instructors and other tourism employees choose to pursue opportunities to emigrate to other countries where they imagine their lives will be better (see also chapter 6).

International relations and marriages mean that foreigners become "part of the family." The family is the most relevant and primary economic unit in Havana. It is rare for Cubans to make atomized economic decisions. Instead, they rely on their households – comprised of multiple wage earners who work across formal and informal sectors – to

resolve their most significant needs (see Bastian, 2018, p. 91-92) My interlocutors who have been able to develop meaningful relationships with foreign clients have helped their families find desired consumer items as well as coveted foreign remittances. When they have found love and married their foreign partners, they effectively added another contributor to the family, but someone who usually had greater possibilities because of their positionality and connections already outside of Cuba. This transnational linkage gave way to a more robust economic unit, thereby permitting their households with new foreign members better chances for upward socioeconomic mobility.

The subject of marriage and emigration out of Cuba has revealed clear gender distinctions though. I observed that the majority of relationships that ended in the migration of the Cuba partner were most often between Cuban men and foreign women. This pattern is bound with Cuban gender and family relations. Cuba society is generally characterized by matrifocal kinship (Safa, 2009). Women are often the head of the household, and responsible for caring for the family members, while men are relatively marginal to family relations centered around women and children. Young women usually can take less part in household responsibility only if there are others who can take their place (Pertierra, 2008). Furthermore, gender divisions regarding family and work responsibilities are still central in Cubans' everyday life, despite the Cuban revolutionary government's effort to encourage women to participate in the labor market (Safa, 2009). Women are responsible for household duties, even if they find work outside the home, while men almost always work outside the house. Moreover, while Cuban women are often encouraged to find foreigner partners that can take care of them (see Andaya, 2013). My work with Stein (Stein and Vertovec 2020) shows that women are also subject to pressure to stay in Cuba and take

care of their family. This is especially the case in households where there is a lack of other young women to take their place if a woman emigrates. Therefore, women instructors or women in other lines of private sector tourism work can be more reluctance to migrate out of Cuba despite the benefits that this may bring.

Conducting entrepreneurship and the commodification of local cultures and identities

Telecommunication advancements in Cuba increase marketing possibilities as well as help facilitate meaningful, more consistent interactions with friends or romantic partners outside of Cuba. Some of my interlocutors simply use applications like WhatsApp or Facebook messenger to maintain communication with foreign people, in addition to their friend or family Cuban counterparts outside of Cuba. Other interlocutors have begun to advertise their dance classes, bars/restaurants, or hotels through international business platforms like Airbnb Experiences or TripAdvisor. While nearly all of my interlocutors had WhatsApp or Facebook messenger accounts, fewer used business platforms like Airbnb because data usage on their phones dissuaded them from using potentially demanding sites that require a high usage of megabytes to download site material. Furthermore, connection can be intermittent, and prices remain very high (reaching up to $20 for 10 megabytes). Also, while internet is available at outside locations, charging by the hour instead of by megabytes, some neighborhoods do not have internet zones and therefore require people to travel (sometimes large distances) to access these internet service points. Nevertheless, these personal connectivity and marketing strategies bring vital opportunities to engage

with international visitors who plan their vacations through web-based platforms or maintain connections with their new/old friends in Cuba.

Focusing on international business platforms, many of them require (or at least suggest in order to attract more clientele) business owners to explicitly state the price of their products or services, the dates and hours or their operations, the location, whether they are suitable for children or large groups, and what exactly will be offered (types of food, drinks, etc.). These requirements subject tourism-based small businesses to outside forces and western logics of conducting entrepreneurial activities, where things need to be thought about, determined, and set in advance. For dance instructors, this logic and practice are very different from how dance instructors used to think about and conduct their business. Before dance instruction was formally legalized in 2015, dance instructors operated on a strictly informal basis. For restaurants or boutique hotels, these announcements are often difficult to determine ahead of time because of rampant resource shortages or even more minor resource shortages affecting specific neighborhoods.

Now, international business platforms like Airbnb and TripAdvisor are helping set market standards for private businesses in the Cuban tourism industry. For instructors, restaurants, and boutique hotels alike, they need to build a competitive page. Specific to dance instruction, the instructors have found it useful to use these platforms to emphasize their cultural assets, provide an alluring description, and demonstrate their understandings of global market desires. Take, for example, Luis's Airbnb description, where he illustrates his class's offerings:

> *Imagine*! ... [during my class] you will go out dancing salsa, with a smile from ear to ear. My "*Sensual* Salsa Class" is very inexpensive, but at the same time very professional and fun… My *sensual* Cuban salsa and its contagious style will be the vehicle that will lead you to be surprised and amazed at how, with this class, you will take with you the essence

> and the *deliciousness* of the AUTHENTIC CUBAN SALSA… My style is without equal…[and] will make you spread to your friends my way of teaching the contagion of Cuban joy. (emphasis added in Stein and Vertovec 2020; description discovered by Stein)

In Luis's description of his class, the name of the dance – salsa – is combined with words that localize it in Cuba and frame the dance as an authentic cultural practice. His description is captivating and seducing. He uses words like "sensual" and "deliciousness" to connect the "authentic dance form" (see Stein and Vertovec 2020) to a certain sexualized nature. The description of the class on the Airbnb page is located below several photos of Luis dancing with tourists. The distinction in skin color is prominent, where the white skin tourists are contrasted to Luis's light brown skin. Through his profile, Luis playfully draws on Cuban tropes, connecting racial, sexual, and cultural stereotypes to market his services.

Front-of-the-house tourism employees also described similar experiences with these tropes. For example, Osmany, the charismatic young Black man who worked at his friends' Tony and Patricia's restaurant, told me, "I think a lot of young Black guys get jobs as doormen or bartenders because that is what the foreigners like. Tony chimed in, "You know, Osmany's handsome, he's smooth, you know that will attract some foreign women." They both laughed and Tony continued, "Foreigners want a party. The women, they want a handsome, strong guy to invite them in to eat. The men, they like it when a *mulatica* [little mulatta] or *negrita* [little Black girl] takes their order. We're there to serve," he finished with a wink (Conversation with Osmany and Tony May 2019).

Reiner, the doorman from another restaurant who liked to take his women clients to dance after his shift, also knew these tropes. He was a young Black man who had worked in front-of-the-house positions for the last three years. He explained to me one day about the many tactics he had to get people to eat or drink at his restaurant. "I have a lot of

strategies. If I see a group of foreign men, I tell them we have cold beer, or that the women are coming later. If it's a woman, especially a white woman – you know, from one of those cold northern countries like Sweden or Germany – I move my hips and invite them to dance with me. I tell them 'Cuba is hot, come have a beer with me'" (Conversation July 2019).

In their marketing tactics, Cuban instructors and front-of-the-house employees alike manipulate and reproduce global racialized and sexualized imaginations of themselves. Cuban men and women are often imagined as embodying sexuality and passion especially when compared to white men and women from Europe and North America. This imagination connects to colonial, post-colonial, and neo-colonial trajectories (see Allen, 2007; Fernandez, 1999, 2010); particularly the (hyper)sexualization of Afro-Cubans (Kempadoo, 2004). These racist constructions are reproduced in various tourist publications which portray Cubans as (hyper)sexual and sexually passionate (Simoni, 2013) and help to reproduce Cuba and Cubans as consumable (Sheller, 2003). My interlocutors understood these tropes, and they frequently utilized cultural stereotypes and imaginations of an essential racial or erotic Cuban identity when marketing their services.

It should be noted that men's descriptions were significantly more explicit in their emphases of the sensuality and sexuality of their persona, their classes, and their services. Women tended to place emphasis more on their professionality, experience, and salsa as the authentic Cuban dance. These distinctions are bound with gendered and racialized sexual expectations and stereotypes of tourists and Cubans. Black women are imagined to be sexually available while black men are imagined to have sexual potency (Kempadoo, 2004). The moral judgment that comes with these stereotypes shape how dance instructors play off these stereotypes. Stein and my women interlocutors tended to be more careful in

marketing their services and downplayed the sensual aspects of dance, so as to not attract unwanted (sexual) encounters with tourists. My Cuban men interlocutors, though, utilized their perceived sexual potency to lure foreign clientele.

Young Cubans in these private tourism industry positions also must act charismatically and develop or maintain certain skills or physical attributes in order to elevate the success of their business, enhance their specific marketing or service techniques, or simply be more attractive to potential foreign visitors. They engaged in many activities or informal behaviors in order to develop and maintain these skills/physical attributes. Most of the front-of-the-house employees I spoke with already had a certain level of language skills (i.e., could hold basic conversations with foreigners in a shared language besides Spanish). Nevertheless, many still decided to pay for private intensive language courses offered around the city to improve their languages or learn new ones. Furthermore, most of the interlocutors I spoke with maintained fairly strict workout regimens either in their private homes or at local private gyms. As one doorman explained to me, "it's like work outside of work. I go to the gym four times a week, try to eat well, and go to English class [at a private teacher's house a block from where he lived.]" He then told me that one of the best parts of his job was practicing his English and French with foreign clients, with the hopes that he would one day be able to use those skills while travelling or living abroad.

Chapter Conclusion

Opportunities to work in Cuba's private tourism industries – including dance instruction and front-of-the-house position in boutique hotels and restaurants/bars – reveals the

nuanced experiences of recent macroeconomic changes from the perspective of microtransformations, and how socioeconomic adjustments can activate new economic modalities for people who are socially marginalized. Liberalization of labor and economy, even if only partly, brought social stratification based on access to hard currency and increased the significance of racialized differences (Allen, 2011; A. Cabezas, 2009; de la Fuente, 2001b; K. Roland, 2006). I have argued that the recent legalization of private ventures opened new possibilities for participation in the international tourism market. Dance instruction and other public-facing positions in the tourism industry build on available cultural resources which can help overcome inequities and inequalities, while the licenses themselves can also provide a security blanket of sorts for marginalized individuals who spend time with visiting foreigners.

Successful participation in the private sector helps secure, even if modestly so, economic survival. For dance instructors, specifically, this depends on their willingness and ability to invest in managing, marketing, and performing cultural authenticity for tourism consumption. As Stein and I (2020) discuss in more detail, Cuban dance instructors reproduce and replicate global imaginations of salsa as the "authentic" Cuban dance. Dance is therefore a cultural commodity that is co-produced between Cuban instructors and tourists alike and Cuban dance instructors re-choreograph the nuances within and between Cuban dance styles to match the desires and expectations of their tourist clientele who are willing and able to pay more for these services. This illuminates the fundamental role that global imaginations play in the classes that Cuban dance instructors teach and their interest in only marketing their services to international tourists.

Cuban front-of-the-house employees also draw from global imaginations of Cuban identity and authenticity. The 'authentic' Cuban experience is supposedly fun-loving, carefree, and marked by vibrant charisma. Many of the front-of-the-house workers I spoke with or observed secured their jobs because their bosses saw these emotions in them, but they also drew from these supposedly 'innate' characteristics in order to attract potential clientele as well as satisfy foreign desires outside of their workplaces. Dance was a common tactic to attract or satisfy foreigners who were walking by the restaurant or bar, as it was an integral component of many Cuban-foreigner relationships outside the workplace. Indeed, dance is an oft-present symbol of Cuban identity and culture, and dance activities play a central role in attracting and entertaining foreign tourists (Babb, 2011; Daniel, 1996; L. K. Roland, 2010; Schwall, 2016; Simoni, 2012). Furthermore, the participatory, corporal, and sensory aspects of dance make it feel less of a commodity and more of an authentic cultural practice (Daniel, 1996), which also attracts tourists to dance activities.

Tourism imaginations of Cuban authenticity are also gendered and racial. Stein and my research found that when Cuban dance instructors access global capital through commodified versions of their culture, they also often emphasize their racialized and sexualized Cuban identities, which can be embodied through dance in formal (instruction) or informal (front-of-the-house) situations. The association of Cuban dance with 'Cuban identity' is employed as much as a strategy for searching for and satisfying the foreign consumer as it is a business model for Cuban dance instructors. The commodification of racialized sexualization enacts the sexual availability of Cuban culture and bodies for tourist consumption (see Cabeza, 2009, p. 100), also reinforcing racialized coloniality

imaginations and global hierarchies (Sheller, 2003). The interactions of local behaviors and touristic imaginations carries certain gender distinctions. Cuban women are often more subtle with their sexual conduct than men so as not to face the harsh moral judgment that comes with colonial narratives surrounding black women's promiscuity.

The consequences of broad socioeconomic changes also extend beyond racial and gender implications and inform shifting subjectivities in Cuba. The changing social and political landscape has catalyzed the emergence of new subjectivities which demonstrate possible neoliberal consequences in the Cuban context. The expanding self-employment sector could be considered a new technique of self-governing in Cuba. This shifts the locus of resource provision from the state to the individual by promoting autonomous calculative choice, self-enterprising, and professionalization (see Hoffman, 2010). An private sector worker's ability to adapt and respond to changing socioeconomic circumstances in the globalized economy show how neoliberal logics of entrepreneurship are diffuse (see also Freeman, 2011, 2014). Dance instructors, doormen, or bartenders in private tourism-focused ventures often must align themselves with broader tropes and stigmas to increase their personal gain. They often see their skills, bodies, and knowledge as valuable tools that must be invested in, nurtured, managed, and developed. While they recognized that the amount and types of tourism entering the country directly influenced their potential for business success, they also placed the burden of productivity on their shoulders, lamenting to me that they needed to try harder or get more creative when their personal incomes turned downward.

Nevertheless, socio-political norms cultivated in the socialist era have not been thoroughly supplanted by capitalist ones. The Cuban government's resistance to

neoliberalism as any sort of new societal framework has led to contradicting restrictions and an overall lack in state support for the private sector. Private tourism workers negotiate their troubled relationship with the state by increasingly relying on collective norms of socioeconomic behavior. For more successful participation in the market, they advance entrepreneurial knowledge of improvisation, informality, mutuality, and social networks, which were all cultivated under previous modalities of the centrally planned socialist economy (Brotherton, 2008; Ritter, 1998; Yurchak, 2002). The complexity of the private sector has forced creative, innovative, and often informal ways to navigate the sector's greatest challenges. The hybridization in private tourism responses to socioeconomic transformations corresponds with what anthropologist P. Sean Brotherton (2005) calls new "pragmatic subjectivities" that have emerged in Cuba since the disappearance of the Soviet trading bloc and which reveal hybridizations of flexible market and socialist subjectivities. On the one hand, this is another expression of the ways that entrepreneurialism has seeped into Cuba. While on the other hand, these informal tactics also advance an idea of what Stein and I called "socialist entrepreneurs;" that is, people who use (entrepreneurial) improvisation in addition to (socialist) collaboration (Stein and Vertovec 2020 Page). All the while, Cuba continues to negotiate the contradiction and fragmentation of its macroeconomic changes. These complexities indicate emergent forms of entrepreneurship that are developed in the margins of the market (see Hernández Padrón, 2016; Umbres, 2016).

The ongoing changes in Cuban political economic apparatuses are also articulated with shifting citizen orders in Cuba. Citizen rights that at one time placed Cubans directly under state control are now increasingly mediated by the global market. While people still

believe in the collective ideals of equity and equality (expressed through the support of the welfare system and an aversion to any complete transition to capitalism), the reality they experience causes them to question those beliefs (see Werbner, 1998). Black Cuban dance instructors, in particular, and other socially stigmatized private tourism industry workers, more generally, remain marginalized both in Cuba, because of their positionality counter to the state sector, and in the global arena, because of global “North” / “South” inequalities. These circumstances force these individuals to situate themselves in between formal economic interactions and informal socioeconomic behaviors. Instructors make use of intimate moments that emerge both within and around their dance classes – similar to the ways that front of house employees use exoticizing, racialized, and sexualized stereotypes in addition to their positionality as “experts” of true cultural experiences in Cuba – to cultivate friendships and romantic relationships. Both are sites for claiming (new) citizenship rights outside of Cuba. These relations have linked some marginalized Cubans to the international community and, as such, they are marked by new prospects of economic, social, or geographic mobilities.

CHAPTER SEVEN | "En la calle, se resuelve todo": Entrepreneurship, Community, and Crisis

On September 12, 2018 *Granma* – the state-owned newspaper – ran a two-page story about a man who was caught buying 15,000 apples (150 boxes of 100 apples) from a large shopping center in Havana called *La Puntilla* (Rodríguez Guerrero, 2018). Unfortunately for the man, a journalist watched as the man stood next to his personal luxury automobile, chatting on his phone[21] while he oversaw a "platoon" of young people (including employees from the store) load the fruit into the store's own trucks before he followed them off the premises. According to the journalist, "The calm with which the 'platoon' acted suggested the conviction of their impunity." That is, the man and the group had probably done this many times before and likely would have continued doing it had they not been caught.

For days, even weeks, this story was the talk of the town. Some people were frustrated by the inequalities that the story revealed; asking, "how could someone afford 15,000 apples in the first place?" Other people considered the man a criminal; saying, "this is why our prices are so high! Everything goes through two or three hands before it gets down to us, the Cuban people." In a follow up article in *Granma*, Betsy Díaz Velázquez, Minister of Interior Commerce, was quoted saying: "There are people who hoard for market insecurities, and others that look to obtain an economic benefit and raise the prices

[21] Both of these are significant indicators of wealth in Cuba. Very few people can afford a car, let alone a luxury vehicle. Additionally, few people have the income to support 'chatting' on the phone since it costs $0.35 USD per minute for phone calls between 7:00 AM and 10:59 PM.

and provoke a shortage. In the end, it is the general public who suffers the consequences" (García Elizalde, 2018, translated by the author).

While Díaz Velázquez was correct in saying that the general public is who suffers the consequences, her comments and the overall media coverage of stories like this undermined some of the rationalities behind specific entrepreneurial strategies. Instead, the government's crackdown on behaviors like selling out a product in order to resell it later – in addition to the ways it highlights the negative aspects of entrepreneurship through state media – often leads to the demonization of these sorts of economic activities. Take for example Rodrigo, a man I spoke with one evening:

> I hate *cuentapropistas* [referring to self-employed business owners]. They have made everything worse. For example, I used to only drink beer but now beer costs too much. So, I've turned to hard alcohol. Beer used to cost $1.00 or $1.15 but now it costs $1.50 or $2.00 because *cuentapropistas* buy all the beer available at the state price and then sell it to make a profit. I've stopped drinking beer and just buy rum from the state stores. You know, the plastic bottles [that cost $2.50 to $3.00]. I'm losing everything, I drink too much, I lost my wife, and it's all because of the *cuentapropistas*. (Conversation March 2019).

While this quote was dramatic, it revealed how the tensions between state policies – in this case the lack of wholesale markets – and entrepreneurial behaviors has negatively affected Cuban consumers and in some cases given a bad name to local entrepreneurs. However, by focusing on the most negative tropes of Cuban entrepreneurship it is possible to overlook how entrepreneurial strategies can in fact be creative responses social and economic crisis in Cuba. Indeed, during my fieldwork, I discovered that profiteering is not the universal norm and, instead, there are many more interesting and critical rationalities behind why Cubans engage in specific entrepreneurial strategies in the first place (like I discussed in Chapter 4). This chapter describes some of those responses, drawing from the PhotoVoice

dimension of the study as well as interviews and participant observation to argue that entrepreneurship can be an important tool for the improvement of local communities.

In what follows, I trace community oriented entrepreneurial strategies and rationalities, beginning with more personal, individual responses before moving to broader neighborhood and city-wide initiatives. The primary goal of the chapter is to describe how people engaged in entrepreneurship have dealt with the fallout from restrictive state policies as well as increasing inequities and inequalities. The first section looks at a very individualized response to resource shortages and policies that hinder the equal distribution of desired/needed resources. The second and final sections describe more systematic responses that have emerged via different socially entrepreneurial initiatives across a few different community organizations in Havana.

Acaparamiento: The 'Benefits' of Hoarding

Acaparamiento (hoarding), in the Cuban context, is the act of selling out, or at least buying in large quantity, supplies in order to later resell at a higher price. Since many hoarders target things like diapers, construction materials, or beer, it can make necessities or other highly desirable items inaccessible for many Cuban consumers. That is, many desired items are quickly sold out in state stores and are often only available at marked up prices in private (formal and informal) businesses. Hoarding can drive inequities in Cuba as some consumers are able to pay marked-up prices for their products while others cannot. In areas of the city that have less access to remittances, or for groups of people who have less access to lucrative forms of employment, hoarding can be particularly devastating, leaving many people without some basic needs.

While hoarding is often considered an unfair practice (by the government and others), it is a much more complex behavior that deserves more attention. Going back to the ‘apple man,’ described above, many people I spoke with concluded that it was ultimately the government’s fault. Their main reasoning was that the inefficient distribution system that dominated the Cuban market meant that 150 boxes of apples were delivered to one store, on the corner of Havana (i.e., difficult for some to get to), while the rest of the city saw none. The problem here lay in the concentration of products in one or just a few (state-owned) companies which has created “a market structure that guarantees quasi-monopolistic conditions for certain state producers” (Fernández Estrada, 2014, p. 30). There was no horizontal control of consumers but rather exaggerated vertical state control over the economy and “[the] decision-making autonomy of enterprises has been reduced to a minimum…” (Fernández Estrada, 2014, p. 30). In effect, state stores were discouraged from utilizing resources to more equally distribute their products around Havana, revealing an inefficient system that favors product consolidation over product distribution.

Some people explained to me that what the man did – buying 15,000 apples from one location – was actually been a service to the Cuban people in the face of these market inefficiencies. According to one young man I spoke with, who worked at the store where the incident occurred (but who made explicit that he was *not* a member of the “platoon”), “That guy was doing everyone a favor. He bought the apples and was selling them to smaller venders all over the city. He increased the price 10 cents maybe 20 cents per apple, but he was helping everyone. If he didn’t do this, the apples would have gone bad in that store… No one was going all the way to *La Puntilla* for just one apple” (Conversation September 2018). In a similar vein, a prominent social scientist (name withheld for

confidentiality purposes) told me, "I don't have a problem with what this man did. I love apples. I don't care how they get to my neighborhood, or if they cost 25 cents more than at the store. I live very far away from *La Puntilla* and with all the transfers I'd have to make [on public transit], I'd waste more time than it was worth" (Conversation September 2018).

Hoarding had other ripple effects throughout the socioeconomic landscape. First, while living in *San Martin* in *el Cerro* – a notorious neighborhood in one of the poorest municipalities in Havana – I discovered that many small-scale vendors made up for hoarding by pilfering state supplies to later sell on the black market. For example, a woman who worked in the detergent factory sold laundry detergent to her neighbors. She "obtained" (i.e., stole) the detergent from her job and sold it for the same price it would have been sold for in the stores. Furthermore, the primary sources of meat in that neighborhood were different workers who worked in a nearby meat packing plant. Since there was usually little packaged meat in the state stores, besides hot dogs and hamburgers, the black market was often the only place to access meat products in this neighborhood.

Similarly, I had a close friend (a Black man) from another part of Havana – though still a socially, if not geographically marginalized neighborhood – who purchased yogurt in bulk from the yogurt factory and then brought it back to his neighborhood to sell. He would mark up the price of each container of yogurt 25 cents, but this was acceptable for his neighbors because as one told me, "There's no yogurt in this part of the city. The hoarders get to it before anyone else can or the state doesn't deliver it. If Osmany is going to pick it up, then he's doing me a favor" (Conversation September 2019).

When I asked Osmany why he decided to start selling yogurt in his community he responded:

> Of course, to make a little extra money but you also need to know that we rarely have yogurt in this side [of Havana]. When people saw me walking home with a couple bags in my hands they asked where I got it… I called a friend with a car and we started to go once a week. Now I buy 50 bags every time I go. (Interview September 2019)

I relayed this story to a mutual friend, and he explained, "Look, there's yogurt in other parts of the city. You can go to *Vedado* or *Miramar* and there's always yogurt. But us, here in *el Cerro*, we'd have to go to *Carlos III* [a shopping center a mile or two away] and wait in a huge line, if they even had it. It doesn't make sense. They [referring to the government] have forgotten us" (Conversation September 2019).

These feelings of abandonment were common is this part of Havana and the entrepreneurial strategies that Osmany utilized, in addition to the woman and men who sold laundry detergent and meat, were examples of proactive measures that Cubans took to secure their necessities or their most desired items despite the shoddy distribution system that surrounded them. "I go to the store and there's nothing so, I go to the street to find what I need. *En la calle se resuelve todo* (in the street, you resolve everything)," a close confidant told me one day. "If they [the government] isn't going to take care of us, then we'll just have to do it ourselves," he finished (Conversation September 2019); expressing that since the government was not handling this distribution problem, nor other economic and social crises described above and below, people would have to take upon themselves to look out for their communities during these crises.

Indeed, these vendors were still generating a profit, but it seemed like many of their neighbors less critical of the activity because Osmany and the others were ensuring that their communities had access to a necessary product. Everyone in these "abandoned" or "forgotten" communities realized that the way the system was set up would likely lead to them not having immediate access to said product. So, they, themselves ensured that their

community would have it if they needed it. If it weren't for Osmany, or the 'apple man,' or the 'detergent lady,' or the meat sellers, residents of these communities would have been forced to venture to another part of the city to locate these items. This was a significant difficulty in and of itself because of the inconsistent transportation system, not to mention the fuel crisis that was occurring at the time of this research.

Ultimately, though, hoarding has revealed a market where buyers compete amongst themselves to purchase products. The demand mostly outweighs the supply which makes it a feasible entrepreneurial strategy to sell-out a desired item and then resell it for a higher price. For some business owners, their livelihoods depend on their supplies (like artists or welders, etc.) so they often stockpile supplies because they realize their required materials may disappear from one day to the next. In this sense, many entrepreneurs in Havana try to strike a balance between preparedness and opportunism, as opposed to any sort of malicious act.

Acaparamiento is a common entrepreneurial strategy in Cuba because of the fragility of the supply chain. There are certainly some Cubans who hoard consumer items to resell them under a higher demand. But many Cubans I worked with stored or bought large quantities of items because it helped them ensure that they would have the product when the needed it or as a means to sell the product (at a slightly marked up price) in a neighborhood that would likely never have access to said product. At once, this activity reveals how entrepreneurial strategies can give rise to serious conflicts, while others do not, and how Cubans have used entrepreneurial activities to make up for the state's incapacity to deal with some of its greatest crises. Following a nearly 50-year-old Keith

Hart article (1975), I wonder which strategies then help improve a community or society and "which lead to its potentially violent disruption" (4)?

Social Entrepreneurship and the Fight against Economic and Social Crises in Havana

The definition of social entrepreneurship is largely contested and unclear because of its "dynamic flexibility," which is exactly why it is such an impactful topic (Nicholls, 2006a, p. 10). Nevertheless, the essence of social entrepreneurship is when someone or some organization aims to create social value of some kind and tries to achieve that value through finding and exploiting available opportunities (i.e., entrepreneurship). Social entrepreneurs often draw from innovative activities, whilst realizing there is some risk involved, but nevertheless declining to limit themselves based on their broader structural conditions (e.g., resource shortages or overarching political economic ideologies) in their overall search for positive social change (Nicholls, 2006a; Peredo & McLean, 2006). The list of socially entrepreneurial activities is nearly infinite but historically the main areas that social entrepreneurs have created change have been in poverty alleviation through empowerment, health care, education/training, environmental preservation, community regeneration, or welfare projects (see Nicholls, 2006a, p. 14). Furthermore, according to Bornstein (2007b), "Increasingly, we find organizations moving beyond stop-gap solutions to more systematic approaches to problems – offering better recipes, not just more cooking" (5).

This is an interesting comment which differentiates the entrepreneurs described previously in this chapter – like individuals who buy things in large quantities and sell them to their friends and neighbors who would otherwise not have access to them – and the entrepreneurs I describe below. The previous entrepreneurs are not necessarily looking for

solutions to the distribution problems in Havana, they are merely adjusting to or accommodating those circumstances in order to take care of themselves, their friends, and their neighbors. Social entrepreneurship, on the other hand, is a viable approach to combatting or reversing different economic and social crises, and their outcomes, as opposed to perpetuating them.

In Cuba, social entrepreneurship has grown in popularity over the last few years (see, e.g., Betancourt, 2017), and it certainly does not exist in a vacuum from the socialist political-economic ideologies which dominated for years. It therefore demonstrates additional extensions of "socialist entrepreneurship" (see Stein and Vertovec 2020: 184), where Cuban private sector actors draw from socialist collaborations, processes, and inspirations to conduct their everyday businesses. There are many examples of social entrepreneurship in Havana, however, here I focus on several themes and patterns that social entrepreneurs draw from to respond to their social and economic circumstances via clever combinations of formal and informal entrepreneurial strategies. Where possible, I draw from the PhotoVoice project's photos/captions to create these analyses.

Attending to economic (and other) disparities

Cuba is undergoing a severe economic crisis, one that began in the 1990s but has extended into the current moment. Based on previous chapters, this should already be abundantly clear. What remains unclear is how Cubans draw from entrepreneurial strategies in ways that help their communities and the residents within survive these economic and social crises. As discussed in chapter 6, the economic crisis has led to some other social crises that are experienced both inwardly and externally. For example, certain communities are

experiencing the effects of abandonment, discrimination, and other stigmas (racial, gendered, aged, and spatial). Furthermore, certain patterns have emerged that reveal the ways that people are handling the economic crisis, leading to particular social crises like the crisis of values or the spiritual crisis. **PhotoVoice Photo 7.1**, entitled "*Con un poco de amor*" (With a little bit of love), expresses these disparities.

PhotoVoice Photo 7.1 *Con un poco de amor / With a little bit of love*
Theme: Opportunities
Analysis: *Dos situaciones iguales con resultados distintos. Esfuerzo y tenacidad cambian la vida. Ejemplo de voluntad y amor pueden ayudar a regenerar abandono y vicio.* / Two equal situations with different results. Effort and tenacity change life. An example of will and love can help regenerate abandonment and vice.
Suggestion: *Se debe tener espíritu de lucha, arreglar todo lo que está a tu alrededor, unir las fuerzas. Mostrar al mundo que todo es posible si te lo propones, vale la pena ponerle un poco de amor y sacrificio.* / You must have a fighting spirit, fix everything around you, join forces. Show the world that everything is possible if you set your mind to it. It is worth putting a little love and sacrifice into it.

The photo shows two adjacent houses in *Cojímar*, a neighborhood in Eastern Havana. According to the artist-community leader, the houses were built at the same time but clearly one has fallen into disrepair. While the opening of the analysis - "Two equal situations with different results" – may be a bit reductionist (i.e., does not account for the disparities in personal life circumstances that can lead to this result), the end of the analysis coupled with the photo itself is a powerful representation of the combination of economic and social crises. As I described in chapter 6, as well as within some of the analysis above (in the section Acaparamiento: The "benefits" of hoarding), some people in Havana have felt abandoned in terms of their possibilities to generate viable sources of income or with regards to their access to resources, and in some cases have engaged in what can be potentially consider vice. The house on the left is supposed to be a representation of the possible outcomes of abandonment and vice.

PhotoVoice Photo 7.1 is a valuable point of departure to discuss the ways that social entrepreneurs have begun combatting the harmful effects of not only the economic crisis but also the fallouts from the social crises in Cuba (see chapter 5). The community leaders who submitted **PhotoVoice Photo 7.1** operate a sustainable local development project named *Artecorte*, which has converted a previously dilapidated alleyway in *Havana Vieja* (see **Figure 7.1**) into a vibrant business ecology, full of public and private businesses including a state-owned bar, a state-owned tech firm, a private art gallery, two private restaurants, and three (or more) Airbnb's. This alleyway is now called "*El Callejón de los Peluqueros*" (The Hairstylist's Alleyway) (see **Figure 7.2**) and a school, known as *La Escuela Comunitaria Artecorte* (The *Artecorte* Comunity School), sits at in the middle. At the school, young people (ages 17-25) without jobs or who do not go to school can apply

to enroll in a two-year barber/hairstyling degree program or a one-year bartender course. The school also regularly admits students with developmental or other motor-function disabilities into a longer program with no set timeframe but with the goal to help develop motor function as well as discover future opportunities for income generation. Finally, in 2019, the school opened an additional program that teaches manicure and pedicure skills to the mothers of children with developmental disabilities (who often enroll in the previously mentioned longer program). The goal of this program is to provide a viable employment opportunity that these mothers can operate out of their home while attending to their children with increased needs.

Figure 7.1 *Callejón de los peluqueros "before", photo courtesy of Papito Valladares*

Figure 7.2 *Callejón de los peluqueros "after", photo courtesy of Papito Valladares.*

The school is *Artecorte's* primary claim to fame, though they do operate other initiatives / ventures around *Havana Vieja* and which serve as important nodes to the school's initiatives of "providing tools and skills to a young group of workers who then become active socially and economically" (PhotoVoice gallery exhibition brochure, October 21, 2020). These nodes include a park for young children which has a space for a recently graduated student to work as a full-time barber and a kiosk that sells sodas, water, and small snacks mostly to tourists (because of the pricing) and is operated by a former convict from the community (T. Henken, 2019). Both small businesses within the park can keep all their earnings, though they have agreed to make sure the park remains clean and safe. Another node is a hair salon that serves deaf or hearing-impaired residents in Havana and that employs a recently graduated cohort of barbers/hairstylists who are hearing-impaired or mute. Furthermore, *Artecorte* works with a nearby old-folks home, where the students of *Artecorte* go every Wednesday to interact with the elderly population in their

community. Finally, *Artecorte* also offers free haircuts to anyone in the community in order to give the barber/hairstyling students the opportunity to practice their vocation.

These initiatives are demonstrations of how *Artecorte* tries to "fix everything around [them], [and] join forces [with members and entities in the community]." They also help "show the world that everything is possible if you set your mind to it" (both quotes from the suggestion portion of **PhotoVoice Photo 7.1**). The leaders at *Artecorte* realized that there were certain fallouts from the economic crisis as well as the social crises described in chapter 6. They met regularly to discuss how they could better address the needs of their community, including bringing in people who have often been abandoned by society at large, like people with developmental or other disabilities and their care takers, the elderly, or stigmatized groups of young people (largely people of color) and who were potentially at risk of falling into "vice." According to Papito:

> *Artecorte* has many goals – we want to improve the quality of life for our neighbors, we promote socially responsible local entrepreneurship, guarantee the integration between different generations as well as gender equity – but it's also important to say that we are socially committed, which is different than social responsibility. We are socially committed to our most vulnerable youth; the kids who don't have work, who don't go to school, who are deaf, or have social issues… throughout our curriculum [with the extracurricular work they do at the old-folks home or at other events where they cut hair or tend bar] we are also teaching the youth that they matter, that they can make a difference, and that their society needs them. (Interview March 2019)

Artecorte has become a model for sustainable social entrepreneurship and has often been discussed during many academic conversations on the social and solidarity economy in Cuba (T. Henken, 2019; see, e.g., Iglesias & Valladares, 2017). Papito regularly emphasized that he was socially committed, which was different than socially responsible. Social responsibility is a sense of obligation to your community; something you know you *should* do but is not necessarily a vow to said community. Social commitment revolves around a link to your community, at once a sense of belonging and empowerment, and the

desire to make it better. For him, reducing stigmas and encouraging personal development is integral to forming this linkage, developing a sense of belonging, making them feel empowered, and getting people committed to making it better world. He envisions that forming a solidarity economy is important for this because it shows that social commitment is a viable, if not desirable, approach to improving one's life and the life of their community. As he describes:

> The main goal is to make sure that your own environment [i.e., neighborhood] is taken care of. If my neighborhood is prospering, then I [as a businessperson] am prospering Within such a framework, it is important to realize that every person is valued based upon what they can contribute. Some have money, some have knowledge, some have labor [or skills], and others have time [to give to their community]. All are necessary, and while each person may only be able to provide one or just a few of those resources, they still help build that sense of commitment. (Interview March 2019)

He continued, focusing on his alleyway:

> In 1990, there was only one private business, my barbershop. Now, there are 23 private businesses, and some state ones too. In just the private businesses, there are over 100 people employed. All these people pay taxes which have helped develop the public spaces, but all these people are also socially committed. They volunteer what resources they can, and we have improved the culture of our small community and given access to those who most need it [through the school and their broader initiatives]. (Interview March 2019)

Papito's emphasis is on concepts like "prosperity," "empowerment," the business "environment" (i.e., immediate neighborhood), and a "sense of belonging." He told me, "how can I expect my business to prosper if my neighbors feel disempowered, if they don't feel like they belong" (Conversation June 2019). For Papito, this was integral to the economic crisis and how it ultimately (vis a vis the subsequent social crises) ruined people's sense of belonging. "You have start with the social and end with the economic, not the other way around. If I achieve making people feel like they belong, like they too are empowered to make a change, then my [personal] economy will be just fine" (Conversation June 2019).

While *Artecorte* is a fantastic example of how social entrepreneurs are fighting to improve the lives of their community constituents, it is certainly not the only one. *Proyecto Akokán* is a quickly growing grassroots "non-profit initiative that works with, from, and for the *Los Pocitos* community in the Marianao municipality, Havana" (PhotoVoice gallery exhibition brochure, October 21, 2020). Their organization is run by Yoel, a young man in his 30s who was a former college professor before devoting most his time to the *Los Pocitos* community. The organization is funded by a small café owned and operated by the director's wife, Regla. The café is unlike most other cafés in Cuba. Regla takes reservations before buying seasonal items, making a spread of mostly finger foods, and laying out the food in the living room of her own home. The prices are higher than most cafes in Cuba (roughly $20 per person), meaning they almost exclusively serve foreign guests. However, the proceeds go almost entirely to *Proyecto Akokán*, save a small proportion for themselves to live off of.

The income from *Café Oddara* mostly funds a library Yoel and Regla have installed in an abandoned stadium adjacent to *Los Pocitos*. There, they host programming for the children of *Los Pocitos* a few days a week. They also host adults from the community for weekly, sometimes multiple times a week, meetings and workshops on a variety of topics like herbal medicine, permaculture, and sustainable development, just to name a few. Furthermore, they actively host festivals that invite other Cubans as well as international guests into their community for panel discussions and fun activities that encourage positive interactions between residents of *Los Pocitos* and broader communities; their largest being "*Festival Akokán*" – an annual festival where they host three days of programming, including ongoing mural painting in the community.

PhotoVoice Photo 7.2, entitled "*Nosotros*" (Us), is an example of the mural paintings. Through their "adopt a house" program, they invite people to either pay for the supplies for a local artist to paint a mural on the front of a house, like you see in **PhotoVoice Photo 7.2**, or the individual can bring the supplies and paint the house themselves, so long as they demonstrate their artistic ability beforehand. Anyone who can afford it can do it, meaning it is open to Cubans the same as it is to foreigners. Yoel and Regla realized that by improving the aesthetics of their community they could perhaps improve people's self-esteem about where they live. In other words, this program was conceptualized with spatial stigma in mind, even if Yoel and Regla do not necessarily utilize that terminology. They also realized that painting the houses would draw more people into their community and hopefully instigate more opportunities for *Los Pocitos'* residents.

PhotoVoice Photo 7.2 *Nosotros / Us*
Theme: Challenges
Analysis: *El arte lo embellece todo, incluso la precariedad. Explosión de formas y color que se apodera de los Pocitos.* / Art beautifies everything, including precariousness. This is an explosion of shapes and color that takes over Los Pocitos.
Suggestion: *Una invitación del proyecto Akokán a intervenir desde el arte en la comunidad partiendo de la fusión belleza-funcionalidad.* / An invitation from Proyecto Akokán to intervene in the community with art, based on the fusion between beauty and functionality.

The caption of **PhotoVoice Photo 7.2** also explains the intention of this program, and helps reveal how *Proyecto Akokán* carries out their specific brand of social entrepreneurship to improve the economic and social well-being of their community. The analysis reveals how art has the possibility to "beautify" or, in some cases, hide the precariousness that exists behind the walls of the building. According to Yoel, "*Los Pocitos* is one of the poorest neighborhoods in Havana, with the majority of its residents being from other parts of Cuba, meaning many of them cannot find legal employment and cannot access social benefits

because their IDs – with their addresses in another municipality or province of Cuba – don't allow them to pick up their rations in Havana" (Conversation during site visit, May 2019). As such, they must be creative in the ways they attend to this community's greatest needs. As **PhotoVoice Photo 7.2's** suggestion proposes, one of their primary strategies is to invite outsiders to "intervene in the community with art" – with the adopt-a-house program – or their time vis a vis Café Oddara or at their different festivals. These are all innovative, creative, and flexible strategies that attract people to the community who will hopefully develop meaningful connections that, in addition to helping the residents find value in their own spaces, can also result in much needed material or economic resources for the community.

Artecorte and *Proyeto Akokán* are two examples of successful social entrepreneurship in Havana. However, while those two organizations have worked hard to achieve their goals, other organizations have faced nearly insurmountable barriers that have hindered their opportunities for success. For example, *Proyecto Vida* from *Vieja Linda*, located in the municipality of *Arroyo Naranjo* faces serious inequalities, stigma, and other social and economic crises, despite their leaders having continued to fight for economic and social inclusion for over 20 years. According to the PhotoVoice gallery exhibition brochure, October 21, 2020:

> Proyecto Vida is a family-based community project whose objective is to transform their community through lifestyle changes. They propose abandoning the inappropriate habits, vices, and bad habits that exist in the community, giving the opportunity to incorporate work, permaculture, and love of life in the inhabitants of this community.

According to the leaders:

> We have been operating for over 20 years. We help young people find work because there are few opportunities in our neighborhood… We also help community members with drug and alcohol addictions as well as victims of domestic violence. Through these activities, we realized some of our 'clients' lacked access to nutritious food and clean water so we

> started giving courses on healthy lifestyle practices, like permaculture and the importance of boiling water. More recently, we also began programming for elderly people who suffer from boredom or depression. (PhotoVoice Workshop September 2019)

This wide array of initiatives has overextended the organization and material and financial resources have become a significant challenge. "We rely on partnerships with other entities – like gardeners, doctors, or the university – to carry out our programming. But, in terms of resources [like money or material items], we're at a crossroads. We don't know if we can continue helping our community," the director told me (PhotoVoice Workshop September 2019).

This organization's leaders turned to other organizations in the social advocacy community in Havana who, having had positive experiences using entrepreneurship in socially conscious ways, recommended that they reconceptualize their approach. This interaction took place at a meeting between member organizations of *La Red de Proyectos Communitarios de la Habana* (The Network of Community Projects of Havana) – a collective of over 20 community organizations who work together to solve common challenges and support one another through consistent community (inter)action, and which I describe in more depth in the conclusion. Thankfully, *Proyecto Vida* heeded their advice.

First, they created quadrants in their neighborhood and appointed two leaders in each one. Those leaders were made responsible for finding resources for their community members, giving more space for the organization's core management group to focus on other tasks. Second, they decided to focus the organization on permaculture, integrating older and younger people into discussions and activities around the usage of already existing land and ecological resources. Third, following the advice of a business mentor from *La Red*, *Proyecto Vida* conducted market research in their community and discovered

that a day care center for children would be the best opportunity to finance their organization as well as attend to a community need.

While they have been delayed in opening the day care center because of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as some other hurdles described below, the primary objective will be to "help women incorporate themselves into work, knowing and trusting that their children are being taken care of" (License Proposal November 22, 2020). The expected results are to (1) help more women and men join working life without caring for children during the day or being concerned for them and (2) give the possibility of employment in the vicinity of their homes to several people who will not depend on transport to get to their workplace, of course with appropriate conditions and fair wages.

This initiative further illustrates the inequities and inequalities that this, and many other communities have faced. As I described in chapter 3, women have domestic responsibilities that often outweigh their participation in work outside the home. For women who have children, these responsibilities become ever more demanding because women are often demanded to take care of the children. A day care center could help ameliorate this circumstance for women in this community and allow them to find work outside their homes.

Building a bridge between the state and el pueblo: Forming bonds between public and private entities and actors

While working with social entrepreneurs in Havana I began to envision their activities, strategies, and behaviors as bridges between the people and the government. Through these bridges social entrepreneurs were able to carry out some of the promised social welfare

programming that had been disappearing in years past; what would be a tremendously important linkage since many Cubans I spoke with regularly expressed their frustration with the government as more of a burden than anything else. I discovered this bridge metaphor because many social entrepreneurs regularly expressed the importance of partnerships with entities and actors that were external to their organizations, often times state agencies, religious groups, or foreign entities like tourists, universities, or embassies. These relationships were fundamental to the growth and prosperity of not only the specific social entrepreneurial venture but also the community it served. **PhotoVoice Photo 7.3**, entitled "*D' Akokán*" (From the Heart), is a direct representation of the importance of external partnerships.

PhotoVoice Photo 7.3 *D' Akokán / From the Heart*
Theme: Primary Goal
Analysis: *La instantánea muestra el cartel del II Festival Akokán de arte e innovación social, promovido y gestionado por el proyecto Akokán Los Pocitos para contribuir al desarrollo integral de la comunidad y se puede apreciar la incorporación de uno de los templos de la Sociedad Religiosa Abakuá de Marianao.* / This snapshot shows the poster of the II Akokán Festival of art and social innovation, promoted and managed by the Proyecto Akokán in Los Pocitos and contributing to the integral development of the community. This photo also shows the incorporation of one of the temples of the Abakuá Religious Society of Marianao.
Suggestion: *Se promueve la articulación del proyecto con los líderes formales e informales y demás actores del barrio.* / Promote the connection of the project with formal and informal leaders and other actors in the neighborhood.

For *Proyecto Akokán*, their relationship with different *Abakúa* temples has been fundamental to their success in their community. *Abakúa* is a male-only secret society and Afro-Cuban religious sect. It is often stereotyped as a "macho underworld (*hampa*) of delinquents and violent criminals, mysticism, superstition, and barrio politics…" (Routon, 2008, p. 382). *Los Pocitos* is one of the most densely packed *Abakúa* centers, with over a

dozen temples in the communities small footprint. As such, *Los Pocitos* is often stigmatized as a violent, macho space full of delinquents and *guaperia* (confrontative, aggressive macho behavior). Regardless of whether or not this was true, *Proyecto Akokán* knew that they had to engage with local leaders in order to promote their initiative (see also Lubiński, 2020).

As the caption for **PhotoVoice Photo 7.3** reveals, for "the integral development of the community," it is necessary to "promote the connection of [*Proyecto Akokán*] with formal and informal leaders and other actors int the neighborhood." This sort of mindset, and the partnerships that have been built around it, have been mutually beneficial for both *Proyecto Akokán* and the *Abakúa* communities. The partnership serves the interest of the community organization by creating important pathways and trust with the most vulnerable or stigmatized community members. It serves the interest of the stigmatized community members who see their (religious or secret society) leaders forming tangible bonds with local development initiatives. As Lubiński (2020) also observed, "Some of the Abakúa leaders in the area expressed their support for the project and lent temple spaces for workshops and other activities, seeing that the project can potentially help with resolving certain issues within the community" (95).

Beyond informal relationships, *Proyecto Akokán* has also benefited from relationships they have developed with formal, state-led entities. For example, they have regularly worked with *Talleres de Transformación Integral de Barrio* (TTIB) (Workshops for the Integral Transformation of the District). These workshops are government offices (more or less) that consist of groups of multidisciplinary specialists – like architects, engineers, social scientists, and social workers – who seek to improve the quality of life

through engagement with neighborhoods and neighborhood organizations in Havana. They officially began in 2008, though there are rooted in an initiative called *el Grupo para el Desarollo Integral de la Capital* (Group for the Comprehensive Development of the Capital) which started in 1987 as a mechanism to advise the government on how to transition urban policy towards participatory forms of urban planning (Anguelovski, 2014, pp. 89–90). According to Yoel, “Not every municipality has a TTIB, and not every municipality with a TTIB has a good one,” he laughed. “We are fortunate because we have one, and they are pretty good… They helped us secure [and maintain] the space that we use for the library, what we consider the headquarters for *Proyecto Akokán*” (Conversation May 2019).

Without the TTIB, there’s a chance that *Proyecto Akokán* would have lost their library space after the local government found out that they were operating in an abandoned stadium and thought it was not up to code. Since they regularly host children and adolescents in the space this was a big concern. However, specialists from the TTIB explained that it was indeed in sound condition, structurally, and that it was providing a much-needed service to the community, so it was also deserving of its own space. Had they lost this space; this would have been a devastating blow to their model of social entrepreneurship since the library served as an important resource to introduce visitors to the community.

Public-private alliances are also fundamental in the search for a healthy, prosperous local economy. Perhaps there is no better example of how these alliances function than *Artecorte*. For the past 22 years, *Artecorte* has cultivated these relationships, realizing that a healthy ecosystem includes public and private entities working together to

generate/cultivate skill sets and increase a variety of benefits to their neighborhood (see **Figure 7.3**).

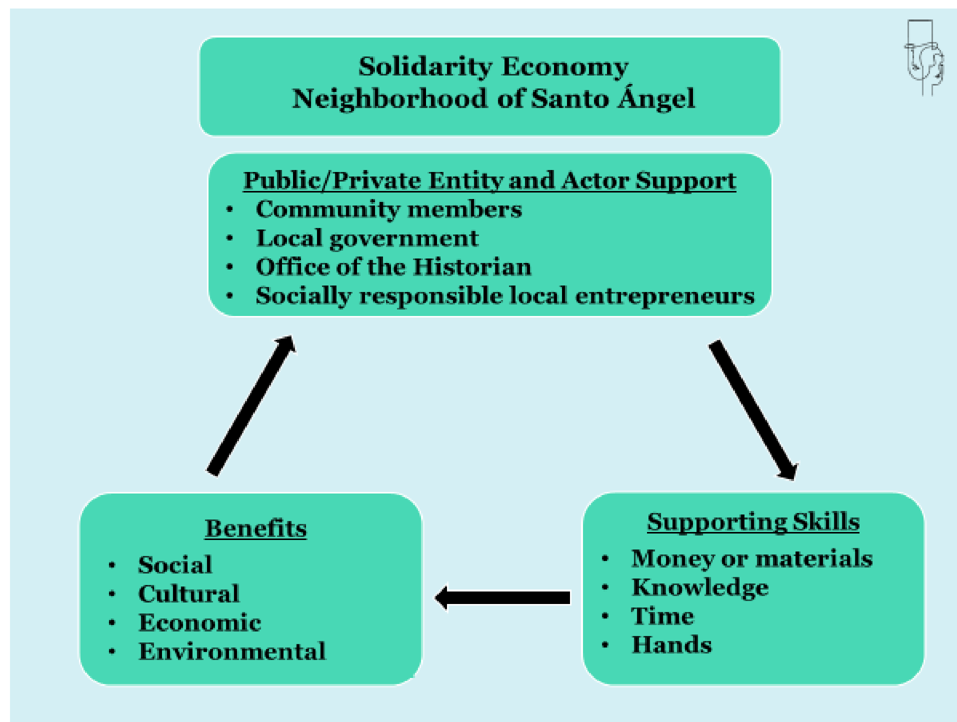


***Figure 7.3** Solidarity Economy of Santo Ángel, adapted from "Artecorte: A Community Development Project" PowerPoint presentation.*

The solidarity economy illustrated in **Figure 7.3** works as a cycle. Different public/private entities or actors provide their support through four main resources – economic or material resources (money or materials), knowledge, time, or their manual labor (hands) – of which are used to improve social, cultural, economic, or environmental benefits to the community. These benefits then attract more public/private support, and the cycle begins anew. Public-private partnerships create the infrastructure for a socially committed workforce and under such a model, both sectors grow together.

No government organization has bought into this philosophy more than the Office of the Historian of the City of Havana. Through their Master Plan – a set of initiatives designed to advance redevelopment aims along the lines of social welfare, political

participation, and economic well-being (see Donaghy & Carr-Lemke, 2020) – they positioned *Artecorte* as a critical tool to implement many of those initiatives. Furthermore, they have helped facilitate even more alliances that are critical to *Artecorte*'s (extreme) growth. As a sociologist commented at a social and solidarity economy conference I attended in Havana (name removed to protect their identity), "Papito is lucky because he has the support of an office like Plan Maestro [Master Plan]. This is rare. In other municipalities of the city, there are rarely offices like this" (Conference on Social and Solidarity Economies, June 2019).

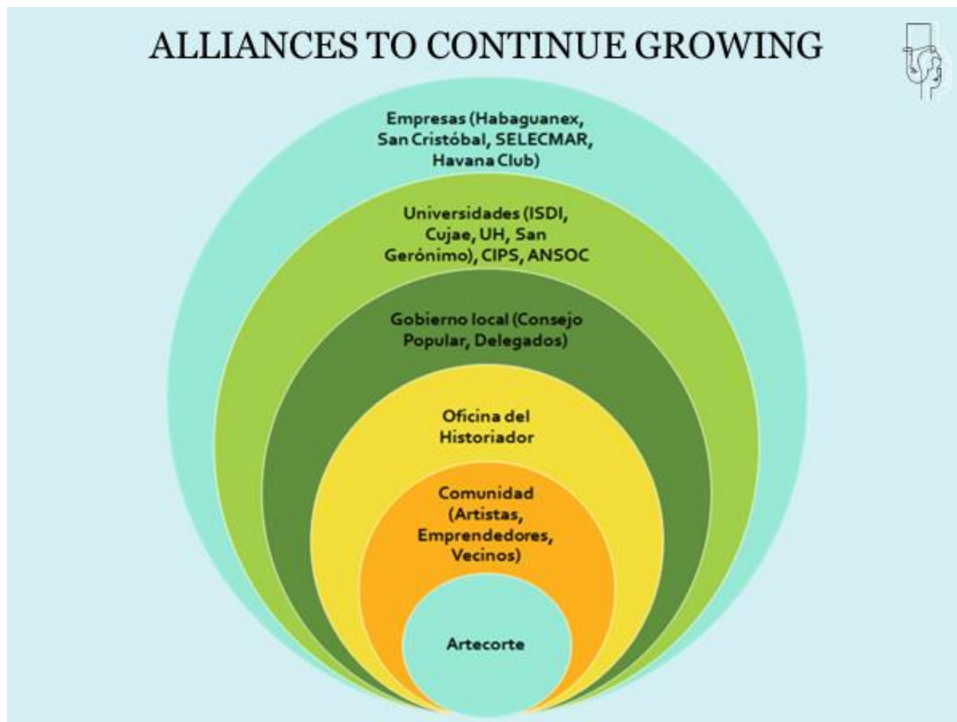


Figure 7.4 *Alliances to Continue Growing, taken from "Artecorte: A Community Development Project" PowerPoint presentation.*

Figure 7.4 is a representation of the alliances that the Master Plan has helped *Artecorte* achieve. In the figure, *Artecorte* is at the center and the surrounding circles identify important public/private partnerships with ascending sized organizations. These alliances

permit *Artecorte* to pull off their impressive list of programming including previously unmentioned cultural events like concerts for university students, environmentally focused initiatives like community cleanups and trashcan installations, economic benefits like conferences on social/solidarity economies as well as employment opportunities on cruiseships for students of the program through *Artecorte's* alliance with the Cuban hospitality company *Habaguanex*.

These partnerships with government agencies, state-owned entities, as well as the private sector, are critical for the success of many social entrepreneurship in Havana. In situations where an organization is unable to form these bonds, their success is severely limited. Take for example *Proyecto Vida*. In the parts of their project where they have developed these alliances, they have been very successful. They provide a master's program for older people in their community through a partnership with local universities. The universities send professors to volunteer their time and teach courses and, at the end of the courses, provide diplomas which elevate the prestige of the initiative. Through this program they have managed to successfully engage their elderly population for a few years now.

However, as I mentioned above, they have always found it very difficult to discover the financial and material resources to sustain all the other initiatives they would like to offer. While they have identified a need for child-care facilities which would at once satisfy some communal demands as well as provide an income for the organization to use to improve their commitment, it has been an arduous road trying to open this business. Besides the difficulties presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, they have also had trouble access the necessary financial investment to make this business a viable option (e.g., to pay

for repairs on a building so as to safely take care of children). They told me about this problem and said that they have been in touch with investors who were interested because they recognized the possibility for a quick return on their monies. I recommended they provide the investors with a copy of their study of the market to make it explicit that this was indeed a necessary project in their community. It turned out that their market study was mostly based on anecdotal evidence. When I said they should go to the state to ask for statistics on women in the workforce in their community they said, "The state doesn't have those statistics, or they don't want to give them to use. There isn't much control [on that subject] and people get very flustered and nervous… you ask for some information and they don't want to help you. They're afraid they'll lose their jobs" (WhatsApp Conversation July 2020)

As Papito later explained, "This is why so many organizations look for foreign investment [via donations, tourism dollars, etc.]. But this is not sustainable. They need to also provide a service to their community, with the idea being that the community will fall in love with you. From there, it's easier to form alliances. Public-Private alliances are what make an organization sustainable" (Conversation July 2019). This is obviously a catch-22. Social entrepreneurs need public-private alliances to make their initiatives feasible and to generate more external support. But, if they come from an area that lacks in those sorts of infrastructures, like *Vieja Linda*, then they are seemingly always at square one. While tourism dollars do help sustain Artecorte, Papito was explicit that they do not do things for tourists, per se, they do things for Cubans which attracts tourists who want to participate in those activities too. *Artecorte* helps improve life in their corner of *Havana Vieja* which

attracts tourism to that area, thereby helping sustain *Artecorte* from an economic perspective; so on and so forth.

Three pillars rise together: Turning philosophy into culture

Each initiative and each alliance are important individual contributions that lead to impactful change at the community level. For Papito, it was a simple proposal:

> You have to start with the micro. Small social transformations – treating your neighbor better, inviting them to participate in whatever your initiative is, that is was leads to physical transformations. It's the feeling of belonging that everyone longs for. Forming alliances with them, your neighbors, allows you to grow together. (Conference on Social and Solidarity Economies, June 2019)

According to expert Cuban economist Juan Triana, "The government isn't thinking about the micro. Hotel Packard and Hotel [Paseo del Prado] are good examples. They plan and execute those hotels but have no plan for the neighborhood that surrounds it" (Conference on Social and Solidarity Economies, June 2019).

Macro-economic projects like the development of 5-star hotels in Havana (e.g., Hotel Packard and Hotel Paseo del Prado] are large scale investment initiatives which are supposed to generate much needed economic growth in Cuba but have seemingly forgot about the general public. They are often situated in the middle of neighborhoods that suffer from collapsing buildings, poor living conditions, and generally terrible levels of poverty for most its residents. Indeed, one evening when I was at a friend's house in *Centro Habana* when a rolling blackout shut off the power in the entire neighborhood. To get a reprieve from the heat that took over the house, in addition to the insufferable fog of mosquitoes that set in, we all decided to go down to the street for some fresh air. When we walked

outside there was an audible buzzing in the air. For a few minutes we could not figure out what it was. When Javier, my friend's son, went across the street to say hello to some friends who were outside for the same reason, he turned back and yelled, "It's the Hotel Packard!" We all looked at each other in disbelief, realizing that the Hotel Packard was literally "buzzing" with energy. My friend Raul looked down and shook his head, "See? It's fucking shameless. The government doesn't care about the Cuban people, it only cares about its pockets" (Conversation June 2019).

This vignette is but one example that expresses the drive that Cuban social entrepreneurs have to make changes at the micro level. As Triana explained, the government has demonstrated that they perhaps do not care about the micro. Instead, social entrepreneurs have sought out innovative ways to make sure that their communities – the micro – are attended to. In order to achieve lasting positive change, though, Papito believes there are three pillars that need to be elevated together and which will generate a level of sustainability for future changes to take place. "It's a question of the society or the environment that surrounds us all, the economy, *and* our culture," he said. "Culture is the spinal column of everything, it's what controls the rest of the body," he said, pointing to his back. "Once we learn – and truly believe – that our prosperity is dependent on the prosperity of our neighbor we will be able overcome the moral and spiritual poverty that we are currently facing. To truly achieve this though, you have to work at the micro-level. Empower people and you will get them to commit" (Conversation April 2019).

Many social entrepreneurs I worked with expressed similar sentiments, that it was not just an economic problem but rather looking at this from a social as well as the environmental perspective were fundamental to achieving prosperity. The goal for many

of the social entrepreneurs I encountered was to turn their philosophies into culture; something that would be ingrained in a person and converted into a way of being. The best way to do that, many mentioned, was to effect tangible changes into their communities with the hopes that these visible, tangible changes would inspire people to continue fighting for social, environmental, and economic well-being. **PhotoVoice Photo 7.4**, entitled "WiFi," is a nod to those tangible changes. The artists-community leaders who submitted the photo had the intention of converting this street corner – which had been full of trash for as long as they could remember – into a WiFi park. Currently, the closest WiFi park is about a 30-minute walk away, meaning that residents usually need to spend hours of their time if they want to connect to the internet.

PhotoVoice Photo 7.4 *WiFi / WiFi*
Theme: Opportunities
Analysis: *Conéctate contra la indolencia y el desinterés. Creemos juntos.* / Connect against indolence and disinterest. Let's create together.
Suggestion: *No seas parte del problema, se parte de la solución y la esperanza.* / Don't be part of the problem, be part of the solution and the hope.

These visible modifications in society, the artists-community leaders of **PhotoVoice Photo 7.4** hoped, would catalyze a feeling of belonging for people in their community. They are opportunities to express to people that while yes there were once problems (like the piles of trash on this corner) there is still the possibility to "be a part of the solution" and to generate hope for future improvement. If the residents of their community continue to feel like they come from situations of failure – like young people from *Vieja Linda* felt when they decided to not even enter *Artecorte* to apply for a position in the school (see Chapter

5), then they will continue to think they cannot succeed. Indeed, many people from different stigmatized or disadvantaged communities across Havana feel disempowered. They are therefore less likely to contribute to positive social change because they do not feel like they can achieve it themselves. This is clearly a huge problem because it means that some Cubans feel incapable based on their home environments and in comparison, to the success that other people or other communities have had.

In essence, what Papito, Yoel, Veronica, and other social entrepreneurs are doing is trying to combat these feelings of unworthiness and instill a new sense of self-esteem into their communities. Their local economic development work is predicated on the conversion of philosophy into culture. That is, the philosophies that surround the best ways to attain inclusive and equitable economic growth are predicated on the notion that people must believe in and push those philosophical terms forward themselves.

Chapter Conclusion

La Red de Proyectos Comunitarios and the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead

In the past 25 years, Havana like the rest of Cuba has undergone significant political economic transformations, including the proliferation of market-oriented sectors and increased possibilities for foreign investment. These are historic shifts for such a strict state socialist economy, but they have also revealed reemergent socioeconomic rifts (see, e.g., de la Fuente, 2001b; Espina Prieto, 2013). This is a complicated phenomenon because these transformations at once ignited different sectors of the economy, drew support for local (macro-)development projects, and became important sources of personal income; while

also fueling social and economic disadvantages that led to macro-economic dependency issues and micro-level inequities and inequalities. Consequently, certain areas in Havana or certain groups of Cubans have begun to flourish while others have not (Mesa-lago, 2002).

In this context, social entrepreneurship has become a pathway for converting some of the positive transformations into tools to try to mitigate or reverse the negative socioeconomic outcomes described above, and many social entrepreneurs have formed community organizations to address these circumstances. However, Havana, with a population of roughly 2 million people, is made up of a wide range of sociocultural diversity. So, like many other urban contexts, each neighborhood or each sociocultural sphere has unique histories, local and global connections, and codes of conduct (see also Pardo and Prato 2012); meaning there are also nearly infinite ways to attend to community needs.

Despite operating in separate urban spaces, on different issues, and with a wide variety of styles or approaches, many community organizations have experienced similar challenges regardless of their sociocultural diversity. Indeed, while I conducted ethnographic research with seven unique organizations in Havana from 2018-2019, the organizations' leaders repeatedly described similar difficulties accessing material or financial resources and challenges navigating bureaucratic hurdles, in addition to the challenges they had initially set out to resolve (e.g., empowering their constituents and search for community prosperity). At first, however, there lacked infrastructure for these organizations to communicate their experiences with one another. So, even though they would all likely face similar challenges throughout their individual trajectories, they had

difficulties sharing their thoughts on potential or already successful solutions to their problems.

With the help of Papito's expertise, drive, and connections, we established a network of community organizations with the goal that they would help each other solve their common challenges and support one another through community (inter)action. As I described in Chapter 2, the name of this network was *La Red de Proyectos Comunitarios* or *La Red* for short. On May 27, 2019, we hosted *La Red's* first gathering. Community leaders from 13 community organizations in 9 municipalities of Havana attended. Though there were no official criteria for participation, all the members were legally recognized grass-roots organizations. The goal of the first meeting was to introduce the participating organizations to each other, with the hopes they would then use each other's experiences to help solve their greatest challenges. Papito also provided mentorship to the other organizations, offering his knowledge so the other leaders could apply it in their home communities as they saw fit. *La Red* had immediate success. Within the first month, the group produced three successful events. First, they hosted an obstacle course race on the local streets of Havana Vieja to raise awareness about fitness and exercise. Then they hosted an Olympics of local traditional games (e.g., jump-rope, *chivichana* cart races, hop-scotch, etc.) which attracted more than 100 participants (roughly aged 5-80) from 10 separate neighborhoods in Havana. A few weeks later, *La Red* hosted a beach cleanup with roughly 150 people from 8 neighborhoods in attendance.

Since its initiation, the goal has always remained the same: build networks and create the infrastructure for positive social change despite distances, differences, and difficulties. As **PhotoVoice Photo 7.5**, entitled "*Crecer*" (Grow), expresses, "[look] for

links with other projects in order to grow. The place does not matter if our roots do not grow firm." For *Artecorte*, the organization that submitted this photo, they knew that they couldn't recreate the success they had in *Santo Ángel* in another part of the city because, as Papito explained, "I wasn't from there, they [the community members] wouldn't listen to me" (Interview February 2019). So, it became critical for them to reach other organizations, open a dialogue with them, and help them effect the change that was desired in the other community. They knew that the other organizations existed, like the plant growing out of an unexpected place, and that with a little help they could grow strong and solid even "in the midst of difficulties."

PhotoVoice Photo 7.5 *Crecer / Grow*
Theme: Primary Goal

Analysis: *Es una edificación en malas condiciones sin techo para protegerse. Sin embargo, hay una planta creciendo en medio de las dificultades.* / It is a building in poor condition with no roof to protect itself. However, there is a plant growing in the midst of difficulties.
Suggestion: *Fortalecer nuestro proyecto buscando vínculos con otros proyectos para crecer. No importa el lugar si no enraizar nuestras raíces.* / Strengthen our project, looking for links with other projects in order to grow. The place does not matter if our roots do not grow firm.

While they have the base formed to continue effecting positive change through their networked initiatives, it will of course be a challenge to maintain their momentum (see also Cameron, 2007). As I described in Chapter 2, a primary goal of the PhotoVoice initiative was to help the participating organizations form a more cohesive bond and use the photos and their captions as a "shared language" to discover and address underlying challenges. That PhotoVoice project was helpful in instigating those goals (see Vertovec forthcoming) and since the end of the PhotoVoice project, *La Red* has implemented a few other initiatives to catalyze a continued search for and resolution of common challenges. The first was a commitment to meet twice a year in a conference like setting, where the different organizations have time dedicated to present their key issues as well as participate in smaller breakout sessions to facilitate group cohesion. The first conference took place on February 3, 2020. Unfortunately, 2020's second meeting never occurred because of COVID-19.

During the February 2020 meeting, the group decided to adopt the utilization of social media applications (Facebook and WhatsApp) to continue facilitating meaningful interactions. They also changed the name of *La Red* to '*La Red de Acciones Comunitarias'* (The Network of Community Actions) in order to be more inclusive of projects with predetermined end dates (carried out by separate individuals or small groups) and to account for organizations that help facilitate festivals or individual actions across Havana. It remains to be seen whether these adjustments will promote inclusivity or, as some of the

founding members have wondered; will it push *La Red* back to facilitating individual community actions as opposed to meaningful interactions geared towards the discovery and resolution of common challenges?

La Red's usage of social media could also be rife with inequities and inconsistencies. On one hand, they successfully used the WhatsApp group to generate material and financial resources to help one member organization recoup their livelihood after a fire destroyed most their property. Some of the less well-known organizations have also found some success in publicizing their own initiatives on Facebook and have begun to discover new support both inside and outside Cuba. On the other hand, the majority of the communications within *La Red's* Facebook and WhatsApp groups have celebrated past accomplishments with photos and videos of different events, as opposed to calling for and garnering support for future events. Moreover, some of member organizations do not have funds they can devote to actively participating in the group chat. These two latter points will be critical for *La Red* to address, especially if they hope to continue their momentum as well as keep discovering and resolving common challenges across communities.

CHAPTER EIGHT | Conclusion

I began this research with one major goal in mind – to discover the innovative even if sometimes informal entrepreneurial strategies that Cubans use to navigate their biggest opportunities and challenges. After trips back and forth to the island since 2012, as well as 15 months of dissertation research from 2018-2019, I felt prepared and compelled to share the diverse narratives I discovered and the rationalities behind some of the most unique and effective strategies different Cuban entrepreneurs utilized.

As this research reveals, these economic activities are indeed entrepreneurial responses to some of the greatest challenges in Cuba's current social and economic landscapes. In chapters 1 and 2 I framed the research problem and laid out the methodology I used for conducting this research. Chapter 3 provided the background for the economic crisis which ultimately led to the emergence of authorized entrepreneurship as well as the growth of inequities and inequalities in Havana, specifically. Chapter 4-7 described how state policies and regulations as well as the underlying narratives of inequity and inequality that have gripped Havana in the past few decades have shaped entrepreneurship, and how, in some cases, Cubans have used entrepreneurial strategies to innovate and instigate personal and communal opportunities.

I conclude the dissertation in this chapter. Specifically, I describe the major findings and key analysis I generated to attend to the different research questions and objectives. Then, I describe some current considerations that have come to light since finishing the data collection phase of the research, and how those considerations impact some of the broader themes I covered throughout the dissertation. The current considerations focus mainly on the COVID-19 global pandemic, the monetary reform currently underway in

Cuba, and some executive orders Donald J. Trump implemented to strengthen the effect of the US blockade on Cuba. In the final section, I describe some potential future research having to do with the ways that inequities, inequalities, spatial stigma, and entrepreneurship may interconnect and shape health outcomes for Cubans, as well as the possibility (or challenges) for entrepreneurship to address some of the challenges covered here, in this chapter, and other chapters in the dissertation.

Analysis and Major Findings

Entrepreneurship is a highly complex, multi-dimensional activity, which involves people, ideas, and behaviors from a variety of sociocultural spheres. It is an economic activity that is shaped by state policies and regulations, while also being an important resource for generating personal wealth even in some scenarios where someone may be otherwise dispossessed from broader society or other economic behaviors. Entrepreneurship has also been proven as an effective means for generating positive social change or at least individual economic opportunities vis a vis economic transformations which otherwise instigate negative socioeconomic outcomes, such as the inequities, inequalities, stigmas, and stereotypes that have emerged in broad-sweeping form since the economic crisis in Cuba began in the 1990s. Using ethnographic methods in addition to helping facilitate a participatory photography methodology (PhotoVoice), all under a Community-Based Participatory Research approach, I have worked to present a more complex, intersectional narrative of entrepreneurship by exploring the different strategies and rationalities that arise from unique socioeconomic circumstances. I conducted this research with four main

objectives in mind (a combination of the eight objectives as well as the four research questions listed together in Chapter 3):

1) Understand how people engaged in entrepreneurship conceptualize, experience, and respond to state policies and regulations in addition to overarching narratives of privilege or oppression.

2) Examine the opportunities and challenges that emerge from the intersection between social and demographic differences and state policies and regulations.

3) Analyze the entrepreneurial strategies that emerge for differently position people and in differently positioned communities.

4) Identify the subjective logics that cohere around these entrepreneurial strategies, and how they relate to demographic, social, and economic inequities and inequalities.

Objective 1

The first objective of this study was to understand how people engaged in entrepreneurship conceptualize, experience, and respond to state policies and regulations in addition to overarching narratives of privilege or oppression. Chapter 4 is an obvious starting point for addressing this objective, as it reveals how informal entrepreneurial strategies can be acts of resistance. The initial choice of engaging in entrepreneurship is often tied to the glim prospects Cubans have with regards to work in the state sector and the limited possibilities they have to make up for reduced social welfare programs since the devastating economic crisis began in the 1990s. The subjective logics of certain entrepreneurial behaviors – including the myriad ways people access material inputs, satisfy consumer desires, or use (or not) licenses – are often direct responses to the strict policies and regulations which govern, and hinder, entrepreneurial ventures.

Chapters 6 and 7 also revealed how Cubans conceptualize, experience, and respond to overarching narratives of privilege or oppression through a diverse range of entrepreneurial behaviors that counteract the social crises laid out in Chapter 5. Specifically, in Chapter 5 I described how stigmas and stereotypes have intersected with the inequities and inequalities that grew from economic crisis and associated political-economic transformations – such as the increased promotion of the international tourism industry – as well as the social crises defined by a loss of values and spirituality (i.e., belief). This helped bring into relief different scenarios where marginalized Cubans (e.g., Black Cubans or Cubans from so-called "delinquency centers") were dispossessed from socioeconomic belonging or, at least, made to believe they were not privy to lucrative opportunities because of their perceived past failures.

While these observations did reveal glim realities for some marginalized Cubans, Chapters 6 and 7 discussed a variety of ways that Cubans counteracted these narratives in personal ways and with their communities in mind. Chapter 6, in particular, described some personal responses in terms of marginalized Cubans who have discovered innovative ways to make a living in the lucrative tourism industry, beyond the oft-studied sex work industry. I drew from ethnographic vignettes of dance instructors and front-of-the-house tourism employees to reveal how they employ stereotypes of themselves to generate economic opportunities and gateways to valuable local/global relationships. In Chapter 7, I raised the level of abstraction to examine key features of social entrepreneurship in Havana; that is, the ways that Cubans have conceptualized, realized, and utilized entrepreneurship for their communities.

Objective 2

The second objective of the dissertation sought to examine the opportunities and challenges that emerged from the intersection between social and demographic differences and state policies and regulations. In Chapter 3, I gave some background on the growth of inequities and inequalities and, briefly, described how those impacted the opportunities and challenges that emerge from the intersection of racial, aged, gendered, and geographic differences. Chapter 5 built on these observations and revealed how spatial stigma – what I consider as an intersectional 'vehicle' to describe the implications of inequalities and stigma in more localized settings – has shaped the ways that some marginalized Cubans imagine their roles or possibilities in the growth of lucrative entrepreneurialism in Cuba.

Chapters 4, 6, and 7 described the range of entrepreneurial strategies used by Cubans, and helped identify how structural, demographic, or personal/individual factors shape the use of those strategies across intersectional experiences. Chapter 4 was focused on how policies and regulations shape the use of those strategies. Chapters 6 and 7 revealed how demographic or personal/individual factors shaped the logics behind the use of particular strategies both in the tourism sector as well as at broader community levels.

Objective 3

Objective three sought to analyze the entrepreneurial strategies that emerge for differently positioned people and in differently positioned communities. Chapter 4 was a broad-sweeping analysis of first, the impetus to engage in entrepreneurship for many Cubans and, second, the usage of different entrepreneurial strategies to overcome barriers set out by the state. Chapter 6 analyzed how some private sectors in the Cuban tourism economy provide

a valuable outlet for marginalized Cubans to gain access to lucrative entrepreneurial activities, as well as opportunities afforded to them via this transnational, global industry. Chapter 7 analyzed the entrepreneurial strategies that Cubans utilize in a variety of ways that have direct (many times positive) impacts on their communities. As I discuss in the second section of Chapter 7, *Acaparamiento* can become an almost equally important strategy as other forms of social entrepreneurship in terms of ensuring that basic goods reach otherwise "forgotten" or "abandoned" communities.

Objective 4

The fourth objective sought to identify the subjective logics that cohere around these entrepreneurial strategies, and how they relate to demographic, social, and economic inequities and inequalities. This objective was achieved primarily through chapters 6 and 7 which both attended to the logics that were framed around specific personal and community-oriented entrepreneurial strategies. Again, Chapter 6 was focused on the logics that workers in the Cuban tourism industry have developed and utilized to first enter those lines of work before then recruiting and satisfying clients, building global social networks, and conducting their entrepreneurial ventures through a self-commodification of sorts that plays off already existing local and global stereotypes. Chapter 7 identified the ways that individuals – some of which identify as social entrepreneurs – attended to economic and other disparities through entrepreneurial mechanisms, and how they have formed bonds between public and private entities in an attempt to turn their philosophies on community engagement / improvement into culture (i.e., converting theoretical actions into longstanding practices).

Current Considerations

The analysis developed throughout this dissertation arose from a particular moment that has changed *dramatically*. Indeed, I arranged the dissertation in a particular way because I was dealing with my data in light of certain macro-level conditions, such as tourism, easier access to remittances, and increasing opportunities (and increasing challenges) in the private sector. These features of the Cuban economy have been drastically damaged because of the COVID-19 global pandemic as well as some internal and external changes. Considering the demographic determinants of success or failure that I have discussed throughout this dissertation, I want to briefly discuss some of these recent changes and how different disparities are carrying people through this current 'COVID period.' This is especially the case because we do not know what or if circumstances will 'return to normal' – as is likely the case across the world as people come to terms with a 'pre- versus post-COVID existence.'

Transformations because of the COVID-19 global pandemic, monetary reforms, and external factors

A couple weeks after COVID-19 was detected in Cuba, all commercial flights into the country were suspended. Cuba's tourism industry, accounting for over 10 percent of the GDP (Hope Bastian & Garth, 2020), was paralyzed. This was devastating for the Cuban economy, and for crucial income opportunities for many Cubans. Many Cubans, even people who are traditionally marginalized from broader society or the economy, as I discussed in Chapter 6, depend on work in the tourism sector to garner livable wages from

visiting foreigners. Furthermore, according to Bastian and Garth (2020), "Each year nearly 50,000 Cubans bring home about $8 billion in goods and cash remittances from trips abroad, around eight percent of Cuba's GDP. Many households' day-to-day struggle to fulfill basic needs is tied to the black market supplied by these small traders" (2). As such, these vital sources of basic goods also went away when flights were suspended and did not re-emerge until commercial flights were re-established in October 2020. During this timeframe, when Cubans were able to locate their necessities the prices had increased to cost prohibitive levels because hoarders had gotten to the items first and were selling them for marked up prices on the black market (Hope Bastian & Garth, 2020), or because the government had scaled back subsidies as part of a larger monetary reform (Gonzalez, 2021).

The monetary reform I am referring to is the unification of Cuba's two currencies, which have existed together for nearly three decades. In the months leading up to January 1, 2021, there were actually three currencies that officially circulated: the Cuban peso (CUP), the convertible peso (CUC), and the US dollar (USD); and it was still fairly common to see euros (EU) used in the black market. Now, Cubans have six months to exchange all their CUC for CUP (i.e., until June 2021), and there will be a single CUP-to-USD exchange rate across all sectors. According to an interview between Cuban economist Ricardo Torres and the Americas Society / Council of the Americas (AS/COA) correspondent Elizabeth Gonzalez (2021), this process will have many implications:

> [For one,] prices will go up… They will now reflect, to some extent, the devaluation of the Cuban peso in the state sector where [Cuban state-owned businesses] were using a 1-to-1 exchange rate: 1 CUP = 1 CUC = 1 USD. Now there will be a unified exchange rate for all sectors of the economy set to 24 Cuban pesos for each USD… Another modification is the scaling back of some, if not all, subsidies. Before [Cuba] had a situation in which the government subsidized—in some cases, heavily—some products, such as utilities and the

> rationing card. With subsidies cut off, prices will go up to reflect a more normal operation of the economy.

Under these circumstances, the black market will continue to be relevant for satisfying one's personal needs. However, it is unknown what prices will look like going forward. If it's any indication, a friend of mine is currently looking for a basic interior door for her home – one that could cost as low as $50 in the US – and she says that the current price on the black market in Havana is $400. She also told me that she cannot find the door anywhere in state-owned stores in Havana.

In addition to these circumstances, the pandemic has not only reduced the amount of physical money entering the country but also the amount of money friends and family outside of Cuba can send to their local counterparts, with some reports indicating that remittances have fallen more than 50 percent in 2020 (OnCuba News, 2021). Thus, accessing products with these exorbitant prices is likely impossible for many if not most Cubans.

To make matters worse, in Fall 2019 Donald J. Trump activated parts of the Helms-Burton Act to tighten the US blockade on Cuba and threaten third countries who were trading with or investing in Cuba (Hope Bastian & Garth, 2020). This strengthening of the blockade has made it so some foreign banks (e.g., ones in France) do not want to engage in money sending to Cuba, as I describe below. One year later, in Fall 2020, Trump forced Western Union to close all its branches in Cuba – totaling just over 400 locations – in an attempt to put pressure on Finicimex, a Cuban military-controlled financial entity that processes and therefore benefits from the money that was formerly sent via Western Union (Semple, 2020). The Cuban people, though, have felt the brunt of this pressure as it is now very difficult to send money to Cuba (see below).

The impact of these transformations

In a short period, COVID-19 and the other internal and external reforms have made significant changes to the socioeconomic landscape in Havana, some of which deepened the inequities and inequalities already discussed in Chapters 5-7. At first, when the global pandemic was just beginning, Cubans with savings or access to private transportation (either paid-for or already owned) were able to stock-pile basic goods by selling out their local stores or travelling around the city, buying products as soon as they appeared in stores. Indeed, the already inefficient public transportation system did not permit people without access to other modes of transportation to rapidly move around the city in search of necessities. Furthermore, according to some of my interlocutors who lived on the outskirts of the city, many items did not even reach their communities because, as they put it, "the sellers knew they could get more in another part of town" (paraphrased from various conversations).

In response to many of the challenges I described above, online commerce and digital currency trading has become more prominent in Cuba (Hope Bastian & Garth, 2020; Delgado Vázquez, 2020). However, significant barriers to these sorts of virtual commerce exist and reveal exacerbated inequities and inequalities for many Cubans. For example, utilizing these innovations often requires a smartphone and a data plan to access the websites, and if they do not have disposable income to spend on data plans, it becomes almost necessary to have someone abroad to fund these activities. As I have described a few times throughout this dissertation, global connections like these overwhelmingly favor white Cubans from wealthier or better conditioned places.

In terms of locating and acquiring necessities, domestic migrants, like the ones who live in *Los Pocitos* (see Chapter 7), are not able to access their rationed goods in Havana, and are less likely to receive their rationed goods through previous mechanisms – like having a family or friend deliver it during a visit to Havana – because of the reduction of transportation between provinces (both because of COVID-19 as well as ongoing fuel shortages across the island) (Bastian and Garth, 2020). According to my interlocutors, prices for basic goods on the black-market have also increased (by over 10 times in some cases) and some items have disappeared altogether. This has made it all the more difficult for people who were already at a disadvantage to continue surviving in Havana and, considering the monetary reforms and the exacerbating policies implemented by Donald Trump towards the end of his presidency, worse still for Cubans who were flourishing at one time or another.

In an attempt to alleviate the economic crisis, at once trying to bring hard currency into Cuba as well as provide basic foodstuffs to desperate consumers, the Cuban government created a chain of stores across Cuba that would sell items that were unavailable elsewhere. According to one interlocutor, "there is nothing, not even in the black-market. Those stores are the only place to get anything" (informal conversation July 2020). However, according to Bastian and Garth (2020), "In order to make a purchase one must have a card loaded with money from abroad or with foreign currency deposited in a Cuban bank" (4). These cards have also exacerbated inequalities because, again, only few people have access to someone willing to load money onto those cards, and even less have savings which would allow them to first buy foreign currency in Cuba and then deposit it to said card. Furthermore, Trump's tightening of the embargo made it very difficult for

people in the US to deposit money onto these cards, and international banks began to suspend this sort of service to Cuba for fear of US sanctions (Bastian and Garth 2020). When coupled with the closure of all Western Unions in Cuba, this isolated even the best positioned Cubans.

An ethnographic vignette of a friend helps describe just how severe these circumstances have become. Yoan, a young 28-year-old private music producer who lives in a decent (but not great) part of Havana told me one day over WhatsApp that he had to pawn off all his equipment so he could feed his mother, wife, and daughter. He told me, "Bro, there was nothing else I could do. We had to eat. I found a guy who would give me some money [amount undisclosed] to 'hold on' to my stuff. I have a month to pay it back or else he's going to keep it" (informal conversation November 2021). We kept on chatting over that month and he told me that finally he reached out to a foreign musician he had worked with for a few years, "a guy who came here [to his studio] a few times and we kept in contact, continuing to make music over the years," he said. Yoan had asked the foreign musician for a loan of sorts to buy back his equipment so he could continue with his business. Now, he feels indebted to the foreigner saying, "if I ever get out of here, I owe my life to him" (informal conversation December 2021).

For Yoan in particular, the current moment feels insurmountable. "People here are crazy because the money doesn't last, not even for food. Imagine how the music business is. It's dead," Yoan told me (informal conversation January 2021). Other interlocutors I have spoken with in recent months have also voiced their desperation. Ultimately, these circumstances have driven many Cubans to pull together whatever resources they have and leave Cuba altogether. As one friend told me, "I have to leave. I bought a plane ticket to

Central America and I'm not coming back. I already sold all my tools and I'm looking for someone to buy my home. In less than a month I'll be gone" (informal conversation January 2021).

The recent deteriorations of the Cuban economy have left many Cubans feeling helpless and that their only solution is pack up and leave. Of course, for many this may be their desire, but they lack the finances or the connections abroad to do it. So, they are stuck in Cuba, forced to manage the system on their own. For Cubans who work in the public sector, the current situation is perhaps more manageable because they have also seen an increase in their wages to account for the inevitable increase in prices that come with the currency unification, reduction in state subsidies, and associated rising inflation. In reality though, my interlocutors tell me the current prices are even too high for their monthly incomes and that if they continue to rise it could be fatal.

For Cubans who work in the private sector or worse, individuals who work precarious jobs in the informal sector, the cost of living will go up and they will probably not have increased wages to compensate increased prices. As Torres explains, "By increasing the cost of living and increasing the opportunity cost of leisure time," what he explains as an "implicit" goal of the monetary reform process (i.e., addressing the dropping rate of micro-level economic activity), "you send a signal to the labor market, to those who are not working, and the signal is: 'You better work, otherwise it'll be very difficult for you to sustain your standard of living'" (Gonzalez, 2021). As I have discussed again and again throughout the dissertation, though, the possibility to discover livable wages and to overcome the challenges that people face in their daily lives is governed by a series of inequities, inequalities, stereotypes, and stigmas. More often the case, Cubans who lack

global connections, who live in marginalized spaces around Havana, or who face overwhelming situations of discrimination will bear the burden of the impending worsening of social and economic disparities in Cuba.

Potential Future Research

I end the dissertation with a discussion of some potential future research topics. By no means are these two recommendations exhaustive. Rather, they are two topics that came up while pulling the dissertation together, and which I think would not only be interesting to explore but also important to consider to improve the lives of many of the people I have discussed throughout this study. The second recommendation – on further exploring the role that entrepreneurship can play in addressing the interconnecting themes of the dissertation that overlap with the recent transformations in the Cuban socio-economy – could also be utilized to further explore the first recommendation on the health outcomes in contemporary Cuba.

The implications of socioeconomic hardships and entrepreneurial challenges on health outcomes in Cuba

In Chapter 5, I briefly allude to the health implications of spatial stigma, describing how Cubans in marginalized communities resort to unhealthy coping mechanisms – like over-using drugs or alcohol – as a means to 'escape' their immediate socioeconomic surroundings. This observation leads me to believe that there are myriad instances of negative health outcomes that pertain to the socioeconomic hardships and entrepreneurial challenges that Cubans face on a day-to-day basis. Indeed, a conversation I had one day

with a community leader in *Los Pocitos* revealed that there are a high number of people actively using illicit substances, in addition to abusive use of alcohol, and that, according to this community leader, “there are a lot of young men and women who engage in sex work, and I would even argue that some of the highest rates of sexually transmitted illnesses exist right here in *Los Pocitos*” (site visit, June 2019). Furthermore, research in the Dominican Republic has revealed unhealthy patterns in coping mechanisms for stress and anxiety that come out of two transnational industries: the international tourism industry and the call-center industry. While the latter will probably not be a concern for years to come in Cuba, the former highlights that these same problems may already be a concern in Cuba and especially as more Cubans are deported from the US and will likely face similar anxieties about “missed-opportunities” or a feelings of failure (Colón-burgos et al., 2020).

Another interesting opportunity for future health-related research has to do with the widening socioeconomic gaps in Cuban society, and the ways that entrepreneurship is creating both opportunities for personal wealth accumulation as well as opportunities for the growth of risky behaviors within Cuba. For example, while there is much information on the role that the tourism industry plays on the growth of sex work and associated rise in HIV/AIDS prevalence particularly in countries without diversified economies (which unfortunately is the direction that Cuba is headed) (Hintzen et al., 2019), perhaps there are opportunities to perform research on how the growth in entrepreneurship may lead to risky sexual or other behaviors. For example, a self-proclaimed ‘businessman’ I interviewed explained to me that one of the best things about owning his own business was making more money. He said, laughing, “every once in while I go out to the countryside, to a brothel, and have a party. I live like a king” (informal conversation, March 2019).

Specifically, he was referring to the transactional sex he would engage in, in addition to the drugs and alcohol he would consume. He said that he only did this once, maybe twice a year, but, "when the money is there, I go," thereby revealing that perhaps these activities will increase if / when money flows more readily into his pocketbook.

These anecdotes make me wonder what sort of health vulnerabilities have arisen that are tied to contemporary circumstances in Cuba? There would be much to consider here, especially with regards to intersecting topics like spatial stigma, the continued growth of inequities and inequalities, the influx of income possibilities for certain sectors of the population, and overarching structural conditions stemming from the international tourism industry, transformations in the Cuban socialist model, and increased (or decreased) linkages between the local community and their friends, families, and clients outside of Cuba. When layered with the recent transformations due to the COVID-19 global pandemic as well as the monetary reform, it would provide a rich discussion that would hopefully lead to constructive structural or political-economic approaches to health and well-being in Cuba but also potentially across the Caribbean.

The role of entrepreneurship in continuing to address underlying challenges

While it has been argued – and rightfully so – that celebrating entrepreneurship can be akin to celebrating precarity (see Páramo Izquierdo, 2019), it also makes me wonder if there is a possibility for entrepreneurship to address the challenges laid out in this chapter. Indeed, the transformations that have occurred since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in addition to the monetary reforms and strengthening of the US blockade have themselves put everyone in Cuba in a precious position. There are regular reports of food insecurity

(e.g., Augustin & Robles, 2020) – my friends / key confidants corroborate these observations – and I know many people who have gone the better part of the past year (March 2020 to January 2021) without work. When I speak with friends and colleagues in Cuba, as well as Cubans in the US, they tell me that the Cuban economic system is at a crossroads. Will there be enough work to get people through the next few months, especially considering the resource shortages and rising prices I have discussed in this chapter and the ones prior? What will happen if young people – who are critical to the survival of their elderly family members – pack up and move out of Cuba in droves? Will people be given more entrepreneurial freedoms to address underlying problems, like we have seen with entrepreneurial responses to food distribution (Carrero, 2020), or will they skirt the government as they have already recognized that time (and deterioration) wait for no one? Or, will these responses continue to favor the Cuban elites instead of Cubans in need?

The analyses I have constructed throughout this study already shed light on many of these questions. However, this research was limited in its time, funding, available resources, and political circumstances. With a dedicated team and additional funding, this research could be expanded to a larger sample size across more geographic spaces in Cuba. The broadening of this research would allow a better understanding of how the primary topics of this study, in addition to the recent transformations, exist in areas that are not so dominated by tourism or with different linkages to, for example, the diaspora community. Furthermore, it will be interesting to see how social entrepreneurship strengthens in Cuba.

As we already know, community organizations and social entrepreneurs in some areas of Havana have gained the trust and support of government organizations and have

laid some important inroads into addressing underlying inequities and inequalities in their communities. What I am most interested in is to see is if they can continue building off this base and, through the network of community organizations (see the conclusion of Chapter 7), effect positive social change across the city. If they are able to continue their momentum, Havana will become a model for social entrepreneurship across the world. If not, there is a possibility that the stereotypes, stigmas, and inequalities I have discussed repeatedly in this dissertation will deepen, worsening the opportunities (or lack thereof) Cubans have to utilize entrepreneurial activities to fulfill their needs. Both outcomes are reason enough to continue focusing on entrepreneurial intersections in Havana, and the rest of Cuba.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A | Research Dimensions

A.1 Research Activities

	Initially planned activities	**Volunteer work with community organizations / Initiation of *La Red***	**PhotoVoice Dimension**	**Unequal Crisis Dimension**	**Dance Instructors Dimension**
Interviews / Topical Conversations	41 semi-structured interviews; countless topical conversations	Weekly conversations with Papito (*Artecorte*) and directors from other organizations (*Entimbalao, Proyecto Vida, Proyecto Akokan, Contramuros, Mi Barrio Suena,* and *Azules del Malecon*) (32 total) (March-October 2019)	14 interviews total (2 with each organization's director): 1 interview before and 1 interview after the project	22 interviews (11 conducted by me, 11 by Bahamonde)	5 interviews with dance instructors (Stein conducted roughly 35 additional interviews over the course of 16 months dissertation fieldwork)
Participant Observation	Regular observations 14 small businesses and 7 community organizations	2 times/week visits to *Artecorte* from March-October 2019 (roughly 60 visits total); weekly English classes from August-October 2019 at Artecorte (roughly 12 total); weekly English/Spanish reading sessions from May-October 2019 (roughly 20 total)	7 collaborative workshop meetings; weekly meetings with each organization (56 total)	living in *el Cerro*	3 club nights with dance instructors and their clients
Document and Media Analyses	Nightly news. State newspapers from August 2018 to October 2019. Public-facing documents from *ONAT*	Document preparation for formalizing *Contramuros*	n/a	Annual statistic reports from *ONEI*	*Gaceta Oficial* 35 (2019)

	Initially planned activities	Volunteer work with community organizations / Initiation of *La Red*	PhotoVoice Dimension	Unequal Crisis Dimension	Dance Instructors Dimension
Other Activities	4 meetings with entrepreneurship lawyers 1 meeting with private business consultant 1 exploratory meeting with director of *Cuba Emprende* 1 intersectionality meeting *Cuba Emprende* staff.	Advising role with 4 community organizations: *Artecorte*, Proyecto *Vida, Contramuros,* and, *Mi Barrio Suena.* 4 site visits to *Vieja Linda*; 4 site visits to *Buenavista*; 2 site visits to *Los Pocitos;* 4 site visits to *Havana Vieja;* *2* all day conferences with *La Red* 3 intercommunity events	1 gallery exhibition	8 project meetings	roughly 10 article writing meetings

APPENDIX B | Participants

B.1 Participants Living in High Tourism Areas

Age	**Sex**						**Total**
	Woman			**Man**			
	RACE						
	Black	**White**	**Mix**	**Black**	**White**	**Mix**	
17-30	**Dance Instructor**[4]	Public Sector[3]; Student[3]	Cantina[1]	Restaurant[1]; **Barber**[1]	**Barber**[1]**;** Student[3]		8
31-50	Community organization Director[1,2]; **Dance Instructor**[4]	Office manager[1]	Office manager[1,2]	*Informal Café*[1]	**Musician**[1,3]; BnB[1,3]; **Restaurant**[1,3]	**Video Producer**[1]	9
51+		***Informal Café***[1]***;*** **BnB**[1,3]**;**	**BnB**[1,3]**;** **BnB**[1,3]**;**	Community organization Director[1,2]	**Stylist**[1]; **BnB**[1,3]		7
Total	2	5	4	4	8	1	24

([1]= initially planned, [2]= photovoice, [3]= unequal crisis dimension, [4]= dance instructors dimension) (bold = business owner, italics = informal, non-licensed)

B.2 Participants Living in Urban Residential Non-Tourist Areas

Age	Sex						Total
	Woman			Man			
	RACE						
	Black	White	Mix	Black	White	Mix	
17-30		***Informal Clothing sales***[1]; **Painter**[1]	**Music Tutor**[1]	BnB[1, 3]	**Tech Repair**[1]; **Artisanal products**[1, 3]		6
31-50	Auto Restoration[1, 2]	Office manager[1, 2]	***Informal Clothing sales***[1, 3]	*Informal Taxi Driver*[1]; Parking attendant[1, 3]; [3]Public Sector	**Auto Restoration**[1, 2]; ***Informal Welder*** [1, 2, 3]	***Informal meat sales***[1]; **Dance Instructor**[4]	10
51+		***Informal clothes tailor***[1, 3]	***Informal consumer item sales***[1, 3]	Public Sector[3]	**Artisanal products**[1, 2, 3]		4
Total	1	4	3	5	5	2	20

([1]= initially planned, [2]= photovoice, [3]= unequal crisis dimension, [4]= dance instructors dimension) (bold = business owner, italics = informal, non-licensed)

B.3 Participants Living in Rural or Peripheral Areas

Age	**Sex**						**Total**
	Woman			**Man**			
	RACE						
	Black	**White**	**Mix**	**Black**	**White**	**Mix**	
17-30	Community organization Director[1, 2]	Student[2]		**Dance Instructor**[4]		**Stylist**[1]	4
31-50		[1]**Café**		Community 0rganization Director[1]; **Dance Instructor**[4]	Community organization Director[1, 2]	**Taxi Driver**[1]	5
51+	Community organization Director[1, 2]			Community organization Director[1, 2]	Community organization Director[1, 2]		3
Total	2	2	0	4	2	2	12

([1]= initially planned, [2]= photovoice, [3]= unequal crisis dimension, [4]= dance instructors dimension) (bold = business owner, italics = informal, non-licensed)

VITA

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PUBLICATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

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