

Original article



Racialized gaps in non-state economic ventures

Brechas racializadas en emprendimientos económicos no estatales

Lacunas racializadas em empreendimentos econômicas não estatais

Silfredo Rodríguez Basso¹  0000-0001-6737-4080  antropol@upr.edu.cu

Zenia Díaz Hernández¹  0000-0001-7486-9428  zenia05@upr.edu.cu

¹ University of Pinar del Río "Hermanos Saíz Montes de Oca". Pinar del Río, Cuba.

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ABSTRACT

The Cuban state has not renounced, in terms of equity, to protect and exalt human dignity, however, when going through an adverse economic context, some manifestations of racism and racial discrimination have re-emerged. In the scenario of the new economic actors, in particular, within the non-state management forms, some manifestations of racial inequality and inequity have reappeared, hence the objective of the present study was to analyze the racialized gaps present in non-state economic enterprises in the city of Pinar del Río. For this purpose, three economic actors were selected: The Non-agricultural Cooperative Café Pinar and the small service enterprises Dainelys's Secret and Café Ortúzar. The empirical methods used were participant observation, unstructured interview and ethnographic with a qualitative and intersectional approach. As a main result, it was possible to make an initial approximation of racialized gaps in non-state enterprises in the aforementioned municipality, given the lack of specific data on the subject, an issue that reveals the presence of significant challenges that require attention in terms of social policy to promote racial equity in the non-state economic sector.

Keywords: racism; racial discrimination; economic actors; municipality; inequality; inequity.

RESUMEN

El estado cubano no ha renunciado, en materia de equidad, a proteger y exaltar la dignidad humana, sin embargo, al transitar por un contexto económico adverso, han reemergido algunas manifestaciones de racismo y discriminación racial. En el escenario de los nuevos actores económicos, en lo particular, al interior de las formas de gestión no estatal han reaparecido algunas manifestaciones de desigualdad e inequidad racial, de ahí que el presente estudio se trazó como objetivo, el analizar las brechas racializadas presentes en emprendimientos económicos no estatales de la ciudad de Pinar del Río. Para ello se seleccionaron tres actores económicos: la Cooperativa No Agropecuaria Café Pinar y las pequeñas empresas de servicios Dainelys's Secret y Café Ortúzar. Se emplearon como métodos empíricos la observación participante, la entrevista no estructurada y el etnográfico con enfoque cualitativo e interseccional. Como resultado principal, se pudo realizar una aproximación inicial sobre las brechas racializadas en emprendimientos no estatales en el mencionado municipio, ante la inexistencia de datos específicos al respecto, cuestión que revela la presencia de desafíos significativos que requieren la atención en materia de política social para promover la equidad racial en el sector económico no estatal.

Palabras clave: racismo; discriminación racial; actores económicos; municipio; desigualdad; inequidad.

RESUMO

O Estado cubano não renunciou, em termos de equidade, à proteção e à valorização da dignidade humana. No entanto, ao navegar em um contexto econômico adverso, algumas manifestações de racismo e discriminação racial ressurgiram. No contexto de novos atores econômicos, particularmente em sistemas de gestão não estatais, algumas manifestações de desigualdade e iniquidade racial reapareceram. Assim, o objetivo deste estudo foi analisar as brechas racializadas presentes em empreendimentos econômicos não estatais na cidade de Pinar del Río. Para tanto, foram selecionados três atores econômicos: a Cooperativa Não Agrícola Café Pinar e as pequenas empresas de serviços Dainelys's Secret e Café Ortúzar. Os métodos empíricos empregados foram

observação participante, entrevistas não estruturadas e etnografia com abordagem qualitativa e interseccional. O principal resultado foi uma avaliação inicial das brechas racializadas em empreendimentos não estatais no município mencionado, dada a escassez de dados específicos sobre o tema. Isso revela a presença de desafios significativos que exigem atenção das políticas sociais para promover a equidade racial no setor econômico não estatal.

Palavras-chave: racismo; discriminação racial; atores econômicos; município; desigualdade; iniquidade.

INTRODUCTION

The Sustainable Development Goals until 2030 include, as part of their priorities, the reduction of inequalities among their targets and indicators. Number 10.2 seeks to promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all people, without any human difference between them, by "race" (ECLAC, 2019). In this sense, Cuba as a state governed by the rule of law, endorses this purpose in its fundamental law. In its 2019 Constitution, it ratifies this intention. Articles 40, 41 and 42 state that all are equal before the law (National Assembly of People's Power, 2019).

Specifically, Article 42 states the following:

All persons are equal before the law, receive the same protection and treatment from the authorities and enjoy the same rights, freedoms and opportunities, without any discrimination based on sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, ethnic origin, skin color, religious belief, disability, national or territorial origin, or any other personal condition or circumstance that implies a distinction detrimental to human dignity.

All have the right to enjoy the same public spaces and service facilities.

Likewise, they receive equal pay for equal work, without any discrimination whatsoever.

Violation of the principle of equality is prohibited and is punishable by law.

The provisions of this precept cover all forms of discrimination to which people may be subjected. In the face of any act, and under the principle of equality, any manifestation of racism is considered a punishable act and is punishable by law. The above ratifies an inherent regularity of the Cuban socialist social project, where the human condition by skin color has not constituted an excluding requirement in terms of participation, but a right that sustains the democratic character of Cuban society above any human difference, however, in the current socioeconomic situation that the country is going through, some expressions of exclusion have re-emerged, which are manifested through certain gaps or fissures by "income, gender, territory and skin color" (Zabala Argüelles, 2024).

In order to guarantee their permanence and stimulate the productive sector, the country has resorted as an alternative to stimulating new economic actors, in particular, non-state forms of management, an initiative not free of contradictions, among them, as one of the most evident, gaps in access to equal opportunities due to racial differentiation.

The studies on the subject in question, in the context of economic enterprises in Cuba, reach a proven relevance. In this regard, and in line with the National Economic and Social Development Plan 2020-2030, the National Program against Racism and Racial Discrimination in Cuba, also known as "Cuban Color", was approved by the Council of Ministers in 2019, whose objective is focused on combating and definitively eliminating racism and racial discrimination in Cuban society, in line with the ideals of justice and equity of the Cuban Revolution.

In line with the ideas of the program, authors such as Zabala Argüelles (2020), Espina Prieto et al. (2021), Zabala Argüelles and Fundora Nevot (2022), Morales Domínguez (2022), Masó Hechavarría et al. (2023) and Carrazana Guevara (2023) address from perspectives such as intersectional or comprehensive affirmative, the particularities of social inequities by the "color of the skin" in this scenario. Among these, the research report *Realidades de los nuevos actores económicos. Contextos y desafíos* of a group of authors of the Cuban Institute of Anthropology in 2023 is stood out, it is a study diagnostic of social cut on the current state of the new typologies of entrepreneurship in Cuba at the country level and where it is particularized in an approximate way, the westernmost of the provinces.

In addition, although there is a two-page sub-section on the subject under analysis, it is stated, according to Rodríguez et al. (2023), that "in the preparation of these businesses, racial patterns are

being reproduced that do not correspond to the characteristics of the Cuban population. The differences are abysmal".

In this and in the other proposals mentioned, a theoretical discourse prevails from various methodological positions where valuable information is gathered on racialized gaps with an intersectional approach where the "skin color" variable intersects with those of gender, age, schooling, disability, among others, where equal access to opportunities for black and mestizo people in the field of the new economic actors presents distortions in social structuring.

In this sense, approaching this phenomenon from the perspective of intersectionality provides essential elements for the deepening of the analysis of these racialized gaps, by revealing the intersections between dissimilar categories of difference -gender, race, class and others- and the conformation of multiple and simultaneous structures of oppression, it also allows political action on the multiple discriminations and disadvantages that are generated from them. It visualizes the matrices of domination in which privileges, oppressions and advantages-disadvantages are identified, thus providing a complex, relational and contextualized vision of these processes" (Zabala Argüelles & Fundora Nevot, 2022).

Although in the province, the adoption of this approach is beginning to be present in some studies on raciality, these are not so prolific. The most visible ones have been elaborated from the educational field. Arango Hernandez and Sosa Castillo (2022), Miranda Hernandez et al. (2023) and Massana Rodriguez et al. (2024) the racialized gaps present in the higher level of education or in the plastic arts, being nonexistent those directed to the entrepreneurial field, hence the objective of the present article, aimed at analyzing the racialized gaps present in non-state economic enterprises in the city of Pinar del Rio as a manifestation of the presence of inequalities in the socioeconomic field.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was based on the qualitative methodological paradigm with an intersectional approach because gender, age and employment were taken into account in relation to "skin color" when investigating the problem. The methods applied were participant observation, carried out in the enterprises: Dainelys's Secret, Café Ortúzar and Café Pinar, in order to appreciate the spatial delimitation of the site to be observed and its description, characterization of the working population, their interrelationships and their racial distribution. The above was complemented with the

unstructured interview with the purpose of inquiring about the typicalities of these forms of management and the subjectivities that revolve around raciality, maintaining the anonymity of the interviewees. The results of these techniques were processed by means of the ethnographic method in order to interpret how these gaps are manifested in these non-state economic enterprises. The sample contemplated the twenty-seven subjects present during the research, conventionally classified by "skin color" as white, black and mestizo.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The new economic actors. Some necessary definitions

With antecedents that place it in the first decades of the construction of socialism, particularly in the 1990s, the emergence of new economic actors shades the national panorama in the present decade, among which are the Non-Agricultural Cooperatives (NAC), the Local Development Projects (LDP) and the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME).

NACs are defined as: "...an economic entity, of an entrepreneurial nature, which is constituted from the voluntary association of people who contribute money, other goods and rights for the satisfaction of economic, social and cultural needs of its owner-members, as well as the social interest, based on their work and on the effective exercise of the universally recognized principles of cooperativism" (Council of State, 2021a).

LDPs: "...constitute a local development project, a set of resources, efforts and actions, with its own identity, to transform an existing situation into a desired one, which contributes to the development of the territory where it operates, and has an impact on the quality of life of the population" (Council of Ministers, 2021).

In turn, MSMEs are: "those economic units with legal personality, which have their own dimensions and characteristics and whose purpose is to develop the production of goods and the provision of services that meet the needs of society" (Council of State, 2021b).

MSMEs can be state-owned, private or mixed, small in size, focused on commercial activities for profit, hence they differ from NACs, entities formed by individuals who associate voluntarily to meet economic and social needs through cooperative principles. While MSMEs seek economic profitability

and market growth, NACs prioritize solidarity, equity and democratic participation of their members in management and decision-making.

In addition, MSMEs may have different legal structures and commercial purposes, while NACs are characterized by their collective approach, seeking the common good, as opposed to maximizing individual benefits, promoting a balance between economic objectives and social values in their operation and development, which is why the latter includes, among others, the promotion of racial equity without discrimination.

Racialized gaps. Some results in non-state economic enterprises in the city of Pinar del Río

Based on the above criteria, three of these actors located in the municipal capital of the province of Pinar del Río were selected for the research. The places chosen were the following service entities: Dainelys's Secret beauty salon, Café Ortúzar and Café Pinar, the first two classified as small enterprises and the third as NAC.

The Dainelys's Secret beauty salon is located at Calle Martí #149 between Colón and Ciprián Valdés (Figure 1).



Figure 1. View of one of the interior and exterior areas of Dainelys's Secret beauty salon

Source: Image taken by the authors

This place has an attractive commercial image, where the color pink predominates in its exterior and interior facade, as part of its commercial image. The place has two floors and two extra rooms,

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located on the neighboring street, which serve as a market and boutique. The store has more than 30 workers, all of them women, except in the barbershop area, where men predominate. It is worth mentioning that all of them have uniforms and perfect image.

On the other hand, Café Ortúzar, located at Calle Martí #127 Colón and Calle Nueva, stands out for its wide range of gastronomic products (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Front view of Café Ortúzar

Source: Taken from internet

The ambience of the place reflects a certain relationship with the origins of tobacco in the province. It is a strictly family business, which preserves a not so ostentatious state, but one of relaxation and enjoyment among friends, families and couples. The place is divided into 3 areas, with different work shifts, open from 9:00 am.

The last site chosen is the NAC Café Pinar, located at 32 Vélez Caviedes Street (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Front access to Café Pinar

Source: Image taken by the authors

The site is spacious, structured in three parts, the last two open to the outside, achieving great lighting and landscaping. It currently has five workers, who divide their work into two schedules: one from 8:30 am - 5:00 pm, for light food service, and from 9:00 pm - 3:00 am, where it functions as a nightclub. These activities are complemented with a variety of activities.

Taking into account the selected sample, the racial representation in these enterprises reflected certain racialized gaps (Table 1). The largest number of white people are concentrated in the businesses Dainelys's Secret and Café Ortúzar for a total of 13 workers, as opposed to 5 blacks and 4 mestizos, distributed in both businesses. As a particularity, in the latter business, the 4 black people, all women, were concentrated in the kitchen area and the second as a waitress. In Café Pinar, of the 5 partners present, 3 are black and one is of mixed race, which reveals the asymmetries between MSMEs and NACs, as they are concentrated in the latter form of management, in a context of clear disadvantage in the absence of regulations that hinder their performance and that has forced the failure of many of them in the municipality.

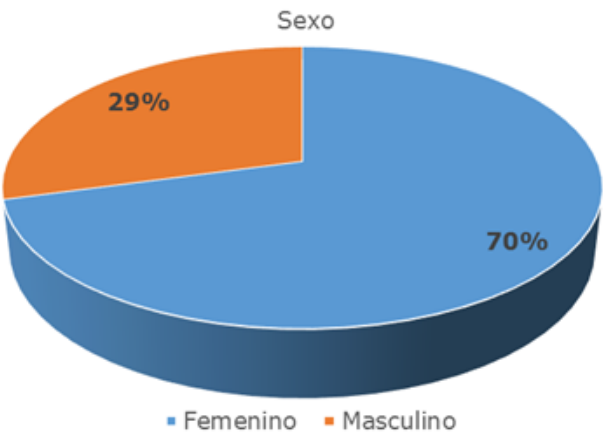
Table 1. Racial representation by types of selected enterprises

Enterprises	Form of enterprise	No. of workers	Racial representativeness			Percentage		
			White	Blacks	Mestizos	Whites	Blacks	Mestizos
Dainelys's Secret	MSME	12*	8	1	3	29,6	3,7	11,1
Café Ortuzar	MSMES	10*	5	4	1	50	40	10
Pinar Coffee	NAC	5*	1	3	1	20	33	20
		27	14	8	5	51	29,6	18,5

Source: Own elaboration

*At the time of applying the observation guide

In terms of gender, there was a predominance of the female sex in these three enterprises as a regularity of the type of services offered (Graph 1), whether beauty or food vending, a total of 19 women out of a total of 27 workers. In addition, two of the managers belong to this sex, namely, Dainelys's Secret beauty salon and Café Ortúzar, both of which are white. On the other hand, the main partner of Café Pinar is male and of mixed skin. Although there is a certain gender parity that leans towards women, the racial asymmetry is once again evident.

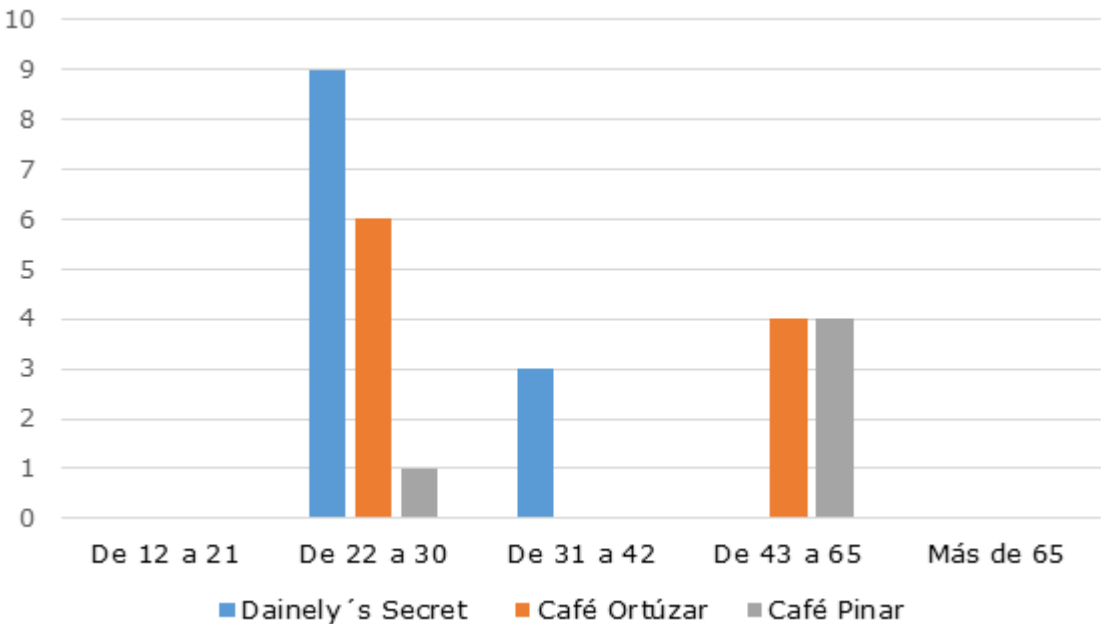


Graph 1. Gender representativeness according to the selected sample

Source: Own elaboration

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The same trend can be seen in the age range, given the physical burden that falls on the subjects inserted in this type of business where the need to attract young people is growing. In the scenarios studied, the age range oscillates between 20 and 65 years of age (Graph 2), where physical presence is a requirement to achieve an attractive image in the business and to attract a greater number of customers. Dainelys's Secret prevails with a larger working population of young people, contrary to Café Pinar, where the age exceeds 40 years according to the sample studied.



Graph 2. Age representation according to the selected sample

Source: Own elaboration

Regarding the labor occupation, it is noteworthy that, of the selected sample, 48% is made up of black and mestizo people, which shows a certain balance in terms of representativeness with respect to white people, 51%. However, the gap can be seen in terms of type of employment, mostly in the occupations of cook, cleaning assistant, hairdresser, which in themselves can be attributed to racialized people (Table 2). White people work as bartenders, waiters, manicurists or managers. Although the income variable was not taken into account, which in comparison with the state sector is considerable, it can be inferred that the most ostensible difference is manifested by the role exercised within the business, where white people are more visible at first glance.

Table 2. Occupation categories of the owners and partners of the selected companies

Occupation	Racial representation		
	Whites	Blacks	Mestizos
Cleaning assistant	-	-	1
Cook		4	
Manager	2		1
Barbering and podiatry	2	-	-
Barber	2	1	1
Receptionist	1	-	-
Waiter	1	3	1
Bartender	2		1
Manicurist	3	-	-
Doorman	1	-	-
Total	14	8	5

Source: Own elaboration

On the other hand, the clothing used by the workers of Dainelys's Secret and Café Ortuzar is characterized by the use of a distinctive uniform combined with accessories made of metals, stones or high-value materials, which allow distinguishing a social *status* that reflects certain asymmetries between enterprises in terms of income received, more associated with MSMEs. In Café Pinar, the use of uniforms was not observed, but rather, modest and simple clothing.

In general, the predominant interest in these businesses is to maximize profits, and belonging to one "race" or another is not a pattern of exclusion for access to employment; rather, the indicators of inequality are based on age, income level or possessing the appropriate skills to perform some type of trade. However, the attitude of denial towards having or not having racial prejudices, expressed by some of the interviewees, responds rather to a question that underlies at the level of social consciousness and that is manifested in some expressions such as "I do not have racial prejudices, for me whites and blacks are equal as long as they bring money" or "Blacks are in the kitchen because

they are the ones who make the best food" (Anonymous, personal communication, November 12, 2024).

People classified as black and mestizo, in general, revealed feeling "satisfied" to be able to have the possibility of earning income that allows them to meet their needs compared to the state sector, that is, to "solve the day" (Anonymous, personal communication, November 12, 2024) even though they work in lower paid jobs compared to their peers in the selected enterprises, mainly in MSMEs.

In closing, the objective of this research, aimed at analyzing the racialized gaps present in non-state economic enterprises in the city of Pinar del Río, makes visible the presence of significant challenges that require attention in terms of social policy to promote racial equity in non-state forms of management.

In this sense, the inclusion in the development strategies of a group of inter-programs, intersectorial, multilevel and territorial actions to overcome racialized gaps constitutes a basic condition for their reduction by localities and productive and social sectors. The management of projects aimed at mitigating and overcoming the causes and factors of racial inequality, the training of government and institutional actors with an affirmative and intersectional approach, the use of innovative tools with the participation of universities and research centers, and the constant monitoring and evaluation of the impact of these initiatives may be a critical route to closing these asymmetries and their reproduction.

In conclusion, the racialized gaps present in the selected enterprises are manifested in equity imbalances identified by type of business. In the case studies, in the two identified as MSMEs, there is a greater presence of white people, in contrast to the NACs, where racialized people are predominant.

As for the gender variable, where a consolidation of the presence of women in terms of employment and management responsibilities can be seen, black and mixed race people occupy the jobs traditionally assigned to non-white women.

By age range, there is a greater presence of young people in the MSMEs, ranging between 22 and 42 years of age, contrary to the NACs studied, where their associates are older than the aforementioned years.

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The presence of a racial bias in the subjectivities of the people interviewed cannot be ruled out when they express a certain rejection of an issue that they consider already overcome by coexistence, in an environment of apparent social equality that contains the difference by skin color, an issue whose essence lies in equity as a phenomenon that expresses the ability to access opportunities to satisfy human needs.

Hence, the variables type of business, occupation, management positions and generational, reveal from an intersectional approach, the presence of gaps that, weighted with skin color, make visible the reproduction of a phenomenon whose bases lie in structural and subjectivity problems, whose solution lies in the comprehensive attention to a complex phenomenon.

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Conflict of interest

Authors declare no conflict of interests.

Authors' contribution

Zenia Díaz Hernández and Silfredo Rodríguez Basso designed the study, analyzed the data and prepared the draft.

Silfredo Rodríguez Basso was involved in data collection, analysis and interpretation.

All the authors reviewed the writing of the manuscript and approve the version finally submitted.



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