
Challenges and Characteristics of Cuban Freemasons in the XX Century: a demographic approach

Int'l Conference on American and Latin American Freemasons:
A New Past and a New Future

Freemasonry and Civil Society Program at UCLA

UCLA's History Department in collaboration with the Grand Lodge of the State of California and its Masonic Foundation.

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Outline

- Introduction and background
- Demographic study results
- Freemasons in Civil Society
 - Comparisons with their Past
- Discussion and Conclusions

Objectives

- Discuss Cuban Freemasons development
 - From 1945 to 2008, using demographic data
- Characterize such Cuban Freemasons
 - And how they became what they are today
- Propose specific ways they can contribute
 - To the development of Civil Society in Cuba

Three Questions

- Why is the Grand Lodge of Cuba important?
 - And how did GLC get to where it is now?
- How has GLC developed in the recent past?
 - What difficulties has it found, and its resolutions?
- How does GLC fit within Cuban Civil Society?
 - What can GLC do, to efficiently participate in it?

Cuban Freemasons / Grand Lodge

- **CF/GLC**: Masons of the **First Three Degrees**
 - Freemasons: “The organization of morality”
 - ‘To make some good men, better.’
 - They are Independent of the Government
 - Discourage **partisan** politics or religion
 - But, individually, take active part in their societies
 - Admit adult men of all races, professions,
 - Political persuasions, religions, social class, etc.
 - Based on **tolerance**, respect and brotherhood
-

Grand Lodge of Cuba (GLC)

- *One of the oldest organizations*
 - With 150+ years of continued existence
- One of the largest
 - Nearly 30K members, nation-wide
- One of the most widely spread
 - Over 300 lodges, one in every town
- International: well-known/respected

Philosophy of Cuban Freemasons

(Freemasonry) does not intend to impede the struggles for the different ideals that exist among men, but to seek that everyone may be able to defend one's principles, against the principles of others, without using any other weapon than reason, and without bringing to the struggle any other pursuit than the noble desire of seeing their ideals succeed, based upon their own merits. (Freemasonry) does not pretend to castrate the human thought, but on the contrary, to energize it in such a way, that it is no longer necessary to use imposition by force, to succeed. (**Gran Logia de Cuba. 1936. *La masonería: sus fines, su historia, su obra.* Molina y Cia. Habana. Page 36).**)

Cuban Freemasons Composition

- All religions, all races, all walks of life
- All social and economic sectors
- All provinces, all regions, all towns
- Older, less '*educated*' than in pre-1959
- Under strong government supervision
- Since 1992, PCC and government members
- Since 2003, 13 *dissidents* of the Group of 75
- Representative cross-cut of Cuban society

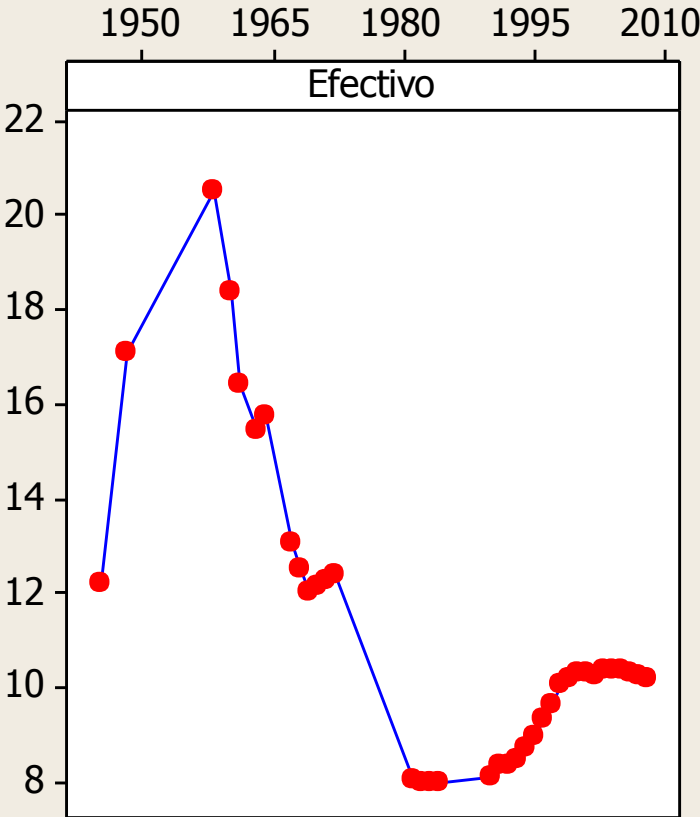
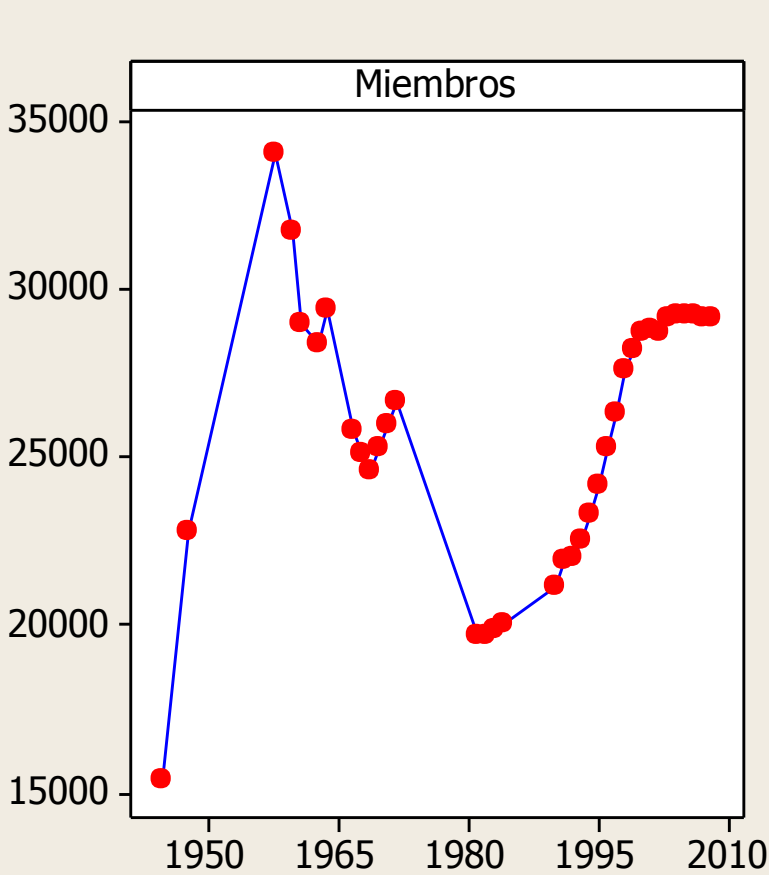
Membership Development:

Effective masons: number per 1000 ha, with respect to *population at risk* (i.e. men, of required age, circumstances and requirements to belong).

YEAR	Members	Lodges	Population	Effective
1948	22757	259	5329100	17.08
1958	34025	340	6638133	20.50
1968	25072	332	8040800	12.47
1981	19690	326	9794900	8.04
1990	21153	314	10433000	8.11
2000	28689	314	11142000	10.30
2008	29110	316	11417246	10.20

Time Series of *Total* and *Effective* yearly membership:

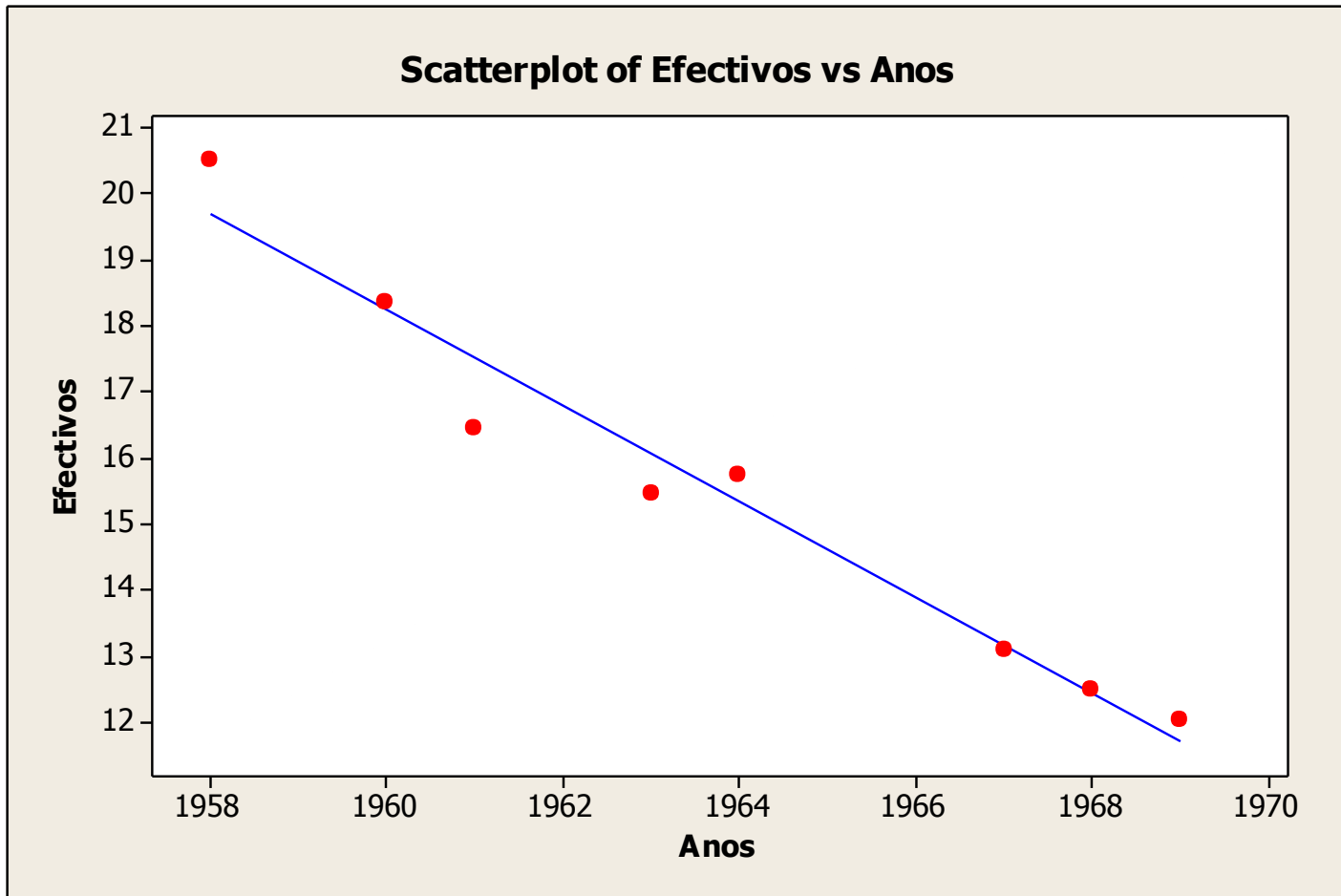
Miembros Por ano: 1940 - 2010



AÑO

Characterization of CF by historical periods: 1945 to 2008:

Historical Epoch	Years	Membership trend	Relevant Events
<u>Before the revolution</u>	1945-1958	Accelerated growth	Grau, Prío and struggle against Batista
<u>First Years after the revolution</u>	1959-1969	Accelerated reduction	Emigration; B. Pigs; October Crisis; Rev.. Offensive; Umap
<u>Second Revolutionary Period</u>	1970-1976	Some stability	Zafra de los 10 Millones; End of Legal Emigration
<u>Third Revolutionary Period</u>	1977-1981	Moderate reduction	State Economy; Visits from “Community”; Mariel Boats
<u>Fourth Revolutionary Period</u>	1982-1990	Slow growth	Economic Liberalization after Mariel: Gorbachev; Disolution of USSR
<u>Fifth Revolutionary Period</u>	1991-2000	Accelerated growth	IV Congress of PCC; Special Period; Rise of Tourism and Economic Liberalization
<u>Sixth Revolutionary Period</u>	2001 to date	Stability	More Tourism; Support from Venezuela; Raul Castro.



First years of revolution: accelerated reduction of members: strong emigration;
B. Pigs; October Crisis; statization of economy; UMAP; revolutionary offensive

Membership Development

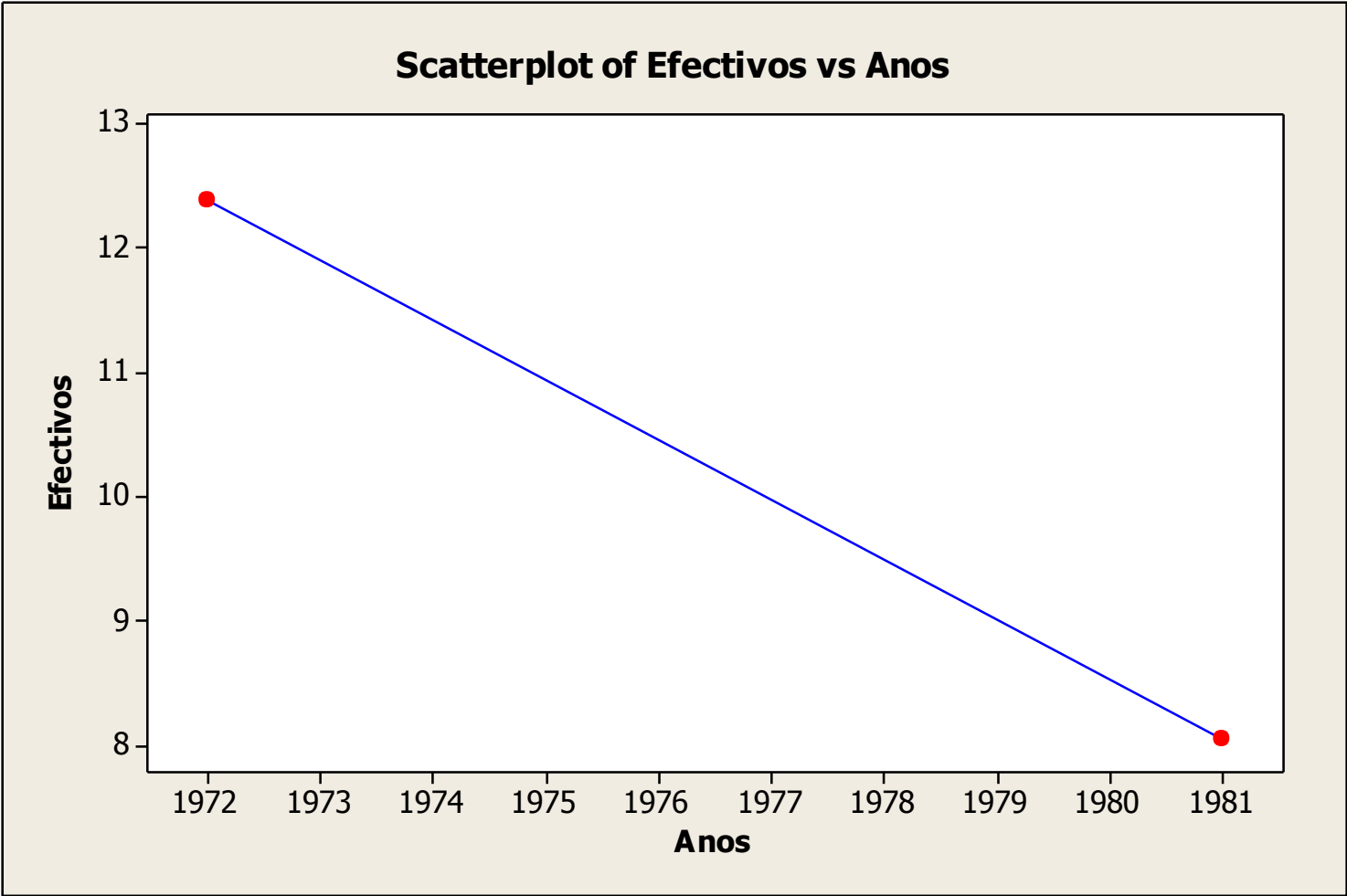
- $\text{Members CurrentYear} =$
 - $\text{Members PreviousYear} - \text{Losses} + \text{Gains}$
- In the Cuban case, we break down Losses & Gains:
- $\text{Gains} = \text{New members} + \text{Re-affiliations}$
- $\text{Losses} = \text{Withdrawals} + \text{Payment} + \text{Deaths} + \text{PolIndcd}$
- Politically induced losses include:
 - Emigration to the US and other countries;
 - Left or never joined, due to adverse government policies
 - Left because new ideology was more attractive/fulfilling

Cuban Emigration to USA (INS Data): 1959 -1969

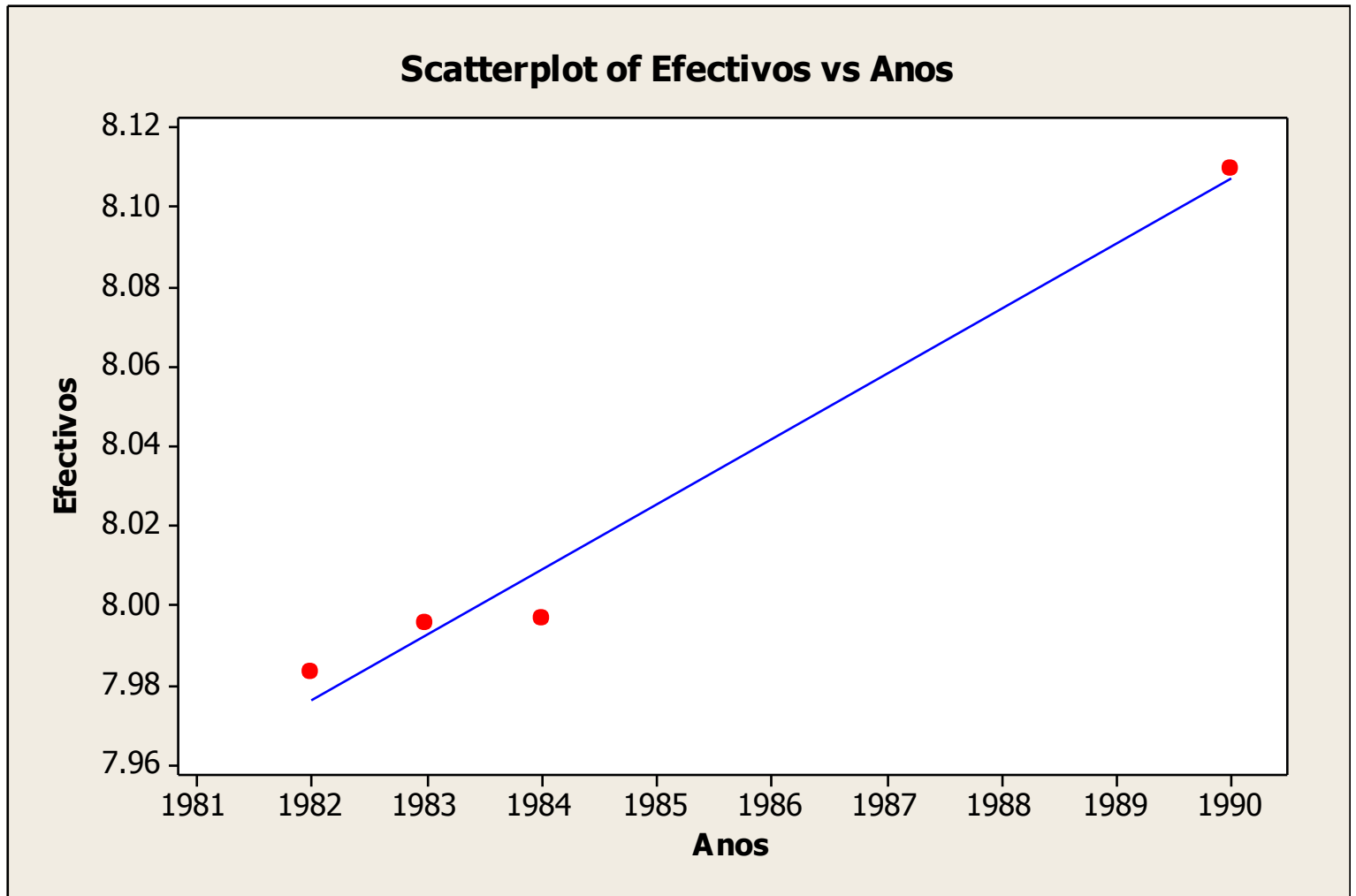
Miembros		Iniciales (en 1959):		34025	Algebraic Total			
Year	TotEmigr	Members	EffectMasons	Emigrat(x1.5)	Deaths(1%)	Losses(2%)	Gains	Total
1959	62,800	32738	0.02051	483	340	681	238	32759
1960	60,781	31492	0.01836	418	327	655	229	31567
1961	50,857	30449	0.01643	313	315	630	220	30454
1962	73,632	28940	0.01643	454	304	609	213	29295
1963	15,535	28621	0.01544	90	289	579	203	28184
1964	15,045	28313	0.01575	89	286	572	200	27874
1965	25,366	27793	0.01575	150	283	566	198	27512
1966	55,422	26657	0.01575	327	278	556	195	26826
1967	49,756	25637	0.01308	244	267	533	187	25800
1968	50,182	24608	0.01247	235	256	513	179	24813
1969	49,415	23595	0.01202	223	246	492	172	23819
Total	508,791			3026	3193	6385	2235	

Membership Reduction: 1959-69

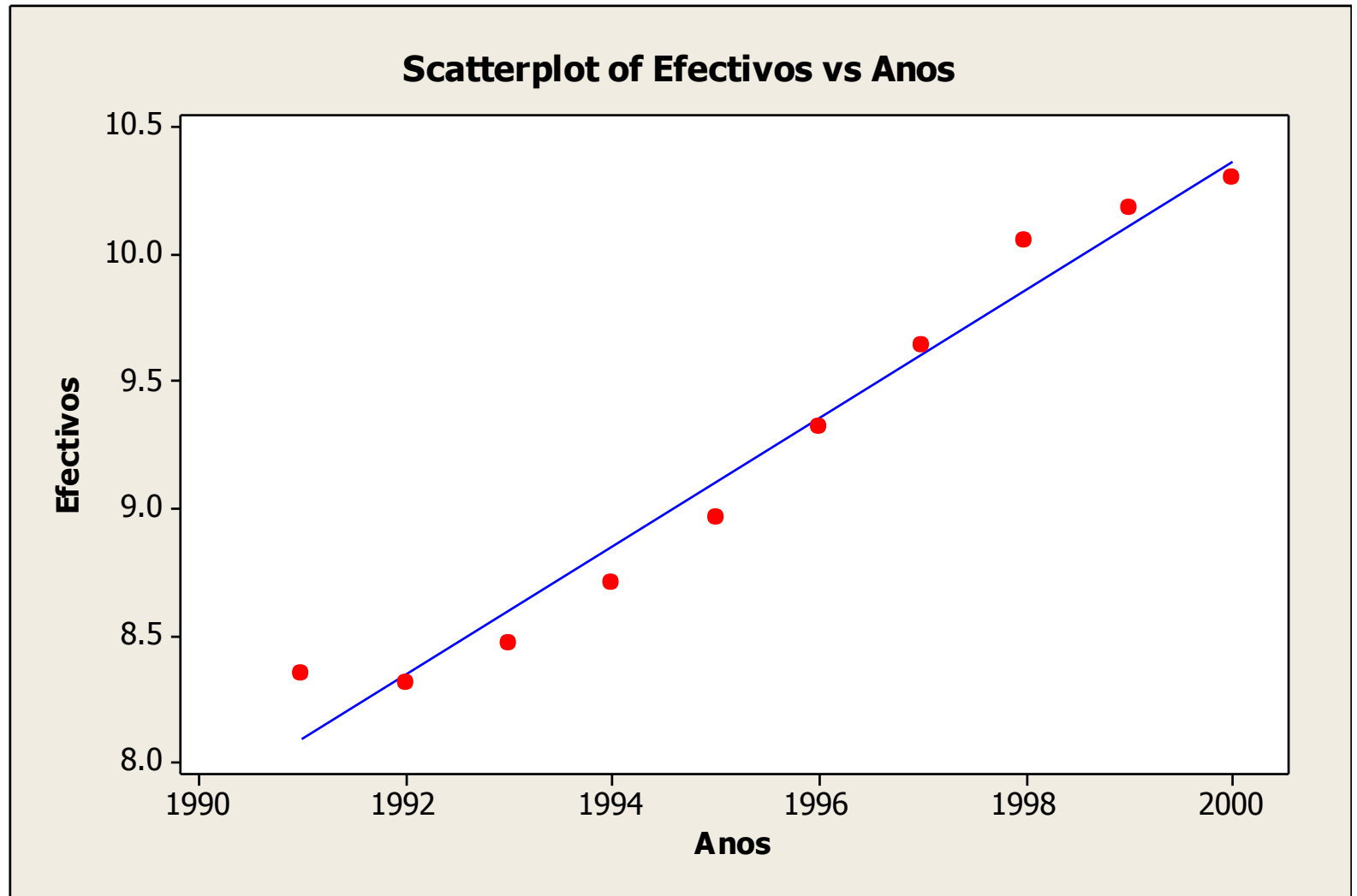
- Deaths, natural reduction: 3088 (L.B.)
- Left the country: 3026 (Lower Bound)
- Left/did not join for ideological reasons
- Left/did not join due to government policies
- Never (re)affiliated, for ideological reasons
- Never (re)affiliated, due to government policy



Expansion of state economy; Visits from “Community”; Mariel Boatlift.



After Mariel: Economic liberalization; Visits; Gorbachev; Disolution of USSR.



IV Congress PCC authorizes members; Special Period: Private Ent./Tourism

Growth by IV PCC Congress & Economy

Year	Population	Estimate	Members	Estimate	IV-PCC	Difference
1990	10433000	0.007	21153	0.03	0.021	*
1991	10574800	10506031	21918	21788	21597	190
1992	10645700	10648824	21962	22441	22051	390
1993	10716600	10720220	22539	23114	22514	601
1994	10787500	10791616	23321	23808	22987	821
1995	10858400	10863013	24169	24522	23469	1053
1996	10929300	10934409	25301	25258	23962	1296
1997	11000200	11005805	26344	26016	24465	1550
1998	11071100	11077201	27635	26796	24979	1817
1999	11142000	11148598	28173	27600	25504	2096
2000	11176406	11219994	28689	28428	26039	2389

Membership Distribution by Province

PROVINCE	Area (km²)	Population	Lodges	Membrs	Mbr/Ldg	Efective
TOTAL	109,886.19	11,177,743	316	29127	92.2	10.423
PINAR DEL RIO	10,904.03	726,574	17	2706	159.2	14.897
PROV. HABANA	5,791.59	711,066	29	2494	86	14.03
CIUDAD HABANA	721.01	2,201,610	111	9329	84	16.49
MATANZAS	11,802.72	670,427	28	2370	84.6	14.14
VILLA CLARA	8,412.41	817,395	29	2667	92	13.051
CIENFUEGOS	4,180.02	395,183	14	1387	99.1	14.039
SANCTI SPIRITU	6,736.51	460,328	11	991	90.1	8.611
CIEGO DE AVILA	6,783.13	411,766	8	449	56.1	4.3.62
CAMAGUEY	15,615.02	784,178	14	709	50.6	3.617
LAS TUNAS	6,587.75	525,485	6	604	100.7	4.598
HOLGUIN	9,292.83	1,021,321	12	1138	94.8	4.4.57
GRANMA	8,375.49	822,452	10	1104	110.4	5.369
STGO DE CUBA	6,156.44	1,036,281	19	1992	104.8	7.689
GUANTANAMO	6,167.97	507,118	7	1187	169.6	9.363

Some observations from the past - 1

- *The more things change - - - - -*
- Some men and a few women sought to express those ideals sociably. Masonic Lodges were by far the most cosmopolitan.
- The lodges occupied a middle ground (...) government officials might be found (...) less official voices of the Masonic brothers who addressed one another
 - ***Jacob; Enlightenment p. 143***

More observations from the past - 2

- First and foremost, Lodges were schools of government (Ibid, p. 124)
- (Lodges foster) the creation of constitutionally governed civil societies (Ibid, p.135)
- Lodges were spaces in a new zone of civil society (Ibid, p. 57)
- Merit should be the sole criterion for status within the Lodge (Ibid, p. 56)
- Promotion within the lodge grounded upon “real worth and personal merit only” (p. 54)

Tenets of Freemasonry (*Ibid p.73*)

- **Past** (*Enlightment*)
 - Religious toleration
 - Fraternizing among disparate social backgrounds
 - Ideology of assessing on work and merit
 - Government by constitutions and elections
- **Present** (*XXI Century*)
 - Political toleration and freedom of thought
 - Fraternizing among disparate social classes and races
 - Broad Merit Criteria
 - Political Pluralism and Open Participation

Freemasons in Cuban Civil Society

- Incubators of Citizens
 - Free men; independent thinkers (out of box)
- Incubator of new Ideas
 - Open discussions, in an environment of respect
- Increase the Social Capital
 - Interaction between different people/social strata
- Tolerance and Acceptance
 - Of new/different ways of seeing things
- Democratic rules and procedures
 - Freely elected leaders and judicial system

Social Function of Freemasons

- Non political:
 - good men => better men
- Some *better men* feel a call to act
 - as individuals, on societal problems
- **Connecting** Function:
 - establish contacts/interact
- **Spreading** Function:
 - proclaim publicly new ideas
- **Incubator** Function:
 - create new organizations.

Others abilities developed

- Effective public speaking
- Listening and arguing respectfully
- Use of persuasion and reason
- Organization skills of large groups
- Democratic methods of leadership
- Dealing and living with a budget
- The art of Negotiation with others
- Abiding by a system of rules/regulations

Advantages over other organizations

- **Egalitarian**

- All Third Degree Masons have same rights/duties

- **Democratic**

- Members elect and are elected, periodically

- **Participative**

- Precludes captive audiences: objecting is possible

- **Open**

- To a larger variety of groups (religious, social etc.)
- Allows for a more participatory exchange of views

Some restrictions suffered

- Loss of some Lodges, locals and income
- Limitations to develop social programs
- Legal and extralegal government control
- Socioeconomic concerns of membership
- Imposition of fines, mandatory reports
- Limited access to media/Internet
- Limitations to creating new Lodges
- Limitations to receiving remittances

Some Progress Made

- Official visits of Masons living abroad
- Reduction of constraints on membership
 - In 1992: membership of government officers
 - As well as of previously *concerned* citizens
- Still under surveillance (PGM Collera Vento)
- Intermittent access of GLC to the Internet
 - Internet is expensive and payments in CUCs
 - Limits Web and Forums to Members & Lodges

Some proposed steps:

- Lodges able to create Web Pages/Bulletins
 - Easier access to Internet and other Media
- Stronger interaction, within and abroad
 - Between Lodges, and with other Grand Lodges
- Possibility to implement in local Lodges
 - Social, economic and cultural programs, as before
- Re-establish links with Masons in Diaspora
 - Regularize, individual and institutional situation of
 - Cuban Freemasons and organizations abroad.

Conclusions

- **GLC strengthens the Cuban Civil Society**
 - FORUMS for Analysis, not Confrontation
- **Freemasons constitute an organization**
 - Of importance to the Cuban Civil Society
 - For its socioeconomic and political breadth
- **Unique opportunity for Institutional growth**
 - Does not have competition: Rotary, Lions, etc.