“You’re a useless person”

The understanding of prostitution within a Cuban context of gender equality and machismo-leninismo

Report from a Minor Field Study

by
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Abstract

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This thesis examines the understanding of prostitution in Cuba. It presents a contrast between the explanation of prostitution before 1959 as caused by structural economic conditions, and the discussion on contemporary prostitution, which is characterized by individualizing definitions. Within the individualizing understanding of contemporary prostitution, ‘jineteras’, Cuban women having sexual relationships with foreign tourist men for economical purposes, are seen to lack morals due to a deficient upbringing. They are also said to represent capitalist values incompatible with the Cuban socialist system. An individualizing definition of prostitution is also reflected in suggestions of ‘re-education’ of individual jineteras as a solution to decrease prostitution.

The understanding of prostitution is analyzed as reflecting a worldview of politically normative categories, within which individuals are defined according to their contribution to society. This worldview is analyzed as a symbolic frame, within which certain categories of thought are shaped. The Cuban ideology of gender equality is analyzed as part of this worldview. It is suggested that gender equality has become normative and that gender has been removed as a category of explanation. The definition of the ideology of gender equality is analyzed as conserving present power relations.

The view on prostitution of former times related prostitution to women’s situation in general, which is contrasted with the individualizing understanding of prostitution today. The latter is suggested to ‘degender’ prostitution, and remove an earlier aspect of women’s rights. This is related to the symbolic frame where gender is not available as a category of explanation. Within such a frame, ‘machismo’ can constitute part of the doxic field without being subjected to discussion. It is suggested that an analysis of the understanding of prostitution must disclose the underlying premises of its individualizing definitions.

Keywords: Cuba, prostitution, jinetera, jineterismo, gender equality, machismo, Bourdieu, symbolic power, feminist anthropology

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1. Introduction

1.1 Question at issue

How is prostitution in Cuba explained and defined today, and how can the understanding of prostitution be related to a wider context of machismo and an institutionalized ideology of gender equality?

My interest in this topic was awoken when I interviewed official representatives from the Cuban Communist Party and Women’s Federation in 1997 and 2000. While ignoring or even denying the existence of prostitution in today's Cuba, these representatives described the ‘elimination’ of prostitution after the Cuban revolution of 1959 as an important political victory. This ‘elimination’ was meant to illustrate how the new revolutionary government introduced fundamental women’s rights, including the right not to have to sell their bodies to earn a living. I knew from my visits to Cuba that prostitution was still widespread and visible today (see section 2.2 and 2.3).

When formulating my project, I asked how prostitution of today is understood within the framework of more than 40 years of institutionalized gender equality. Gender equality in Cuba is defined as already implemented, and women’s rights are officially said to be a priority of the government. I asked if this framework would suggest explanations to the causes and solutions of prostitution today that would differ from those concerning the period before 1959.

During my fieldwork January-July 2002, I focused on the strong condemnation faced by jineteras, Cuban women having sexual relationships with foreign tourist men for economical purposes (see section 1.4 for an introduction of the term). Everything that was considered ‘good’ and ‘correct’ was in opposition to them, and they were blamed for causing class differences, individualism and egoism. As my analysis proceeded, I asked whether this condemnation could be perceived to reflect a more general worldview. During the completion of the thesis, I have cross-analyzed the idea of a normative worldview with an analysis of the premises of gender equality. This suggests a symbolic frame of the
understanding of prostitution today, and shows how the explanations of contemporary prostitution can serve political interests.

1.2 Background to the field

Until 1989, the Cuban economy depended heavily on financial support from the Soviet Union (Marshall 1988: 253). After the fall of the Soviet Union, Cuba entered an economic crisis worsened by the simultaneous strengthening of the US trade embargo (Pérez & Stubbs 2000: 5). This led to a rapid decrease of material standard and a ‘special period’, accompanied by a number of economic measures, was proclaimed by the regime. In 1993, possession of US dollars was legalized, and a ‘two market-system’ developed allowing the use of both Cuban pesos and US dollars. From the very beginning, the regime admitted that the legalization of dollars would lead to new class differences as not everyone has access to dollars (Fuente 2001: 317f). A normal salary in Cuban pesos is equivalent to 10-20 dollars a month, which is not enough to live on, even though small amounts of staple food are provided through a ration system. Dollars have become essential, as many basic products, such as soap, are only available with dollars. The main ways to obtain dollars are through relatives abroad, working in tourism, or through various illegal activities (Fuente 2001: 318).

To acquire hard currency in the economic crisis, the government has decided to make tourism the single most prioritized industry. Tourism has been heavily promoted by Cuban authorities and has by now become an established and indispensable industry. Phenomena, such as class differences and prostitution that were considered ‘eliminated’ after the Cuban revolution of 1959 have grown with the new tourism. Ever since mass tourism started, prostitution has been widespread, especially around the tourist centers (see section 2.2 and 2.3 for a presentation of the field of prostitution today). Cuban authorities have been criticized for their way of promoting the country as a tourist destination, for example in a coverage in Playboy magazine, which was approved by the present Cuban government (Rundle 2001: 8). The government is accused of using Cuban women in its advertisement, which is contrasted to its condemnation of the extensive sex-tourism in the period before 1959.
1.3 PCC, FMC and machismo

Since the Cuban revolution of 1959, there is only one political party in Cuba, PCC, el Partido Comunista de Cuba, commonly called ‘the Party’. The Cuban constitution states: “The Communist Party of Cuba, martiano¹ and Marxist-Leninist, the organized avant-garde of the Cuban nation, is the superior leading force of the society and the State, one that organizes and guides the united efforts towards the high aims of the construction of socialism and the advance towards the communist society” (Capítulo 1, Artículo 5 of the Cuban constitution from 2001, my translation). ‘The Party’, which “formulates the ideology and policies of the country, makes final decisions, and holds ultimate power”, is the most important political institution in Cuba (Rosendahl 1997: 6).

In her study of everyday life in Socialist Cuba, the Swedish anthropologist Mona Rosendahl states: “For a long time in Cuba, the term ‘revolution’ has been synonymous with ‘socialism’ which in turn is closely related to the Party” (ibid: 112). Marxism-Leninism is thus still the official state ideology in Cuba, notwithstanding economical changes.

Socialism constitutes a symbolic frame, within which fundamental categories of life are defined. This is thoroughly discussed by Rosendahl, who uses the concept of ‘hegemonic ideology’. Within this frame, the concepts of ‘socialism’ or ‘revolution’ function to define what is ‘correct’, which results in a “sacralization of the existing political order” (Rosendahl 1997: 161). Thus, socialism in Cuba, as someone suggested, is not a ‘Sunday ideology’, given a brush whenever there is a spare moment. Instead, it permeates, I would suggest, all levels of life including the symbolic level, and fundamentally contributes to shaping people’s categories. In other contexts, socialism can signify a certain political conviction, while in the Cuban context, it can be understood as a normative definition of reality. This ideology can be seen reflected both in practical demands, when state television presents participation in a

¹ Of José Martí, a liberation hero fighting and writing during the second half of the 19th century. Martí “is considered the father of the Cuban revolution. He stands for humanism, national independence, and human dignity” (Rosendahl 1997: 2).
demonstration for eternal Socialism as a condition for human dignity, or symbolically, when non-revolutionary is equated with being dirty, weak, impotent and probably even gay.

According to the United Nations, Cuba is at the front of all ‘underdeveloped’ countries in the league of gender equality (Fleites-Lear 1996: 41). The UN assessment of gender equality consists primarily of statistics referring to the percentage of women in different sectors of employment and in decision-making positions, as well as of an analysis of women's access to education and public health and of laws regulating women’s conditions (ibid: 41).

The Federation of Cuban Women, FMC (la Federación de Mujeres Cubanas), is the main force in defining the ideology of gender equality (Rosendahl 1997: 74). FMC was the first mass organization to be founded in 1960, and organizes 83% of all Cuban women over the age of 14 (ibid: 26). All mass organizations, including the FMC, are under the control of the state and the Party. According to the federation itself, the FMC “is a non-governmental organization set up by the will of women to participate in every task necessary for making true the revolutionary goals /…/ to defend the Cuban revolution” (FMC 1995: 26).

Interestingly, machismo is generally not discussed by the FMC as an obstacle to attain gender equality. Rosendahl defines ‘machismo’ as “an exaggerated display of manliness but also the idea that men should have supremacy and control over women in every aspect of life and that both physically and psychologically, men and women are in different spheres” (Rosendahl 1997: 52f). Emically, machismo is related to stereotypical gender roles, dichotomized gender characteristics and controlling behavior like, for example, pronounced jealousy. Machismo is recognized but rarely discussed, not even by the FMC. It is not questioned that both men and women still relate to machismo, although it is described as old-fashioned and irrational. During my fieldwork, I came to consider machismo a fundamental category in the Cuban context.
Machismo and the ideology of gender equality are sometimes presented as opposites in discussions on Cuba (Rosendahl 1997: 52f). For my later analysis of the underlying gender order of the Cuban context, I will suggest that the ideology of gender equality is essential on a rhetorical level, while machismo can be interpreted as a doxic frame of values (see section 4.1 and 6.1). I thus use ‘machismo’ as a symbolic concept and do not focus on the concrete expressions of machismo mentioned above. Through my final discussion in part 5 on the premises of the ideology of gender equality, I will propose that machismo and gender equality need not to be understood as contradictory on a symbolic level. Following this argument, the sarcastic naming of the Cuban revolutionary rhetoric as ‘machismo-leninismo’ (Smith 1996: 185) is illustrative.

1.4 ‘Jinetera’

According to some of my informants, the term ‘prostitution’ has connotations to the time before the Cuban revolution of 1959, when it referred to women who worked in established and state-sanctioned brothels. Now, the context of prostitution is different, and instead, people talk for the most part about ‘jineteras’. There is no exact definition of how the word ‘jinetera’ is used.2 The signification of the concept can be seen as a continuum, as it is used in a broad sense. It can refer to women who have a pimp and sell sex to different men every day. It can also refer to women who have relationships that last for weeks or even months with foreigners for economical purposes or for emigration purposes. It can also signify anything in between that involves having sexual relationships with foreigners for money or material gifts. To define who is a jinetera is thus not done through a clearly demarcated definition, and naturally ‘jinetera’ does not suggest inherent qualities in a person.

2 Literally the word means ‘horseback rider’. In the masculine/gender neutral form jinetero, the word can refer to anyone who live on swindling tourists, from cigar peddlers, beggars, middlemen arranging contacts with tourists, to pimps and prostitutes. Elizalde comments: “jinetero is not only the one who practices prostitution. The term is more related to illegal trade with hard currency, and, in an extended sense, includes those who sell sex to foreigners. /…/ Jineteur (the verb to ride/mount, my comment) has an almost literal meaning in this underworld. It is ‘mounting’ the tourist, ride him towards the main goal: to deprive him of the foreign money” (Elizalde 1996: 38, my translation).
When I asked my informants for a definition of ‘jinetera’, they affirmed that it referred to women involved in prostitution. In the following discussions, it was implied that they referred the term to prostitution between Cubans and foreigners. Some of my informants said that jineteras can “be with Cubans” as well, as long as they are paid well. Some informants have commented that also Cuban men are involved in prostitution with tourists. However, in my interviews it was almost always both implicit and explicit that the term ‘jinetera’ referred to Cuban women selling sex to foreign tourist men. Women who have a pimp or are involved in street prostitution sometimes consider themselves jineteras. Those who have relationships with foreigners to obtain dollars do not necessarily consider themselves jineteras, but others often define them as such, according to a distinction between relationships with economical interests and ‘real relationships', which include ‘love’.

The Danish anthropologist Mette B. Rundle who has studied *jineterismo* in Havana observes that the concept of jinetera also has ‘racialized’ connotations. There is a myth that black women constitute the majority of the jineteras. Thus, black women who are seen with foreign tourist men will be interpreted differently than white Cuban women in a similar situation (Rundle 2001: 7, 9).³

I use the terms ‘prostitution’ and ‘jinetera’ interchangeably, like they are used by my informants, to refer to Cuban women who have sexual relationships with foreign tourist men for economical purposes.

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³ Rundle suggests that for white Cubans it can be “incomprehensible that white European men should wish to have relationships with or even marry Afrocuban women” (Rundle 2001: 8). This is an attitude that I have observed myself. One middle aged white woman told me: “Many jineteras are ugly, really ugly, and black. I can’t understand that foreigners want to be with them. They are extremely ugly, and really black.”
1.5 My material

A scholarship from Sida\(^4\) enabled me to conduct a six months fieldwork in the city of Havana January-July 2002. To present a background to the concrete field of prostitution in Havana today, I use my own observations, information given to me from agents involved in this field, and official literature from state organizations. My understanding of this field has also been based on numerous informal discussions and various cultural expressions relevant for the topic of my study such as music, TV programs, theatre plays etc.

My analysis in this thesis does not focus on the actual field of prostitution as such, but on the understanding of prostitution. The predominant material that I use to present my analysis consists of the taped interviews I conducted during my fieldwork. In all, I conducted ten semi-structured interviews focusing on prostitution, machismo and gender equality.\(^5\) I interviewed people in private at my home or theirs, usually for 1-2 hours.\(^6\) The interviewees are the ones that I

\(^4\) Sida - Styrelsen för internationellt utvecklingssamarbete, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, or ASDI, Agencia Sueca de Desarollo Internacional.

\(^5\) I used different questions in all interviews, but stuck to some predefined topics to try to grasp a general line of reasoning. Prostitution was generally brought up last in the interview, as this was the most controversial topic. I often referred some comment that I had heard on why jineteras turn to prostitution to let my interviewees bring the discussion further. From their reflections on this comment I used their concepts to direct the discussion to find out how they reflected on the reasons behind prostitution and how they looked upon jineteras. I often asked whether prostitution was increasing or decreasing, why they thought it was decreasing or increasing, whether and how prostitution was persecuted or sanctioned, what they considered to be appropriate sanctions if any etc. I also asked if they knew any jineteras, what advice they would give a jinetera etc. Generally, my informants had strong opinions on the matter, and I tried not to express any own opinions but instead referred statements from other people to ask them whether they thought that these statements made sense or not.

My first questions were often on gender equality, and I directed the discussions to see how my interviewees reflected on changes in the situation of women, what were considered the most important women’s rights etc. I asked them to tell me about their own lives and families, and how they reflected on their marriage/children/parents. I asked about the FMC, their work, their tasks and their importance. Most of the times, machismo was brought up by the interviewees, and I asked them to give me examples of machismo, their own experiences, whether machismo changed and how this was observed, if young people were less machista and how they noticed this, whether they considered Cuba to be a machista society etc.

\(^6\) The interviews were conducted from an agreement that the names of the informants would not be revealed. I thus do not use their real names in this thesis. When I believe that presenting their background might suggest their identity, I have changed certain details or chosen not to present possibly disclosing factors.
refer to as my ‘informants’. I made sure they were a mixed group in terms of gender, age, what in Cuba is called 'race', occupation, place of residence etc.\(^7\)

I conducted the first interviews on the basis of certain questions formulated before my fieldwork concerning explanations of the existence of prostitution today and reflections on gender equality. During my fieldwork, I continuously analyzed the interviews, and thus reformulated my questions encountering my material. Among other things, it turned out that my questions were formulated abstractly, that my informants could not relate to the premises underlying my formulation of questions, and that concrete and personally directed questions gave me more thorough and interesting answers. Thus, I concretized my questions although my interest was focused on examining a general way of reasoning. Back home in Sweden, being 'outside' the field, an analytical distance could develop allowing me to interpret my material differently, and I could see new connecting lines that were never ‘in view’ when I conducted the interviews. My question at issue and analysis has thus clearly been shaped by and shaping my interpretations of the empirical material.

1.6 To create empirical material

Anthropology has a long tradition of opposing empiricist positivism. Thus talking about 'gathering of information' might seem foreign to the discipline itself. In fieldwork and in participant observation, the researcher is never a passive observer, but co-creates the frames for the construction of the empirical material. Using my taped interviews as an example, I will present a brief discussion on the creation of this part of my material.

In discussions about a researcher's co-creation of interview material, a common item is her position in relation to the informants. It is suggested that the researcher makes conscious for the reader her general position and visualizes her

\(^7\) ‘Race’ is emically considered an important category, which is the reason why I present it as part of the background of my informants. Of the ten interviewees, there were four men and six women, four consider themselves ‘mulatos’, three ‘whites’ and three ‘blacks’, their age ranges from 20 to 50, four live in central parts of Havana while six live in suburbs. The ones living in suburbs generally live under more constrained economical conditions.
part of the interaction in the interview situation. A traditional focus is to discuss the power relations in an interview situation and to see the researcher as having a power advantage through her academic position. It is also common to mention certain characteristics of the interviewer and the interviewee to give a background of the situation, such as their gender, age, ethnic origin, occupation etc. These factors undoubtedly contribute to the interaction of an interview situation. Nevertheless, I consider them far too wide-meshed to define the complex positions of such an interaction and they should never be considered self-evident or stand alone to suggest a satisfactory 'contextualization'.

I hold the view that the most important for what my informants told me in the taped interviews, was not the fact that I was a young, female foreigner. More acute were, as I see it, two factors. The first of them was the fact that many of the informants expressed, explicitly or implicitly, doubts about being taped while talking about the topic of prostitution. Merely suggesting that prostitution exists can be politically controversial in Cuba, and some of my informants were afraid of being taped while expressing what might be interpreted as regime-critical opinions. Some of my informants explicitly told me that they would be more careful what they told me while the tape-recorder was running. This may naturally have shaped their statements to a great extent, although I believe that the interviews can still be interpreted as expressing a general line of reasoning. Two persons turned down my inquiry to interview them when I told them that I wanted to tape the interview.

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8 The base of this discussion is the requirement of scientific literature that a reader should be able to reconstruct the constructions and understanding of the researcher, to be able to form an opinion of whether the analysis is well founded or not (cf. Bourdieu 1999 [1993]). This, Pierre Bourdieu states, is because "the crucial difference is not between a science that effects a construction and one that does not, but between a science that does this without knowing it and one that, being aware of the work of construction, strives to discover and master as completely as possible the nature of these inevitable acts of construction" (Bourdieu 1999: 608). The researcher will always be in the position that she "starts the game and sets up its rules" (ibid: 609), which suggests a symbolic power asymmetry between the interviewer and the interviewee. The researcher must analyze and reflect upon her position in relation to the informant, and actively try to create a situation where both parts become subjects of the interaction.
Secondly, I believe that the way I got to know my informants affected what they told me. Two of them were asked via a representative, and so I could not myself control what they were told about my project and topics of interest.

In this thesis, when introducing my informants, I give a general introduction to their background and mention what I consider to be important keys to interpret their statements, for example, how I got in contact with them. Thus, to some extent, I try to ‘make probable’ my interpretation of the informants. I have also tried to present my intention with the quotations used, to show whether I consider them to illustrate a way of thinking, see them as examples of statements often repeated, or as reflecting certain interests or positions.
2. Prostitution now and then

2.1 Prostitution around 1959

In the Cuban context, what is called the ‘triumph of the revolution’\(^9\) of 1959 is seen as a fundamental historical division to which all changes are related. The ‘elimination’ of prostitution has in official rhetoric been pointed out as a symbol of the revolutionary changes.

According to Rundle, Cuba in the 1950’s was “known as the ‘brothel of the Caribbean’ /…/, and 10,000 sex workers are estimated to have operated in Havana alone”. The new government “quickly initiated a programme for the rehabilitation of prostitutes, which was largely successful. /…/ In the decades after the revolution tourism was discouraged for its associations with gambling, prostitution, and US-dependence” (Rundle 2001: 5). Rundle furthermore argues that “prostitution is often associated with the pre-revolution era and is therefore a sensitive issue for the socialist government” (ibid: 1).

The quotations below are meant to illustrate the situation of prostitution before 1959, to suggest the importance of the elimination of prostitution after the ‘triumph’, and to raise some reflections that will lead to my question at issue about the understanding of prostitution.\(^10\)

Many women, who were denied jobs, saw themselves forced to become prostitutes in order to survive. (The museum of the revolution, Havana, room 7, about the years before 1959)

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\(^9\) The revolution is seen as an ongoing process. The actual events of 1959 are thus called the ‘triumph’.

\(^10\) It might be problematic to use these texts and quotations for a description of the field. All official voices commenting on this period reflect clear ideological interests, as they are part of creating a version of history meant to suit those currently holding power positions, and must be interpreted as such. However, regarding the field of prostitution of the years around 1959, I am at the mercy of such sources to be able to comment on the topic at all. Regarding the prostitution of today, I try to consciously distinguish what are my own observations and other parts of my material that I use descriptively, and the sources that I use for an analysis.
With 6 million inhabitants, in 1959 Cuba had ten thousand prostitutes /.../ [The revolutionary army] started a process of social incorporation in which almost all the persons involved in this environment took part voluntarily. /.../ Brothels were closed down, the women and their children were taken care of, they were given the opportunity to learn a profession and to assist at schools and health centers… The reluctant pimps were brought to justice, and in 1965 when the process was considered to be completed, those who still exercised [this activity] were sent to agricultural farms. (Elizalde 1996: 17, my translation)

A priority was the elimination of prostitution. In Cuba, there were dozens of thousands of women who performed this degrading trade, forced by economic reasons. Many, right from the beginning of the Revolution, availed themselves of the opportunities for jobs that were being offered. Others required more patient work so as to be rescued from this regrettable way of subsistence. Brothels were closed down, all of the women were given medical attention and enrichment courses so as to enable them to join social life in an appropriate position. /.../ [T]he causes that originated these disgraces were eradicated. (FMC 1995: 19f)

For my discussion, the importance assigned today to the prostitution of 1959 is interesting. In the quotations above, prostitution of earlier times is discussed in terms such as ‘degrading’, ‘regrettable’ and ‘disgrace’. Statements like “forced by economic reasons” and “the causes that originated these disgraces were eradicated” suggest what are seen as economic causes behind the phenomenon, and the view that a change was made possible through overthrowing the former political system and creating new economic conditions where these ‘causes’ did no longer exist. The ‘elimination’11 is referred to as a matter of justice and a responsibility of the new revolutionary government. Pimps were punished, the prostitutes were ‘rescued’ and ‘given opportunities’ and ‘enrichment courses’. Prostitution is made a symbol of the degradation and poverty of the former

11 One can naturally question whether prostitution was totally eliminated during the years between 1959 and the 1990’s. I know of concrete cases which suggest that this was not so. A man who went to prostitutes during this period of time commented: “There has always been prostitution, only it turned more expensive when the tourists came.” However, during this period, there seems to have been little and relatively invisible prostitution.
dictatorship, and related to structural economical conditions. Its elimination comes to symbolize political change, and the new regime is given the honor of creating new possibilities in which women do not have to sell their bodies. The prostitution of the time around 1959 is thus unambiguously defined as a phenomenon possible and desirable to eliminate through political means.

My informants reflect this view when discussing prostitution of former times.

One of the first things the government did after the triumph was to eliminate prostitution. That was extremely important, that women shouldn't be like merchandise, to be bought and sold. (Francisco)

Before the revolution many women were involved in prostitution. But after the triumph there was work so they didn't need to make themselves a living through sex. And they were never stigmatized for what they had done. (Carmen)

It was important after the triumph of the revolution to eliminate prostitution. Because it's not right that a woman has to sell her body to get the things she needs. (Alicia)

Also these voices reflect the ‘elimination’ of prostitution of former times as an important political issue, they relate it to women’s situation in general before the ‘triumph’ (what I will later discuss as a ‘gendering’ of the issue), and reflect on it in moral terms of right and wrong.

2.2 The field of prostitution today

As a background to my discussion on the understanding of prostitution today, it is necessary to draw a picture of the contemporary field of prostitution. I will present here two written sources that have studied this field.

Rundle studied prostitution in Havana during a fieldwork carried out in 1998 (Rundle 2001). According to her, prostitution is one of many ‘livelihood tactics’ aiming at obtaining goods, money, or leaving the country. Rundle observes that jineteras are often faced with police harassment and stigmatization from the
authorities that consider them to be anti-social elements whose lack of morals must be confronted and suppressed (Rundle 2001: 1). Jineteras are subjected to negative moralizing. People often believe that jineteras prostitute themselves because of ‘luxurious tastes’ (as stated by a Cuban journalist, ibid: 7), which in reality means the need for soap or other everyday necessities. Rundle analyzes prostitution as a phenomenon that is clearly ‘racialized’. She argues that “[t]he popular stereotype of a jinetera is a black or mulata woman soliciting male tourists in the streets. /…/ [T]wo recent studies, however, concluded that the majority of jineteras were white or mestiza, mixed race” (ibid: 2). The popular picture of jineteras says that they dress up in flashy clothes that, it is assumed, they cannot have obtained without prostituting themselves. However, due to the ‘racialization’ of jineterismo, young white girls dressing in the same clothes might pass as foreigners themselves (ibid: 4). The phenomenon has been racialized to the extent that, in certain contexts, young black Cuban women are almost automatically seen as jineteras (ibid: 9).

Rosa M. Elizalde, who is a Cuban journalist living and writing in Cuba, interviewed 28 women and five men between the ages of 15 and 30 partaking in some way in prostitution for a commentary on prostitution called Jineteros en la Habana (1996). She categorizes jineteras according to where they meet the foreigner, namely in a fixed place (disco, hotel, restaurant etc) or in the street (places where there are often many tourists or sailors), or as part of a category which she calls ‘exclusives’ (those who also engage in other activities such as ‘dancers, models, masseurs’, Elizalde 1996: 37). Jineteras most often try to get money, although they are also known to go out with tourists to get goods such as shoes, clothes or cosmetics, or to get access to tourist places, or to be invited for luxurious dinners etc (ibid: 38f). Jineteras are often main economic providers of their families and are at times compared to foreigners coming ‘from the outside’ bringing gifts to Cuba (ibid: 40). Elizalde concludes from her interviews that jineteras did not get the love they needed from their families. She writes that “in 66% of the homes there was or is at least one alcoholic, in 42%, a person with a psychiatric treatment, and in 72%, the father or mother has been absent. Almost all associate their childhood and youth with loneliness, incomprehension, scenes
of violence, authoritarianism or excessive tolerance” (ibid: 40, my translation). Elizalde localizes part of the reasons behind prostitution in how, in her opinion, the jineteras idealize the foreigners and their foreign values, especially their view of sexuality, and contrast them with the “intolerable machista Cuban men” (ibid: 40). Elizalde states that no one is a victim in this, that everyone taking part does it by a conscious choice, often, as she sees it, as a natural consequence of a generally promiscuous life.

2.3 Voices from my material
Isabel is around 30 years old, and lives under relatively poor conditions in a suburb of Havana principally inhabited by black Cubans. As her story below suggests, she has been to prison accused of being a jinetera. She is constantly involved in relationships with foreign tourists, but they give her little money. She says she does not like them and wants them to go back to their countries and just send her the money. She does not call herself a jinetera, and would never explicitly ask the foreign tourists for money, although she assumes that they will give her money if she sleeps with them. She has Cuban boyfriends as well, who do not seem to mind her relationships with foreigners. She supports her brother, sister, her own daughter and her brother’s children. One of her sisters is currently in prison for being a jinetera. Isabel assumes that her younger sister will also have relationships with foreign tourists, and that she will be “better at it” because she already “seems so cynical”. Isabel told her story as follows:

One day I went out to get some cigarettes. It was in one of those areas in Old Havana where there are many tourists. I'm black and I was wearing a small dress, so they thought I was a prostitute. A police car stopped me and asked me what I was doing. They took me to the police station where I was held for eight days while they did an investigation, talked to my CDR\textsuperscript{12} and so on. Then they let me go, because I hadn't done anything wrong and I had no criminal record.

\textsuperscript{12} The CDR's, Comités de Defensa de la Revolución, are the neighborhood committees. They were started to defend the revolution at a grassroots’ level, and have later been used to organize neighborhood watch during the nights or cleaning the block, as well as carrying out campaigns of vaccination of children or blood donations. Their main function in everyday life is mostly one of social control.
The second time they took me in, I was sitting in a bar talking to the boyfriend of a friend of mine. He's white and a foreigner. This also took place in Old Havana. This time I had a criminal record, because of the investigation they had done the first time, so this time I had a trial. I defended myself, said I hadn't done anything, I was just chatting with this guy, but it didn't help. They made me sign a white sheet of paper. Afterwards they wrote a lot of things that I had never ever told them, like that I had relationships with foreigners and that they had given me money. I was sentenced to two years of prison. I think my crime was being a prostitute, but they never really told me.

In prison, there was a really fierce atmosphere. There were three barracks, one with murderers, one with jineteras, and one with thieves. There were a lot of young girls in my barrack, like 16, 17 years old. They were fighting all the time, and stealing from each other. I was really careful with whom I talked.

Every day, we were woken up at five o'clock and worked until twelve, and then we worked again from two o'clock. Once every week we had classes about venereal diseases and other things, but nobody was really interested. They let me go after one year because I behaved well and didn't get into trouble. Now, my sister is in prison for the same thing, but she's in a much worse situation, she doesn't behave well and is punished all the time. (Isabel)

Felipe who knows many jineteras from his block, describes how the business works:

The jineteras most often meet their clients at hotels or other tourist centers, or through their pimps, or through someone freelancing, working only with finding clients. If someone else than her pimp gets her the foreigner, she pays five dollars to this person. Then they rent a room or go to a hotel. At the hotel, she has to pay the doorman to be allowed to go to the room, 15 or at least ten dollars. The best is to have a pimp, because the pimp can bribe the policemen for you. Otherwise, the jinetera has to work for the police as well. To not turn her in, she has to sleep with him or to give him part of what she has earned. These are the policemen

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Felipe is an unemployed man around 30 years old, and says that he is “black and proud of it”. He lives in a poor suburb, and seems to make a living through foreign girlfriends. I interviewed him because I thought he had an interesting, regime-critical view on prostitution. I believe he noticed this interest and that this might have affected what he told me.
working around the hotels. If she gets caught anyway, by other policemen, she has to sleep with them so that they don’t take her to the police station. She might have to sleep with ten of them, or 15 or 20, or the whole unit. It is normal, you know. Now, it has turned into that the police go out at night to have sex. They just put on their uniform, stop girls in the street, and ask for their ID. They don’t even have to say anything, because she, out of fear, has sex with him. It’s very common. (Felipe)

I myself experienced a glimpse of the last thing Felipe mentions one night when I walked home with a friend of mine along the Malecón, the street at the sea front in Havana. It was very dark and the cars that passed us saw only our backs. A car with plates from the FAR (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias, the military forces) approached us. The two men in the car told us that they would not take us to the police station if we went with them and did what they told us to do. My Cuban friend pretended to be a foreigner, talked to them in English and told them goodbye. The car drove on. I asked my friend what the whole thing was about. She responded that “they were from the armed forces, they thought we were jineteras. Through the threat of taking us to the police station, they know they can get what they want.” I asked her whether this kind of thing happened regularly. “Of course”, she said, “all the time. The only way to escape is to pretend to be a foreigner, and then they won’t do anything to you. You’re blond, so when I walk with you it is easier to escape.”

Miguel14 lets part of his flat to a pimp and his ‘girlfriend’/jinetera, and explained to me the jinetera-business from his point of view. He goes out with the pimp and the jinetera every night, he lives from the money she makes, but does not consider himself a pimp. According to Miguel, the club to which they go every night is the cheapest place in Havana to buy sex. He told me that “everybody knows that, here you can get a girl for a night for 30 or 40 dollars, sometimes

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14 Miguel is around 35 years old, lives in a relatively wealthy part of Havana and considers himself to be black. He and the people around him are involved in other illegal activities apart from organizing prostitution. He does not know that I use him as a source of ‘information’. He noticed that I asked a lot about the topic of prostitution, told me not to be so curious, so I decided to drop my further inquiries.
even as cheap as 20”. Most times, the jinetera goes with the tourist to a hotel. The jinetera negotiates the price with the tourist before leaving the club. The pimp follows them outside, where, in turn, he bribes the doorman, the policemen outside, the taxi driver and the other taxi drivers for not telling the police. The people at the hotel are already bribed for not telling. Every night, Miguel and the pimp see ‘their’ jinetera off, and then get drunk and go home. Their role, according to themselves, is to take care of the bribing and to make her go with as many tourists as possible. With good connections to the police in the block, they do not risk very much. They may risk an occasional fine, but Miguel regards that as just another bribe. “All policemen are corrupt and can be bought off”, he told me.

The people mentioned have their own interests when telling me about prostitution in Havana. Although everyone will have a different impression of this field, no one visiting Havana today can fail to notice widespread and visible prostitution, especially around the tourist centers. The voices presented above can create a background to some of the characteristics of prostitution in Havana today. When talking about jineteras, one almost always refers to the contacts with foreigners. Prostitution, or jineterismo, includes everything from clubs reminiscent of brothels, to street prostitution and longer relationships with foreign tourists. It is widespread, established, well organized, and those taking part know the rules concerning bribes and prices for intermediate links.

The laws concerning prostitution are listed under a section called ‘Crime against normal development of sexual relations’ (Libro II, Título XI, Capítulo I, of the Código Penal of 1999, Ministerio de Justicia). According to the penal code, one can be sentenced to 4-10 years of prison for seducing someone to take part in prostitution or having any other kind of involvement in organizing prostitution, administrating or housing prostitution, or in any way benefiting from prostitution. If the person sentenced works in public health, education, youth direction or tourism, the penalty will be 10-20 years. Trafficking/trade with human beings gives 20-30 years (Artículo 298).
Elizalde comments on the practical handling of prostitution in the legal system of Cuba. She writes that prostitution and pimping are not criminal as such, but are usually penalized as *antisocial behavior* according to the law criminalizing the ‘dangerous condition’ (‘estado peligroso’, Artículo 72), that is the “special disposition of a person to commit crimes, demonstrated by an observed condition in obvious opposition to the norms of the socialist moral” (Elizalde 1996: 30, my translation).
3. The understanding of prostitution

3.1 Individualizing prostitution

As mentioned, the focus of my thesis is not a descriptive report on the field of prostitution in Havana today. Nevertheless, a presentation of the discussion about prostitution of 1959 and to give some clue to what this field looks like today, as presented in part 2, are necessary as a background to my discussion on the understanding of prostitution. I will start the ensuing discussion by presenting parts of my interviews with three informants on the topic of prostitution to raise what I see as interesting issues for my discussion on the understanding of prostitution.

Two of my informants, the housewives Maria and Alicia, described in the interviews what they considered to be the causes of prostitution and their general view on the existence of prostitution today. Maria emphasized that prostitution in Cuba today does not occur out of necessity. According to her, it is just “the easiest way to get money”, a way to escape having to work. She told me that prostitution is the way some people want to live, “they want to live their life, you know. They like it, I respect that, they don’t want to work.” All the same, the interview with Maria turned out to be full of contradictions concerning how she understood the reasons behind prostitution. She told me that women involved in prostitution have a “low cultural level”, and that they have been badly brought up. The way to prevent prostitution, she told me, is to give people in prostitution psychological help, to change their values. At the same time, she

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15 Maria is a housewife living in a wealthy part of Havana. She is around 35 and considers herself ‘white’. Through her husband’s job she has access to dollars. Earlier on she let a room to jineteras and their clients, just like almost everybody in her block did before the tax control was intensified. Maria was considered one of the most ‘eager’ room-providers, as she did not care if they rang her bell in the middle of the night, and she made a lot of money. Maria thinks that prostitution is ‘persecuted too much’, which I believe must be understood in the light of this.

Alicia is also around 35 and also considers herself ‘white’. She works night and day in what can be called the informal sector. Her husband does not have a job, according to themselves because of his regime-critical opinions. Alicia supports him and their three children. She is concerned for her 15-year-old daughter, because he daughter’s boyfriend has been bragging about how he provides girls from their group of friends for foreign tourist for a ‘middleman administrating fee’.
told me that some people do not have money to feed their children, and therefore “choose this very easy way”.

Alicia, on her part, believed that prostitution cannot be controlled, because, she maintained: “This can’t be ruled by any government. This is in the hands of people.” Her view on why some women turn to prostitution was the following:

The jineteras want money, to have nice houses, have a good life, have clothes. And if they don’t do it that way, through being with a foreigner, they can’t have that kind of life. A girl who didn’t study, where’s she going to work? If she didn’t study, she doesn’t know how to do anything. She’ll have to clean, the lowest kind of work. Then she’ll get a low salary, and with that salary she can’t live that kind of life. /.../ It’s the easy way. There they don’t have to make sacrifices or anything, not to study, not to work. It’s the easy life. (Alicia)

Alicia did not like the fact that prostitution exists, as she argued that:

[i]t’s bad because it’s immoral, it’s not the right way to find yourself a partner. [She takes a break to think] I don’t know. [New break] It’s not correct. It is not seen well upon, there are many diseases, right? One contributes to spreading all these diseases that are really bad. You know? Otherwise we wouldn’t have this much AIDS that we have. (Alicia)

Seeing prostitution as an ‘easy’ way to get money was repeated by practically everyone with whom I discussed the topic of contemporary prostitution. Maria’s statement that it is a way to escape having to work was slightly stronger than how it was usually expressed. However, Maria’s general view reflects many of the aspects that were often mentioned when my informants commented on or tried to explain to me the reasons why prostitution exists today. Maria stressed that the reason cannot be found in economical necessity, although she admitted that these women may be in a desperate economical situation with hardly any food for their children. Instead, she told me that the jineteras have a ‘low cultural level’, a common emical concept in Cuba, and that they probably have been badly brought up.
Alicia argued that having a relation with a foreigner was the fastest way to obtain what she considered to be the objective of the jineteras, i.e. to have nice clothes and a nice house. She also called it the ‘easy’ way and considered women in prostitution not to have to sacrifice themselves through work or studies. The ‘problem of prostitution’, she said, is the spreading of diseases and its immorality.

I interpret their reasoning on the topic as different from the arguments presented earlier about the prostitution of 1959. As mentioned, commenting on prostitution in earlier times, the idea is that women were forced to turn to prostitution because of intolerable economical conditions, and that they needed to be ‘rescued’ from this by a responsible government. Contrary to such an understanding, and although she admitted that there are hard economical conditions, Maria maintained that prostitution is a way to escape work and that “they want to live their life, you know. They like it”. Talking about the prostitution of today, Alicia did not relate to her statement mentioned earlier on the importance of eliminating prostitution in 1959, where she said that “it is not right that a woman has to sell her body to get the things she needs.” Now she instead stated: “This can’t be ruled by any government.”

Maria argued that jineteras are badly raised and that they have a low cultural level. She also suggested psychological help to change the values of the jineteras as an appropriate solution to the problem. This I interpret as focusing on a problem in the background of individuals to explain that they turn to prostitution, which in turn suggests individual ‘solutions’ such as psychological help to get jineteras out of prostitution. The focus on ‘forcing’ and ‘rescuing’ seems to have been replaced by focusing on individual choices and reasons found in individual backgrounds. Maria’s general view on how jineteras do not want to sacrifice themselves through work or studies, but instead choose an ‘easy’ life, may also reflect a generally individualizing reasoning around prostitution.
Another of my informants, Francisco,\(^{16}\) explicitly individualized the issue of prostitution in his comments. He told me that prostitution “is an individual problem, it is their choice, their decision, you shouldn’t interfere with people’s private life”. Furthermore, he stated that prostitution has got nothing to do with the country, because nobody has told the jineteras that they have to prostitute themselves to solve their economical problems. He told me that in Cuba, the state respects the private life of people, but that they naturally need to penalize “antisocial behavior”. People involved in prostitution must be given advice, because “it’s very important to forgive people no matter what sin they have committed”. The reason why some people turn to prostitution was, in his opinion, to have fun, or because they were badly brought up and were not told that they had to study. He explicitly emphasized that the causes of the prostitution of today must be sought in the upbringing of the family when he argued that: “The family is the foundation of society, like Marx said. Considering the phenomenon of jineteras, there is always something in the family, with the parents, that has failed. I would never accept it with my children. The dignity of Cubans and the idiosyncrasy of the Cubans has never been like that. That’s not the way we raise our children here.”

Francisco listed a number of individualizing explanations for the existence of prostitution today. He stressed that prostitution is ‘an individual problem’, an individual choice, it is a sin, it is a private matter etc. He found reasons behind prostitution in different explanations such as girls wanting to have fun or in their bad upbringing. This can be compared to his earlier comment on the prostitution of 1959, when he stated that “women shouldn't be like merchandise, to be bought and sold”.

\(^{16}\) Francisco is around 50 years old and in a Cuban context defined as ‘mulato’. He seems to have an average living standard in a suburb of Havana. He is a babalao, a sort of priest within the Afro-Cuban religion Santería. In the taped interview, his way of talking suddenly became more formal and he held more regime-friendly opinions than in our earlier talks. I believe the taping situation made him put on a more official role. As a babalao, he has been interviewed by foreigners before, talking about the freedom of religion in Cuba. However, when I provoked him during the interview through some controversial statements, he strayed away from official versions and seemed to express more of his personal opinions. His wife and daughter overheard the interview from another room.
3.2 Symbolic power

I will now present some analytical tools that I consider fruitful in the analysis of the understanding of prostitution. Throughout my analysis, theory of symbolic power, as presented by the recently deceased French anthropologist/sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, will act as the connecting thought. The terms and main thoughts of this theory were elaborated in a classic article in 1973 (Bourdieu 1996 [1973]). Bourdieu distinguishes economical, political and symbolic power. Symbolic power in brief is *the power to define the world*, which can work as a tool for domination contributing to conserve status quo and serving the interests of those in power (Eriksen 1996: 336).

Bourdieu (1996: 339) sums up his theory: ”Symbolic power is a power of constructing reality”. He comments that his analysis does not foremost focus on intentional and conscious exercise of power. On the contrary, he stresses the importance of the recognition of symbolic power by those who are dominated by it. Bourdieu argues:

> For symbolic power is that invisible power which can be exercised only with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subject to it or even know that they themselves exercise it. (Bourdieu 1996: 337)

> Symbolic power – /.../ of making people see and believe, of confirming and transforming the vision of the world /.../ – is a power that can be exercised only if it is recognized, that is, misrecognized as arbitrary. /.../ What creates the power of

17 I will comment on my general use of Bourdieu in this thesis. From his theories and concepts, I apply to my discussion what I see as relevant for my analysis, and continuously introduce new parts of his theory when I consider them illuminating. Thus, my analysis is not as much shaped by his theory, as my selection of the ‘juicy’ parts of Bourdieu is shaped by my analysis. Yet, his theory of symbolic power has been constantly present during the whole process of this thesis, from formulating the project, through bedside reading (and funeral feasts) in Havana, to the phase of completing the thesis.

I am conscious that it may be problematic to depend so heavily on one theorist like I have done in this thesis. However, this choice should be seen in the light of my general use of Bourdieu mentioned above. Thus my intention has been neither to give a complete presentation of Bourdieu nor to include all the theoretical approaches that might deepen my analysis. Instead, I have consciously tried to *apply* parts of Bourdieu, and to see his concepts as analytical tools to be used to interpret my empirical material and further my discussion.
words and slogans, a power capable of maintaining or subverting the social order, is the belief in the legitimacy of words and of those who utter them. And words alone cannot create this belief”. (ibid: 343f)

Bourdieu partly dissociates his theory from concrete and conscious exertion, and hence, primarily, does not discuss underlying intentions and interests. I hold that his theory on symbolic power can be fruitfully used for an analysis with different approaches. It can analyze distinguishable interests underlying certain definitions, discuss the power that lies in the construction of a worldview, or analyze the frames that limit our reflections through providing certain categories of thought. I will use Bourdieu’s theory for all the three fields of analysis mentioned, and show how they all can create legitimacy for power relations.

3.3 Defining the causes of prostitution
My discussion will start with a suggestion how the causes of prostitution today are understood and defined. I turn to official sources and relate them to what I interpreted above as “individualizing prostitution” on the part of the three informants introduced above. This may be fruitful for discussing the right to define what is considered political versus individual matters, and can be connected to the question of the underlying interests behind this right to define.

In my discussion about Maria, Alicia and Francisco, I presented a contrast between the understanding of the prostitution of the past and prostitution today, and I considered their reasoning to reflect an individualizing understanding of the latter. Examining some quotations from texts published by the FMC, I will ask whether such a difference can be found in this material as well. As mentioned in section 2.1, prostitution, at the time of the Cuban revolution, was commented on by the FMC as ‘degrading’, prostitutes were seen as ‘forced by economic reasons’ and then ‘rescued from this regrettable way of living’ when the causes were ‘eradicated’ (FMC 1995: 19f). Prostitution of today is discussed in the same source, a booklet called Realities and Challenges, which was published for the UN world conference on women held in Beijing in 1995. It is one of the few official sources where the existence of contemporary prostitution
is recognized and commented. Under the heading of ‘The right to an honorable life’ it is argued that:

Specially prioritized has been the treatment of the current cases of female prostitution, for it represents one of the most serious forms of discrimination and self-discrimination, essentially opposed to the dignifying condition that women have reached in Cuba. This work proves complex, taking into account that the causes and characteristics of the people who practice it today are different from those in the early revolutionary period, which enabled their eradication. (FMC 1995: 20f)

The delegates meditated on the prostitution issue, on FMC’s concern over the attitude of girls who have had all the opportunities that the Revolution gave them for studying, for learning: and they fall in the degrading sale of their bodies. (ibid: 29)

Prostitution of today is defined by the FMC along the same line as earlier prostitution, as it is discussed in terms like ‘degrading’ and ‘opposed to the dignifying condition that women have reached in Cuba’. Nevertheless, FMC explicitly distinguishes the causes of earlier prostitution from those of prostitution today. The causes that were earlier seen to force women into prostitution for economical reasons are said to have been eradicated after the ‘triumph’. The logic of the earlier structural explanation made it a public responsibility to ‘rescue’ these women. Following the logic of FMC’s argument on how the causes were ‘eradicated’, prostitution of today seems almost incomprehensible; girls of today have had all the possibilities, and still they ‘fall into’ prostitution.

FMC’s explanation of, and thus suggestions of ‘solutions’ to prostitution of today, hence may differ in comparison with the situation of 1959. In the booklet mentioned above, the reasons behind prostitution of today are commented on as follows: “Surveys conducted show that part of those girls have been neglected by their families in several ways, and are characterized by a lack of ethics and moral values” (FMC 1995: 21).
In the official paper of the FMC called *Mujeres* (‘Women’), a representative of the Federation reports, in June 1997, from the local work of the FMC, where they “meet with the woman and help her to strengthen herself morally” (FMC 1997: 3, my translation). The paper refers to the background of jineteras, writing that “in the family, there is a deformation, there is a disorder of values, and this has a negative influence on the appropriate upbringing” (ibid: 3, my translation). The conclusion is that the work to prevent prostitution must be directed towards the individual jinetera and her family, teaching her solidarity, respect and appropriate values, because, it is argued:

> These are the principles of our society, that is not perfect, and we make our utmost efforts to cure the deficiencies. We have people that have evolved according to the purposes of the revolution, and others that are drifting behind, that have not advanced with all the possibilities they have been given. Thus you always have to give them social guidance, to give them attention and make them see other perspectives. (FMC 1997: 3, my translation)

Pointing to the family background of jineteras to explain why they turn to prostitution, or defining prostitution as being a question of the ethics and moral values of individual jineteras, appears to be another way of individualizing the phenomenon. Both the reference to upbringing and family background and the explanation concerning moral values seem far removed from the explanations concerning prostitution of 1959.

To present another official voice that comments on the causes of prostitution today, I will, again, turn to Rosa M. Elizalde.¹⁸ In *Jineteros en la Habana* (Elizalde 1996), the main distinction is not between prostitution of pre-revolutionary times and today, but between prostitution in Cuba and ‘in the

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¹⁸ In the booklet presented above, the author Rosa M. Elizalde is introduced as journalist and sub editor for the official daily newspaper of the *UJC, la Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas*, the communist youth league. I therefore consider her to represent an official voice. This booklet is another of the few written publications I have found dealing with the topic of prostitution. It is written as a journalistic commentary on the ‘underworld’.
world’. She states that ‘in the world’ the causes of prostitution are unemployment, underdevelopment, starvation and poor education, or patriarchy and domestic violence, which lead women to devaluate themselves. In relation to the Cuban context, she makes a distinction between prostitution as a ‘strategy for survival’ and prostitution as an ‘enterprise’. This is reminiscent of the contrast made by FMC and quoted above, between the causes in pre-Socialist Cuba that forced women into prostitution, and what are considered almost inexplicable reasons for prostitution today. Elizalde refers to a Ph.D. of social economics, Fidel Márquez, who states that prostitution in Cuba is not a question of survival but, in his opinion, “a reflection of the collapse of spiritual values at a social level” (Elizalde 1996: 25f, my translation). According to Márquez, the economic crisis of the country strengthens a western model of consumption that has survived from the time before the revolution (ibid: 26). The causes of prostitution are thus related to factors outside Cuba, to capitalist values from before the ‘triumph’, and thus implicitly analyzed as foreign to the socialist political system of Cuba.

Whether the causes are defined in an individualizing manner (upbringing, bad values) or also related to political factors (‘capitalist’), it seems like the apparently different definitions end up offering the same conclusion. Both definitions present prostitution of today as opposed to the socialist political system. Either prostitution is incomprehensible, bearing in mind the opportunities that women in Cuba have today, or it is related to spiritual values that have survived from before the ‘triumph’. Irrespectively, the causes of today’s prostitution are defined as different from the causes of prostitution in pre-Socialist Cuba, which were related to structural economic conditions. Prostitution today is hence described as incompatible with the current political system.

To relate this to the theory of symbolic power presented above, the definition of the causes of prostitution of today can be analyzed as related to political interests and as legitimating present power relations. According to Bourdieu, the right to define can work as a tool for domination that contributes to conserve
status quo and serve the interests of those in power. The right to define the causes of prostitution can be interpreted as an exercise of symbolic power. An increase of visible prostitution seems to demand legitimating explanations to defend the current political system. Therefore any individualization of the causes of prostitution of today or explanations relating it to factors outside Cuba legitimize present power relations. This must be understood in the light of what I mentioned earlier, that the elimination of prostitution in 1959 was stressed as an important symbolic victory of the revolutionary process.

3.4 Re-educating jineteras
To follow up my discussion on the definition of causes behind prostitution today, I will discuss what ‘solutions’ are presented to prevent or reduce the extent of prostitution. An analysis of what solutions are assumed appropriate may suggest assumptions about what are seen as the causes of prostitution today. Here, I will introduce two other informants from my material, whom I call Carmen and Pablo. They both work as teachers at the Communist Party School of the Province of Havana. I will examine what sanctions towards prostitution that are considered appropriate by Pablo and Carmen. Carmen explained briefly to me: “If a girl is a jinetera, then you help her to find a job.” Carmen thus chooses to discuss prostitution on an individual level, seeing the solution to be a change in some of the conditions in the life of the individual jinetera. As she is active in the FMC, who are organized on many levels, also locally, on the blocks, I asked her what the FMC would do if there were a jinetera on their block and she responded:

You visit her, you check out what she’s doing, you talk to her family, check her activities, how she earns her living, her level of life, if she fulfils her tasks in the neighborhood. How she gets her stuff. Then if you find out she’s doing such

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19 Carmen and Pablo are around 50 years old, Carmen considers herself ‘white’ while Pablo considers himself ‘mulato’. They are married to each other and live with an extended family in a house in a suburb of Havana. I interpret them much related to their job at the Communist Party School. Although they cannot be interpreted as ‘official sources’ as their statements were not officially censored and approved by any authorities, the interviews with them suggest that they try to ‘explain’ the official ideology to me. I do not consider their statements to reflect ‘personal opinions’.

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things, then the FMC goes to see her, they try to persuade her, to convince her, to prevent. You can send her to a school of social workers, to give her a possibility, stimulate her, or give her a scholarship to study. (Carmen)

In the interview with Pablo, I asked him what he would tell a jinetera. He gave the following answer:

Like, for example, that this is an activity that doesn't correspond with a socialist system, you see? Because then you've lost moral values, and you're no longer an example, neither to your family nor to the neighbors. So this is the kind of advice one gives them, so that they get it, so that they reflect. [...] What happens is that they change their way of thinking from the point of view that they incorporate to do something for the society. (Pablo)

According to Carmen and Pablo, change occurs if the individual jinetera is persuaded that it is not the correct way of living. The ‘solution’ to prostitution is thus understood on an individual level. This re-education, suggesting that jineteras should be taught a correct way of living, is interesting, as it is often used to stress that the Cuban government takes prostitution seriously. It is seen as an illustration of how the authorities ‘pull it up by the roots’ through providing individual jineteras with alternative occupation or giving them psychological help. My interest, however, lies primarily in seeing how these solutions reflect an individualizing understanding of the causes behind prostitution today. This can, in turn, be analyzed to reflect certain political interests behind these definitions, as they contrast prostitution with the current political system and the values taught by political authorities.
4. Defining a worldview

4.1 Doxa

Individualizing definitions of prostitution can also be interpreted as reflecting a certain worldview. This worldview can be seen as an implicit frame within which certain definitions are formulated and loaded. The definition of such a frame can be related to symbolic power, as it clearly can contribute to preserve the status quo of power relations. This, however, does not necessarily need to be understood as an intentional or conscious exercise of power.

To understand what is meant by defining a worldview, it can be fruitful to relate to Bourdieu’s theoretical concept of doxa. This is presented thoroughly in Outline of a Theory of Practice (1977 [1972]), where Bourdieu writes that “the natural and social world appears as self-evident. This experience we shall call doxa.” (Bourdieu 1977: 164) Doxa refers to that which is considered ‘natural’, that which we do not reflect upon or question, the premises upon which our thinking rests. Bourdieu argues that “[t]he adherence expressed in the doxic relation to the social world is the absolute form of recognition and legitimacy through misrecognition of arbitrariness, since it is unaware of the very question of legitimacy, which arises from competition for legitimacy” (ibid: 168). To reveal the truth of doxa, it must be confronted with competing discourses, and be questioned through a “critique, which brings the undiscussed into discussion, the unformulated into formulation” (ibid). Bourdieu makes a distinction between ‘opinion’, that which is explicitly questioned, and ‘doxa’, that which is beyond question. As suggested, doxa does not need to be legitimatized. When it is actively rejected, the arbitrary categories of doxa can appear as such, and a work of rationalization is needed to try to restore doxa. Doxa will be replaced with “the necessarily imperfect substitute orthodoxy” (ibid: 169). Orthodoxy is opposed to “heterodoxy, that is, by reference to the choice – hairesis, heresy – made possible by the existence of competing possibles” (ibid). The opposition of orthodoxy and heterodoxy, as Bourdieu puts it, “delimits the universe of possible discourse /.../ the universe of things that can be stated, and hence thought” (ibid).
Generally, to make something available for consideration, judgment and reflection, it must be put into words. That which is part of doxa is not made subject for discussions that make visible its arbitrariness. Doxa can be seen as a frame constituting limits for our thoughts, as providing categories for what is 'thinkable', and can thus be criticized and analyzed. This discussion can be connected to definitions that conserve power relations. To make something changeable, it must first be a category of change, part of a dynamic universe that is open for reflection and action. Symbolic power as a delimiting factor for our categories of thought can be understood as an unconscious domination of our minds.

Making use of these analytical instruments, I will now develop an analysis of the understanding of prostitution. By using the concept of doxa as a departure point, I suggest an analysis in which the understanding of a phenomenon is examined through an analysis of the premises of an argument, or categories, which are implicit, and thus presumably taken for granted. In my discussion, I will examine a worldview as a set of premises within which an understanding is formulated, and discuss the symbolic power of the formulation of such a worldview. Further, to analyze which categories carry a normative dimension may suggest some of the underlying premises for the argument presented.20

4.2 View of human beings
In my interview with Pablo, the topic of prostitution came up on his initiative when I asked him about the most profound changes regarding the situation of women.21 He explained to me how and why the revolutionary government considered it an important political matter to eliminate prostitution:

20 Eriksen writes: “The right to define what is valid knowledge is an important source of power; power to define what the world is like, power to disqualify, dismiss and humiliate alternative forms of knowledge, power to disempower other people” (Eriksen 1993: 286, my translation).

21 Pablo, who I introduced earlier, was presented to me through another person, who told him that I wanted his opinion on prostitution. I believe herein lies the reason why the topic came up so rapidly.
We were the Las Vegas of the U.S. But after the triumph, all this was pulled out. You see? So, we gave women the chance to, instead of giving out their bodies, to give a contribution to society. To become a worker /.../, any kind of labor activity. So she could contribute to society. Not a contribution from an individual point of view, like in prostitution, right?, like when you sell your body for money, or whatever it might be. /.../ All the people who were prostituted were incorporated in the social life, to work, normally, like a worker, like a normal human being. (Pablo)

Pablo’s focus when commenting on the prostitution of 1959 is not that women were to be ‘rescued’ from having to sell their bodies to earn a living. His argument as to why women were given the right to work after the ‘Triumph’ was to give them the possibility to contribute to society. The goal, in his opinion, seems to have been to redirect their contributions so that they aim at working for society, not for the individual, ‘like in prostitution’. Thus, according to Pablo, the problem of the prostitution of 1959 was the lack of incorporation in society of those involved in this field. When we talked about the prostitution of today, Pablo told me:

We reject these bad things, things from the past, prostitution, people who don't work. /.../ Imagine, you're like 17 years old and choose prostitution. Who's going to work? Who's going to contribute to the society so that it develops? /.../ That's why it’s negative, prostitution, drugs, lazy people who don't want to work. Society has to deal with this. The measure to be taken is that people realize what the system wants. You'll have to give them advice. /.../ You have to teach people, from they are born, to celebrate what's best for the country. Like me, for example, I work, but not only for my own salary. I work because I want to do something for the society. You have to think about what the system wants, the country. And avoid individualism.

* I asked him: - Is this the advice you give to jineteras? and he answered:

Of course. A person who withdraws from the point of view that she just goes looking for personal benefits, that's called social deviance. It’s against the society. Like me, I teach you, so that you instead of doing this, do other things
that contribute to the society. Equality is also not to dedicate oneself to these kinds of negative activities. /.../ The influence, the measure must be that people understand, and therefore change. You can't change what's inside people's heads. So you try to educate them, not through forcing anything on them, but through explaining, convincing, so that they can realize. Then they reflect, and instead choose to contribute to society, and incorporate themselves. You understand? (Pablo)

The problem of prostitution of both 1959 and today is explicitly stated as lack of incorporation into society, that people work only for themselves and do not contribute to the country. Jineteras must be re-educated to understand that they have to work for ‘the system’. Pablo uses terms that reflect a strong condemnation, especially in a Cuban context, calling prostitution ‘looking for personal benefits’, a ‘social deviance’ and being ‘against the society’. The goal seems fixed and indisputable, that people involved in prostitution should ‘celebrate what’s best for the country’ and choose to ‘contribute to society, and incorporate themselves’.

It is also interesting what Pablo considered to be a 'normal human being'. A normal human being is a worker, someone who contributes to society and is incorporated into the work of the revolution. This suggests a wider frame for interpreting his view on prostitution. Related to his statements, I will analyze what I consider to be a view of human beings, or more specifically, a view of the obligations of individuals towards society. Within this view, a person’s value seems connected to her contribution to society. To be considered a normal human being one must work, and this is contradictory to the position where an individual’s only contribution is to herself. A human being is not only defined in relation to society, but, more narrowly, through her contribution to society. I will in my discussion interpret this to represent a view that considers individuals to exist not for themselves, but for society.

I earlier quoted Pablo’s advice on how to make a jinetera leave prostitution, saying that prostitution ‘doesn't correspond with a socialist system’, jineteras are not good ‘examples’ and they have ‘lost moral values’. Pablo’s focus is not
mainly the responsibility of society, rather, the individual jinetera is seen as the problem as she is not incorporated into society. The solution, according to Pablo, is that she should understand, change her way of thinking, and choose to ‘incorporate to do something for the society’. In my interpretation, this corresponds with the suggestion above of a view of individuals which focuses on a person’s obligations to society, rather than asking what society can contribute to the individual.

In my interview with Carmen, we also talked about giving advice to jineteras. To my question about what kind of advice the FMC would give a jinetera or her family, Carmen gave the answer:

To incorporate into society, go to classes, get a job. /.../You know that you have to study, you have to get an education, and that you afterwards have to give your services to the society. These are the values we work for. And not earn your living through... through what? If you don't have an education, if you don't have any skills, then you have to steal, then you have to sell your body. Because you don't know how to do anything else. You're a useless person. You understand? (Carmen, my emphasis)

In my opinion, this is a strong and unambiguous illustration of my two points above, that a person and her value are defined in relation to her contribution to society, and the view on individuals as existing for society. Carmen does not question ‘hav(ing) to sell your body’ in the absence of education or other skills. Rather, she seems to understand this as a natural consequence of the assertion that ‘you’re a useless person’, as if this were the definition of any person who does not contribute to society.

4.3 Normative normality

Above I have discussed what I call a ‘view of human beings’ as part of a worldview including how the existence and value of individuals is considered and reflected upon. I will now turn to an analysis of how certain normative categories can reflect some of the premises underlying such a worldview.
I return to Pablo’s statement: “all the people who were prostituted were incorporated in the social life, to work, normally, like a worker, like a normal human being”. To be considered a normal human being one must work, in contrast to contributing only to oneself. I asked Pablo if prostitution still exists in Cuba, and he stated:

There is less, there is some, but there's more control. These things are social deviations, marginal phenomena. [...] We want you to be incorporated into society again! We don't want to reject you, but to give you a chance, so when you have adjusted, to be incorporated into society again. That's how we solve that problem. [...] The fundamental law is to avoid that this is consolidated. Our system doesn't allow this to breathe. (Pablo, my emphasis)

Here, Pablo again denominates prostitution a ‘social deviation’. The ‘obligations’ of individuals to contribute to society mentioned above, can be seen as the frame or the premise of this judgment. The judgment above is logical within a frame where an individual is defined through to her contribution to society. Within this frame, it will be consistent to define a jinetera as ‘incorrect’ as she only makes contributions to the individual. Here, an individualizing understanding of prostitution seems to be taken for granted. Calling prostitution a ‘deviation’, or stating that the solution is for jineteras to ‘adjust’ are strong normative judgments. Considering something a ‘deviation’ implies that something is considered ‘normal’. The power to define normality can be a powerful tool of dominance. It suggests a definition of normality which underlies this judgment. Pablo’s judgment can thus be said to reflect implicit categories of normality as premises of the argument.

The condemnation of jineteras reflects a worldview with normative categories. The definition of normality is reflected in the judgments but not itself made subject to discussion. This definition includes determining the legitimacy of one’s existence as an individual human being, assuming the voice of society by formulating ‘what the system wants from you’, and finally defining normality including normative categories of what makes a ‘good’ person. I understand all these elements as forming essential premises in the reasoning of Pablo and
Carmen. To use terms like ‘normality’ when discussing actions or persons, presupposes categories of correct/incorrect ways of living. Pablo and Carmen do not need to define what is a correct action or not, as they implicitly refer to a worldview, or what I have called ‘a view of human beings’, with normative connotations concerning the value and purpose of the existence of individuals.

4.4 Symbolic violence

I have discussed two suggested fields of analysis regarding the understanding of prostitution. I have analyzed distinguishable political interests underlying certain definitions of the causes of prostitution, and the power lying in the construction of a worldview. The third field of analysis I presented as an analysis of the frames that limit our reflections through providing certain categories of thought. To bring my analysis further and to take on this last approach, I will introduce Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic violence, which I believe can be fruitful for my discussion. Symbolic violence is thoroughly discussed in Bourdieu’s recent work *Masculine Domination* (2001 [1998]). Symbolic power is exercised through symbolic violence, which, in Bourdieu’s words, is “… a gentle violence, imperceptible and invisible even to its victims, exerted for the most part through the purely symbolic channels of communication and cognition …” (Bourdieu 2001: 1f).

The argument follows the same line as that of symbolic power or of doxa, which is how the construction of certain categories of thought limit our reflection through creating a frame for what is imaginable and thinkable. This shapes how we live in society, how we understand our context and the choices we make. According to Bourdieu, our choices will not be independent or detected from the androcentric logic of the context in which we live, but, on the contrary, they will depend on this same logic, as elaborated by Bourdieu: “When the dominated apply to what dominates them schemes that are the product of domination, or, to put it another way, when their thoughts and perceptions are structured in accordance with the very structures of the relation of domination that is imposed on them, their acts of cognition are, inevitably, acts of recognition, submission” (Bourdieu 2001: 13, his emphasis). This form of violence is discussed as an
exercise of power through symbolic means. Important here is the point stating that symbolic dominance is exercised without physical force, but is in spite of this “… all the more powerful because it is for the most part exerted invisibly and insidiously through insensible familiarization with a symbolically structured physical world and early, prolonged experience of interactions informed by the structures of domination” (ibid: 38).

The main point is that “[t]he effect of symbolic domination /…/ is exerted not in the pure logic of knowing consciousness but through the schemes of perception, appreciation and action” (Bourdieu 2001: 37). Domination thus shapes our categories of reflection, and affects what becomes ‘thinkable’. Our reflections take part in a frame, which provides us with certain categories. Analyzing what categories are available can also be related to the symbolic power to construct reality. Examining how our understanding of the world is affected by the limits of our categories of reflection can also suggest the underlying premises of certain definitions or judgments. The normative loading of certain categories, which then constitute the premises of our reflections and judgments can also be analyzed as symbolic violence.

4.5 Politicizing prostitution

In the discussion above, a ‘normal human being’ was defined as a ‘worker’ working for ‘society’ and not only for an contribution to the individual. All of these terms can be interpreted in the Cuban context as politically normative. On the whole, all politics in Cuba can be seen as normative along a certain line of reasoning. Rosendahl discusses the official ideology of socialism in Cuba as *hegemonic*, and as “presented to the people by the leaders as the true and ultimate interpretation of and guideline for society” (Rosendahl 1997: 3). Rosendahl concludes that, within this hegemonic ideology, “*socialist political structures and organizations dominate the whole society – thereby making it difficult to realize alternatives*” (Rosendahl 1997: 156, my emphasis). Alongside Bourdieu’s terminology, this means a preferential right to define what is a correct way of living within the Cuban revolution. To present truths and normative categories for right and wrong, good people and social deviations, can
be interpreted along the lines of symbolic violence. This delimits what becomes imaginable and what categories of thought are available within this frame. The worldview that I presented in my discussion earlier can be understood as constituting a frame of thought, which provides categories with politically normative connotations.

In her work, Rosendahl states: “Since no alternative interpretations are officially available, the only options are for people to accept the Party’s interpretation of the world or to reject it. People are constantly presented with a view of the world that is conducive to the goals of socialism” (Rosendahl 1997: 120). As suggested, ‘socialism’ in the official Cuban rhetoric is not a neutral concept, it is presented as Correct, as the Truth. In my interpretation, this can be analyzed as a delimitation of ‘options’ of thought. This suggests a symbolic power to construct reality, which is connected to normative politics in the Cuban context.

Also prostitution is discussed within these politically normative categories, as exemplified in Carmen’s statement:

There are families where girls are encouraged to be jineteras, where they are told to get themselves a foreigner. Let’s not idealize; we're working against this. We work so that there won’t be any more of this, because it is not compatible with our society. A socialist and a capitalist system are not compatible; they’re like oil and vinegar. We have to live with some of these things from capitalism, but with a lot of control, with a lot of influence from our organizations. /.../ We have tourism because we need it, after the fall of the socialist block we didn’t have any other possibilities, except increasing tourist activity, to get dollars, to get hard currency, to be able to develop through this. We reject the attitude of jineterismo; we’re not compatible with that. /.../ This is what capitalism brings. What capitalism wants is exactly this. That the person doesn’t think, that she doesn’t care about others, that she doesn’t care about a collective. Capitalism brings individualism. /.../ This young girl can’t just think about herself, we’re trying to develop a collective thinking, in our society what dominates is a collective way of thinking. (Carmen)
Prostitution is directly linked to political categories such as capitalism and individualism, which in this context becomes nearly a self-explicable judgment. If something is connected to capitalism, it is wrong per se. Defining prostitution as something ‘from capitalism’, ‘not compatible’ with the Cuban socialist system, seems to be Carmen’s way of emphasizing how much Cuban society rejects prostitution. Thus prostitution is related to a frame of normative terms, and presented as an offence against a socialist society. In this symbolic frame, her judgments are shaped within the normative boundaries of the categories that are available.

As quoted above, Pablo said that prostitution ‘doesn’t correspond with a socialist system’ and that jineteras are not good revolutionary examples. Later in the interview Pablo states:

> There were many people who ended up on this track, the easy one, because they wanted dollars. And this leads to social differentiation, where some people have dollars and can get hold of products that other people can’t afford with their peso-salary. And there’s the birth of social indiscipline, egoism. (Pablo)

Also Pablo connects prostitution to categories such as ‘social differentiation’ and ‘egoism’ that in a Cuban context have normative political connotations. Pablo can thus be interpreted as representing a certain frame of reference, constructed within, by and to maintain a certain political system. This system provides people with normative categories for right and wrong, good people and social deviations, according to which thoughts and judgments are structured. Within this revolutionary logic, prostitution is considered ‘incorrect’, as a ‘deviation’ from which jineteras need to ‘adjust’ into a correct way of living. It becomes logical to see breaking these norms as not only antisocial, but also egoistic. This reflects, one can say, the view on prostitution as an offence against society, which is a clearly normative judgment.

The logical ‘solution’ to prostitution is imagined within this frame. Suggesting re-education as a solution implies that the responsibility and the subject of
change is related to the individual jinetera. Thus, what I earlier interpreted as an individualizing understanding of prostitution, and later a connection of prostitution to political terms, need not be opposing categories within this symbolic frame. The ‘ politicization’ in my interpretation functions to define prostitution as opposed to the present political system. Even though prostitution is described using political terms, individualized solutions are logical. To ‘teach’ people to contribute to society suggests a definition of prostitution as a lack of incorporation. Within this frame, an implicit normativity functions as a premise for the judgments made.

In my discussion, politicization can be *used* as an argument to suit certain interests or to legitimatize power relations. That the formulation of the argument reflects its function and does not primarily stress the political content can be briefly illustrated. One woman I came to know, who was not at all interested in politics, told me that she wanted a man, but it had to be a revolutionary. I asked her why, and she said that she did not like dirty people, alcoholics, people who did not contribute to society. She would prefer a revolutionary, a normal worker, a strong man whom she could trust. This suggests that the content of the concept of ‘revolutionary’ is not only a political one. It instead reflects a normative worldview that shapes how people sort their world in categories of good and bad. Politics thus represent a view of human beings that, in the case of this woman, can be clearly connected to my discussion above on seeing individuals as existing for society and defining them in terms of their contribution to society.

This connects to Bourdieu’s analysis of symbolic violence of making people think within the thought-frames of the dominating groups, and that these acts of cognition thus become, at the same time, acts of *recognition*. To think within the concept of ‘revolutionary’ at the same time will recognize the normative content of the concept, and confirm the symbolic frame that gives it its normative loading. Naming prostitution a ‘deviation’ simultaneously confirms the logic of the present system as ‘normal’ and, implicitly and normatively, desirable. The definition of normality provides categories for ‘good’ and ‘bad’, which affirm
and recognize the dominating logic behind this definition. This logic, through providing certain categories, affects a fundamental understanding of the world, which shapes the understanding of prostitution to reflect the inherent logic of the categories on which it is based.

What can be concluded from this discussion is, firstly, that an individualizing understanding of prostitution, seen in the definition of its causes and solutions, can serve certain political interests through redirecting criticism towards individuals. Secondly, it can be seen as reflecting a certain worldview, where individuals are defined according to their contribution to society and judged according to normative political categories. This can be seen as both a strategy to serve the same political interests, but also as a symbolic delimitation of the categories that are available. The normativity of the categories functions as a frame for people’s judgments, such as the condemnation of individual jineteras. An individualizing understanding of prostitution can also be seen as a premise for the ‘solutions’ that are imaginable within the symbolic frame, such as re-educating individual jineteras. When analyzed as reflecting a worldview that constitutes the frame for judgments, individualization and politicization of prostitution are not necessarily contradictory, as they can both function to defend status quo of power relations. The underlying premise of these arguments, it can be suggested, is to present prostitution as opposed to the current political system.
5. The premises of gender equality

5.1 Prostitution and gender equality

I will now introduce what can be perceived as a paradox in the understanding of prostitution. In my analysis, the prostitution of 1959 was politicized in the sense that it was made a symbol of the degradation of the former political system. It was considered a responsibility of the revolutionary government to ‘eliminate’ prostitution, and the ‘eradication’ of its causes has come to signify a political victory showing the superiority of socialism. The understanding of prostitution today along similar criteria would imply a criticism directed against the present government. Thus the political interests behind an individualizing understanding of prostitution suggesting individual sanctions seem evident. Arguments that politicize prostitution today function, one could say, as a defense of status quo.

Interesting, however, is how prostitution in 1959 was related to women’s situation in general, and discussed partly in relation to women’s rights. The break from the former system is said to have given women the chance to work so that they would no longer have to depend on selling their bodies to survive, and this is often mentioned as a fundamental change in the general situation of women. In this sense, prostitution was made a ‘gendered’ issue, even before the Women’s Federation, the FMC, was founded in 1960. Now, after slightly more than 40 years of work of the FMC, prostitution is still discussed as ‘opposed to the dignifying conditions’ which women in Cuba have achieved. Still, the focus on individual backgrounds or capitalist values as the causes behind prostitution, as well as the re-educating measures to change the values of individual jineteras, clearly reflect, in my opinion, ‘ungendered’ explanations of prostitution. Prostitution is no longer seen as reflecting women’s situation in general, instead the FMC sees prostitution as contrary to the opportunities women have been given by the revolution. Following my line of reasoning, one could suggest a paradox: FMC was founded in 1960 to work for women’s rights, and thus gender equality was defined as a political issue and formally declared a priority of the state. Nevertheless, I understand the present explanations of prostitution
as ‘degendered’. How come, after more than 40 years of an ideology of gender equality, the earlier aspect of women’s rights related to prostitution is absent?

The ‘degendering’ of prostitution through the detachment of the aspect of women’s rights is partly connected to how prostitution is no longer related it to structural causes. Gender equality is discussed on a structural level, while prostitution is individualized. Naturally, what I have suggested as politicizing/individualizing and gendering/degendering definitions of prostitution are interrelated. As shown in the earlier discussion, the right to define what is considered a political or an individual matter can be a tool of dominance related, through my analysis, to a worldview which provides us with categories of thought. I believe it may be fruitful to examine how women’s rights and gender equality are defined in Cuba today, and what themes are detached from this discussion as irrelevant and/or as individual matters. To examine the premises of gender equality can provide a frame for an analysis of what I above suggested to be a paradox, the ‘degendering’ of the prostitution of today.

5.2 Gender as a category of change?
This discussion is inspired by some theoretical points made by Bourdieu in his works *Masculine Domination* (2001 [1998]) and *Practical Reason* (1998 [1994]). In *Masculine Domination*, Bourdieu analyzes how the gender order is made part of doxa through processes that he calls ‘naturalization’ and ‘eternalization’. His question is: “...what are the historical mechanisms responsible for the relative dehistoricization and eternalization of the structure of the sexual division and the corresponding principles of division” (Bourdieu 2001:viif)? His argument goes as follows: Androcentric schemes shape our thoughts, and these schemes are then used to legitimatize or justify the same schemes. He argues furthermore that “[t]he division between the sexes appears to be ‘in the order of things’, as people sometimes say to refer to what is normal, natural, to the point of being inevitable /…/ functioning as schemes of perception, thought and action” (ibid: 8). According to his line of reasoning, the way to analyze gender is thus to dismantle
the processes responsible for this transformation of history into nature, of historical arbitrariness into the natural. And to do so, one has to adopt the point of view on our own world and our own vision of the world which is that of the anthropologist, capable of showing that the principle of division (nomos) which founds the division between male and female as we (mis)recognize it is simultaneously arbitrary, contingent, and also socio-logically necessary. (Bourdieu 2001: 2)

Bourdieu continues:

Posing the question in those terms marks an advance in the order of knowledge, which is a decisive advance in the order of action. To point out what appears, in history, as being eternal is merely the product of a labour of eternalization /.../ is to reinsert into history, and therefore to restore to historical action, the relationship between the sexes /…/. (Bourdieu 2001: viii, my emphasis)

This, in my interpretation, can be understood as a theory of change. According to Bourdieu, to move gender relations to the sphere of change and action, they must be ‘dehistoricized’ and ‘denaturalized’, through dismantling their premises and exposing their arbitrariness. Gender must be made a category of discussion so that the gender order is no longer part of the doxic field, which is not questioned. This point is, in my opinion, especially illuminating in a discussion concerning Cuba. In Cuba, since the founding of the FMC, gender equality has been made a political issue, the gender order has been detached from the natural, and changes in this order are explicitly considered desirable. Following the theoretical point above, this would suggest important conditions to enable profound changes in the gender order, as an ideology of gender equality suggests that gender roles and are no longer seen as static or natural.

My question in the ensuing discussion on the premises of the ideology of gender equality will be whether gender has been dehistoricized and profound changes in the gender order have been made possible? Or has gender equality itself become a normative category, which makes impossible to see gender as a category of explanation? The obvious risk of an institutionalized ideology of gender equality
is that it will be incorporated into the interests of the state. In the Cuban context, this would mean that gender equality itself becomes part of the hegemonic ideology and thus becomes a normative category of right and wrong, where gender ought not to matter. To make gender a category of change would presume that it can be named and analyzed so that discussion of the premises of the gender order would be made possible.

Another theoretical point directing the line of my discussion is found in Bourdieu’s work *Practical Reason* (1998), where the role of the state in symbolic production is analyzed. Bourdieu states that “one of the major powers of the state is to produce and impose /…/ categories of thought that we spontaneously apply to all things of the social world – including the state itself” (Bourdieu 1998: 35). Bourdieu calls into question whether social sciences can help us understand the state, as these sciences are based on the same premises as the state itself (ibid: 36ff). He writes: “[T]o have any chance of thinking a state that still thinks itself through those who attempt to think it (as in the case of Hegel or Durkheim), one must strive to question all the presuppositions and preconstructions inscribed in the reality under analysis as well as in the very thoughts of the analyst” (ibid: 36). Hence, to analyze the state one must question the premises underlying the very concept itself, and “there is no more potent tool for rupture than the reconstruction of genesis /…/ to offer a systematic account of the properly historical logic of the processes which have led to the institution of this ‘X’ that we call the state” (ibid: 41). Through this reasoning, the whole concept of the state is made relative and subjected to discussion.

I do not mean to suggest that an analysis of gender would be the same as that of a state. It is the ‘prescription’ of an analysis that has inspired me to imitate Bourdieu only to relate it to the ideology of gender equality. To examine the premises of this ideology would then mean to examine its ‘genesis’, see how it has developed, scrutinize its definitions and preconstructions, ask what is not considered relevant to gender equality, and to see whether gender through this ideology is made a category of discussion and thus enable profound changes in the gender order. Having analyzed the premises of this ideology, I will,
analogously to Bourdieu’s distrust of whether social sciences can provide us with instruments to analyze the premises of the state, ask whether it is possible to think about gender equality within its own premises or how its own categories limit such an analysis. Through this discussion on the premises of the ideology of gender equality these premises can illustrate the paradox suggested above; on how prostitution was related to women’s rights before Cuba even had an ideology of gender equality, but now, in spite of an explicit prioritization of gender equality, prostitution is detached from this discussion and in my interpretation ‘degendered’. Thus, the next part of my thesis will focus on the ideology of gender equality to suggest an analysis of its premises. Later I will return to my discussion on the understanding of prostitution.

5.3 The definition of gender equality
As an introduction to gender equality in Cuba I will introduce some examples from my own material. As a starting point, I turn to the housewives Maria and Alicia, and their reflections when asked about women's rights and changes in the situation of Cuban women since 1959. According to Maria and Alicia, the right to have a job was stated as the incomparably most important change in women's lives, and their definition of gender equality seemed to be that women can now have any job they want. I quote my informants below:

Now we have equality, earlier we didn't. Women can do any job they want. (Maria)

There has been a huge advance. Before people thought that women were not able to work, but now they've understood that women can do anything. /.../ In this system that we have, all have the same rights, women and men. Women can have all kinds of jobs. (Alicia)

There is a law in Cuba introduced in 1975, called the Family Code, stating that men and women should share housework. It is declared in the Cuban Constitution that: “[Marriage] is based on an absolute equality of rights and obligations of the consorts, and they should take care of the maintenance of the home and the upbringing of the children by united efforts” (from article 36 of
the Cuban constitution from 2001, my translation). This law is often used as an argument that gender equality is already implemented and given high priority by the government. When I asked Maria and Alicia about everyday life activities, like sharing of housework, I was told:

Earlier, women used to be at home, while men were in the street, therefore men are not used to doing housework. Sometimes the woman prefers to do it herself, maybe the man is no good, that’s everybody’s own business. (Maria)

There are men that help out, like my husband helps me with everything. But there are homes where the man thinks that because he brings home the money, then he can sit down to watch TV. /.../ They’re like that, they weren’t raised well, they weren’t taught to help out at home. The wife is the one who has to make her partner help. But sometimes she just accepts that he doesn’t, and takes all the responsibility herself, because she thinks he’s not able to do it properly. (Alicia)

When asked about machismo, they told me:

Machismo is a result of upbringing. Machismo might be that men don’t like that their women are independent. /.../ In the countryside there’s more machismo, because their cultural level is lower. (Maria)

Cuba is a bit less machista than before. It always exists, you know, among older people, among some young people as well, due to their upbringing, but that’s the few. Not the majority. (Alicia)

We see that, according to Maria and Alicia, Cuba is a gender-equal society, defined as such because women have the right to any kind of job. This, however, seems to have little to do with the tasks of everyday life. Both women stated that whether men take part in housework or not is an individual choice, possibly related to men’s upbringing or to the demands from their wives. Also machismo was seen as a product of upbringing or of ‘a low cultural level’. Alicia explicitly defined machismo as non-political. When I asked her whether the question of machismo is dealt with in the meetings of the FMC, the answer was:
No, no. In these meetings we don’t talk about such things. This is something that you might talk to some other woman about. /.../ It’s private. It has nothing to do with politics, it hasn’t got to do with the meetings that we have. /.../ There is equality, there’s no need to talk about it so much, to repeat it again and again. But like, if a woman works in the sugar cane industry, then you talk about her, that it’s important that even women have reached the same level as men, that they can do the same, or more, than what men do. Women who work in, like, factories, then you talk about it, like ‘the first woman who cuts sugar cane, or handles this or that machine’, and in that way you give it more importance, so that people shall see that women are not weak. (Alicia)

As gender equality was explicitly declared by the foundation of FMC as a political issue, it is interesting to see what is categorized as relevant for the discussion on the situation of women. Some aspects of women’s situation are politicized while others are considered individual matters. Gender equality was by Maria and Alicia declared as something already achieved, and there was no need to ‘repeat it again and again’. It will then be logical to interpret that which does not fit into the gender equal picture, such as machismo, as individual matters. Furthermore, the right to have a job in Cuba is unambiguously defined as a victory of the revolutionary process. Defining gender equality as the right to have a job thus also functions as a defense of achievements of the revolutionary government. Moreover, seeing the right to have a job as the most important women’s right is in line with my argument, in section 4.2, about the view that defines individuals in relation to their contribution to society.

22 The power to define some aspects of women’s lives as political while others as individual has been dealt with by feminist theory. Politikens paradoxer (‘The Paradoxes of Politics’, Wendt Höjer & Åse 1999) makes a feminist analysis of political science: “Feminism wants to loosen the strict boundaries of traditional theory between politics and non-politics. /.../ The relationship between the sexes is not only formed in the parts of society that are traditionally understood as political. /.../ The foundation of the political order is problematized: what is recognized as political, who can take political actions and in what form politics should be carried out to be considered politics” (Wendt Höjer & Åse 1999: 12, my translation). In a discussion of the old feminist slogan ‘the personal is political’, the authors relate the definition of politics to symbolic power, when presenting the definitions of Locke and Rousseau: “Classical political theorists devoted a great deal of thinking to establish that neither the family nor family relations were political by nature. /.../ Through defining personal relations between men and women as separated from the political sphere men can preserve their power” (ibid: 38, my translation).
5.4 The task of the FMC

Rosendahl informs us that the “discourse on plena igualdad (total equality, my comment) and the gender system is carried out principally by the Women’s Federation” (Rosendahl 1997: 74). FMC has the role of officially formulating the ideology of gender equality in Cuba. Hence, it is interesting to see what is defined as women’s rights and as the main tasks of the FMC. In an interview on women’s rights in Cuba, the leader of the FMC since its foundation 1960, Vilma Espín, mentions the Family Code, saying that men and women should share housework within the family (Espín 1990: 2). Other women’s rights mentioned are a minimum living standard, bettered housing possibilities, childcare facilities and services to lighten domestic work (ibid: 1ff). Espín’s argument focuses on women’s role in building socialism and presents women’s rights as a way of facilitating this, through providing an economic security guaranteeing “the constant motivation and economic stability that comes from feeling useful, recognized and dignified as a human being – everything that socialism has brought us to” (ibid: 3). Thus, the main focus is that socialism provides women with their rights, and that they should use these rights to build socialism. This too can be related to the view of human beings not primarily existing for themselves but for society. I also find it interesting that, in a context where women take care of the children and do most of the housework, some of the rights mentioned, such as childcare facilities and lightening the burden of domestic work, are clearly ‘gendered’. Still, both the source and aim of these rights is (to build) socialism. Thus the focus of the arguments is the interests of the government and the revolutionary process, not the women.

For my discussion on FMC’s definition of women’s rights, it is indispensable to remember that their tasks and mandate was given and formulated by the government. In another interview with Vilma Espín (FMC 1995), she describes the genesis and growth of the FMC. She stated that “it was Fidel that gave us the first guidelines on the significance of the work that we were undertaking” (FMC 1995: 29).
One article on women in Cuba by Marisela Fleites-Lear (1996) discusses the relationship between FMC and PCC. The author recognizes that Cuban women have gained important victories such as family planning and political positions through the revolutionary process, but points to what she considers to be some paradoxes in the process that gave women access to these rights but at the same time preserved Cuba as a patriarchal and machista society. One paradox, as she sees it, is precisely the role of the FMC. Fleites-Lear states that the FMC did not necessarily raise a discussion on women’s problems, but instead “the official organization of women adopted the position that there was no need for feminism in Cuba, as the Revolution had made men and women equal before the law” (Fleites-Lear 1996: 50, my translation).

All the mass organizations, including the FMC, are under the control of the Party. PCC sees the function of these organizations to strengthen the ties between the Party and the masses. Thus, the premise of the work of FMC is to serve the interests of the Party. Also, the management of the FMC is inextricably linked to that of the Party (Fleites-Lear 1996: 50). For example, Vilma Espín is the sister-in-law of Fidel Castro and she has been in the Central Committee of the Party since its foundation. She has also been a member of the Political Bureau since 1980 (Espín 1990: preface). According to Fleites-Lear, the position of the FMC as the right hand of the PCC has had both its advantages and disadvantages. It has strengthened the organization, but at the same time severely limited the scope of its discussions.23

Another work that discusses how the definition of the ideology of gender equality is formulated within a certain political frame in Cuba is the book Sex and Revolution by Lois Smith (1996). The study does not question that socialism meant greater economic independence for women and fundamental rights such as health, education and employment. However, the centralist

23 Fleites-Lear suggests that the statements of Vilma Espín speak for themselves: “We have never had a feminist movement. We hate that. We hate the feminist movement of the United States. We see the movements of the United States as a struggle for equality for women against the men! That is absurd! It doesn’t make sense! That these women call themselves revolutionaries is ridiculous!” (Espin quoted in Fleites-Lear 1996: 51, my translation).
policies through which these rights were distributed are called into question. According to the author, centralism facilitated an implementation of women’s rights, but has also meant that the actual power would stay in the hands of the revolutionary government, and also that “national policies on issues of great interest to women would be made by men” (Smith 1996:182).\footnote{Smith suggests that the absence of women in decision-making positions is seen in the facts that housewives were barred from Party membership for almost thirty years, that abortion was disallowed for a number of years after the revolution, and in the great official silence on domestic violence and rape (Smith 1996: 182).} Ironically, Smith writes that “women in Cuba were lucky that women’s advancement was of interest to the patriarch. /…/ Fidel Castro realized the tremendous utility of harnessing the energy and support of women. /…/ [T]he Cuban government worked to ensure that Cuban women were engaged in active support of the regime and its predetermined policies. An important tool in this effort was the Federation of Cuban Women” (ibid: 183). Smith states that even though a women’s organization was founded, it was left without any formal power within the larger framework of the revolution, and, in addition, “[a]ll ideas that did not encourage women to march as commanded by the great patriarch, the \textit{comandante}, were deemed ‘diversionary,’ enemy propaganda” (ibid: 183).

Smith points out some interesting aspects for my discussion. As the initiative of the FMC was taken within the revolutionary framework, and the commission of the FMC thus was formulated in line with the interests of the present government, the organization’s definition of gender equality can be anything but subversive. This suggests that the rights that women attained were gained because they were also in the interest of the government, for example that women should enter the labor market to contribute to the revolutionary process.

So what is the explicit aim of FMC’s work? The interview mentioned above is published in a booklet called \textit{Realities and Challenges} (FMC 1995). The title suggests that there are issues related to the work for gender equality that are not yet achieved that imply future challenges. Espín states that the challenges of the FMC today are the challenges defined by Fidel Castro after the fall of the Soviet
Union. In 1990, the local divisions of the FMC asked themselves ‘what else can we do?’. This question was directed towards finding out in what other ways Cuban women could contribute to the revolutionary process after the change of economical conditions in the 1990’s. Espín calls special attention to the task of “preparedness for the defense”, because “safeguarding the Homeland and the Revolution always comes first” (FMC 1995: 29). Thus, the ‘challenge’ of the FMC is not to analyze what aspects of women’s situation need to be changed, but the responsibility that FMC chooses to shoulder under the new economical circumstances. According to Espín, Fidel Castro gives them in this work a “tremendous, most beautiful support”, at the same time as “he was launching that same challenge on us: the challenge of the years to come and of the battle we must wage” (ibid: 29).

As the tasks of the FMC are defined by the government/PCC/Fidel Castro, the definition of gender equality is formulated within an existing frame and aims at maintaining and supporting the present government. The right to have a job, which was earlier presented as the most important women’s right, can also be interpreted as a duty to contribute to the revolution. Thus one might suggest that important women’s rights have been defined primarily according to the interests of the government, and the interests of women were only subordinate to these.²⁵

²⁵ One example of this point might be a lecture that I attended in 2000, given by a representative of the FMC. She formulated the task of the FMC to be to organize as many women as possible. The reason, according to her, was that this would show that the Cuban government and Fidel Castro gave women’s rights top priority.

This must be understood in relation to the fact that the mere existence of the FMC by many people is used as an argument for gender equality and women’s rights in Cuba. One of my informants, Francisco, commented: “Here women are given much protection, we even have an organization, FMC, that exists to satisfy the needs of women. We have to be really careful with what we do for example with the girls at work, we have to give them the same possibilities, and they never give in, for example they want more female bosses. /.../ Here there are no victims, here no woman is a victim, here they even have their own organization.“ (Francisco).

I think that it is interesting that the existence of the FMC is not used as an argument that there is still a need for changes in the situation of women in Cuba, but rather constantly is seen to ‘demonstrate’ that gender equality is already implemented. Through this, women’s rights can be used to confirm the virtues of the present government or the current political system.
5.5 Non-subversive definitions

I will present two more examples to show what is not considered relevant to the discussion of gender equality in the Cuban context. With these examples I will sum up my discussion on the premises of the ideology of gender equality, and then relate it to my earlier suggestion of a paradox of the present 'degendered' understanding of prostitution.

In an article by Johnetta Cole and Gail Reed from 1986 on women in Cuba, there are five women interviewed (Cole & Reed 1986). The authors show how the word ‘power’ in their interviews is not associated with discussions on women’s conditions in Cuba. ‘Power’ is instead used to refer to the official organs of policymaking (*Poder Popular*, ‘the people’s power’), to ‘the power of a united people’ or to ‘the power of the working class’. The authors state:

Discussions about ‘women’s power’ -- the ability to affect meaningful decisions in one’s life and in the life of the nation -- are more likely to take the form of concrete reference to problems or goals such as the full incorporation of women into the work force, the full participation of women in Cuban life, and the burden of the double shift. Rather than ‘women’s power’, one is more likely to hear the terms ‘women’s equality’ as the goal of struggle. (Cole & Reed 1986: 342f)

Even though this article was written more than 15 years ago, I believe that some of its conclusions can still be valid today. ‘Women’s power’ is related to ‘the full incorporation of women into the work force’, which clearly suggests that the importance of women’s rights is formulated within a frame of political interests. The major point of the article is that the Cuban revolution has set up possibilities to achieve gender equality, but “that is a possibility which can only be realized through the continuous application of government policies from above” (Cole & Reed 1986: 323). Thus implementation of women’s rights is at the mercy of those holding power positions and their interests underlying such initiatives. The ideology of gender equality primarily serves to facilitate women’s ‘contribution to society’, and this definition, I would argue, functions to conserve present power relations. Thus it is obvious that questioning or redistribution of power will not be considered relevant to gender equality.
As another example of what is considered irrelevant to gender equality, I will take the official understanding of violence against women. In the booklet introduced above (FMC 1995), the topic is brought up in the most extensive chapter under the title “The greatest violence: Blockade”. The chapter is a tribute to the Cuban revolution and socialism. Violence against women is presented in the following way: “In Cuba, there are cases of family violence, including violence against women. /.../ One has to recognize, though, that - in our case - the size of this problem is insignificant as compared to the high rates of violence against women existing in the world” (FMC 1995: 21). Then it is stated that “the most serious case of violence against women in our country is the inhuman and brutal blockade that /.../ the United States has imposed on our people” (ibid: 21).

In a lecture by a representative of the FMC (mentioned above in footnote 25), I was told that with rights to divorce and economic independence, there is no longer any reason for women to stay in violent relationships. The few cases that are said to exist are caused by overcrowded houses or alcoholism. I asked whether there existed any statistics or research on the topic, and the lecturer told me that because of the limited extent of the problem, as the causes of domestic violence were eradicated, there was no need for such research. The lecturer also pointed to the US blockade as the main obstacle in women’s lives.

I analyze this line of reasoning first of all as a rhetorical diminishing of violence against women by contrasting it against the extent of the problem in other countries or in the past, claiming that its causes have been eradicated. It can also be interpreted along the line of the theory on symbolic violence and what is made ‘thinkable’ within a certain frame; through the definition that women’s rights are achieved and problems eradicated, there are no categories available to explain for example violence against women. The formulation of the topic mentioned above functions as a tribute to the present political system. Redirecting the focus towards the US blockade ‘degenders’ the matter in several ways; firstly, through focusing on the gender-neutral political phenomenon of
the blockade, and secondly, it again shifts the focus on violence against women
to a defense of present power relations. Hence violence against women is not
even discussed as a problem related to women, but is related to explanations that
serve as a defense of socialism as the source of and condition for women’s
rights.

The definition of gender equality, what is seen as not relevant for gender
equality, and even the recognition of problems in the situation of women, seem
to have the same aim, as a tribute to socialism. Also the description of
prostitution has at times been used this way. On a trade union congress in 1996,
the previously mentioned leader of the FMC, Vilma Espín, stated: “We once
eliminated prostitution. Women who got the opportunity to work thanks to the
fact that there were schools and day-care centers for children remember this as
one of the most beautiful victories of the revolution. Now all this returns with
tourism. Full loads of foreign men come to buy sex. Men with no morals or
scruples. And do you know what they say? Yes, they say that our prostitutes are
the most beautiful, the most healthy, the most cultivated – yes, that’s right,
because the revolution has given them education and free health service” (ABF
1996: 99, my translation). In my interpretation, prostitution is here used to show
the virtues of the revolutionary government.

The discussion on gender equality thus seems to reinterpret any phenomenon to
serve as a defense of socialism or the government. Even violence against women
and prostitution can provide as such an argument. Both women’s rights and
women’s problems seem to be used to defend the system, but are never used to
demand anything from the same system or to point at the imperfections in the
status quo. Gender equality seems to be formulated to suit the interests of the
government, and an institutionalized ideology of gender equality serves as a
defense of existing power relations. Along such an analysis of the definitions of
gender equality, it will no longer seem like a paradox that the explanations of
prostitution today are degendered. In 1959 the revolutionary government had a
clear interest in making prostitution of the past a political symbol and to
shoulder a responsibility to eliminate it. Letting prostitution symbolize women’s
degrading situation before 1959 served to give the new government legitimacy. Now, a ‘gendering’ understanding of prostitution, relating it to women’s situation in general, would undermine this same legitimacy, as gender equality has been proclaimed as a political goal already implemented by the present government.

5.6 Normative gender equality

Another aspect of symbolic power, apart from the distinguishable political interests discussed above, is the power to construct reality. Analyzing gender equality as defined on the premises of those presently holding power positions suggests two things. Firstly, gender equality must unreservedly be defined as already implemented, as the opposite would undermine its legitimating function. Secondly, an institutionalization of the ideology of gender equality makes it part of the hegemonic ideology, and it will thus not be subversive but normative. Gender equality will become normatively correct, which means that phenomena in women’s situation that might contradict the gender-equal picture will be individualized or in other ways degendered and defined as not relevant to gender equality. Hence the ideology of gender equality becomes a conserving force. In the light of such an analysis, it becomes logical that the existence of the FMC is used as an evidence that gender equality is already implemented in Cuba, and not as a suggestion that there are changes still needed in the situation of women.

Interestingly, when gender equality becomes a normative category, gender as such is not nor should it be given any significance. This can be seen as an extension of what I earlier suggested to be a paradox of the ‘degendering’ of prostitution. This can be also be related to Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic violence. Within a normative gender equality, the significance of gender is normatively abandoned. Gender ‘must not’ matter, as this would undermine the premises of the ideology of gender equality mentioned above. Within this frame, ‘gendering’ categories will not be available. As gender has been normatively removed as a category of explanation, ‘gendering’ arguments are thus not possible or ‘thinkable’. Degendering prostitution thus reflects more than merely an individualization of the phenomenon. The detaching of prostitution from
women’s rights suggested in section 5.1, can be analyzed as reflecting a frame of thoughts within which gender simply is not a category of explanation.

The seed of this argument was sown by the point of departure of Maria Wendt Höjers and Cecilia Åse study Politikens Paradoxer (‘The Paradoxes of Politics’, Wendt Höjer & Åse 1999). The title suggests the following paradox: At the same time as women have less power because of their gender, the political importance of gender is not recognized, as traditional politics normatively state that politics are gender neutral. The authors argue that “[f]eminists are critical of the sort of theories that in their very premises abstract gender. Once gender has been cancelled, one has removed all chances to see how power and gender are connected.” (Wendt Höjer & Åse 1999: 11, my translation). In my analysis, the basic premise of the ideology of gender equality is that gender should not matter, therefore, on a symbolic level, gender is ‘cancelled’ as a category of explanation. Even though one could assume that an ideology of gender equality is meant to make gender (power) relations visible and conscious, it seems that it can also function to deny the significance of gendered power. Explanations based on ‘gendering’ arguments are not made possible within such a frame, which can thus contribute to conserving gendered power asymmetries.

This discussion can be related to Bourdieu’s analysis in Masculine Domination (2001) where he suggests that categories that are formulated within certain power relations will inevitably maintain the same relations, and that the protests that are shaped within a certain frame of thought (such as the ideology of gender equality) can have a conserving function. Criticism is made difficult, because the categories of thought (the normative view that gender does not matter) are themselves a product of the gender order they are meant to criticize. Using the categories of a dominating logic, strategies of resistance will recognize and confirm the dominating frame. Thus, if strategies for change are formulated within the premises of what they are meant to criticize, they will have a conserving and non-subversive function.
In my analysis, gender has not been made a category of change by the ideology of gender equality in Cuba. Even though this institutionalized ideology has in certain ways ‘dehistoricized’ and ‘denaturalized’ gender, its formulation has had a conserving function. As gender equality is defined through an ideology that serves to defend present power relations, profound changes in the gender order are not made possible. The ideology of gender equality is instead made normative, within which gender ought not to matter. On the contrary, issues that may suggest imperfections in the gender-equal picture (such as machismo, prostitution or violence against women) are defined as not relevant to gender equality. The normativity of gender equality can be interpreted as removing gender as a category of thought. ‘Gendering’ explanations that explicitly link phenomena to gender will not be ‘thinkable’ within this normative frame. Thus a ‘degendering’ understanding of prostitution needs not to constitute a paradox. Rather, it can be seen as logical within an institutionalized ideology of gender equality, constituting a frame where gendered categories of explanation have been ‘cancelled’.
6. Symbolic frames

6.1 Machismo as doxa

In this final part I will discuss if machismo can be analyzed as part of a doxic field and be seen as a symbolic frame of gender equality. This will be related to my point in section 5, where I suggested that the normative ideology of gender equality is not open for gendered explanations. In some concluding remarks, I relate this to the analysis of the understanding of prostitution that I have developed in this thesis, through seeing my argument in this section as a symbolic frame for this understanding. I will first introduce a brief discussion on machismo as doxa, followed by questioning whether change can be made possible within the theoretical frame that I have used in this thesis.

On a concrete level, the political interests of the government set the limits of the mandate of the FMC. Thus the ideology of gender equality has been defined on premises about contribution to the revolutionary process. Seeing this contribution as a primary duty can be related to my earlier discussion on a ‘view of human beings’, in which people are normatively defined and judged according to their contributions to society. This view was analyzed as a frame of thought that included an implicit normative normality.

This normative normality is reflected in the loading of certain categories, for example what is understood as the ‘correct’ way of living. A ‘revolutionary’ is defined as someone giving his life to society, an idea loaded with strong positive connotations. This ideal is reminiscent of the concept of being a ‘Man’. To quote Rosendahl: “Many of the traits of the ideal revolutionary build on such traditional male traits as courage, virility, strength, audacity and initiative (cf. Leiner 1994: 25). The idea of man as protector, provider, and lover has also become a political ideal” (Rosendahl 1997: 84). The concept of ‘Revolution’ is normative as a higher goal towards which one should strive, and, in my interpretation, the revolutionary hero embodies a specifically male ideal. This is the frame for the sarcastic naming of the Cuban revolutionary ideology as ‘machismo-leninismo’ (Smith 1996: 185), which suggests a machista basis of
the formulation of revolutionary rhetoric. As mentioned in the introduction, ‘machismo’ can be defined as “an exaggerated display of manliness but also the idea that men should have supremacy and control over women in every aspect of life and that both physically and psychologically, men and women are in different spheres” (Rosendahl 1997: 52f).

Here I wish to raise the question whether machismo can be analyzed as part of a doxa, the unquestionable, the premises upon which our thinking rests and what is considered ‘natural’ and self-evident. As shown earlier, gender equality is subjected to discussion, while machismo is not made relevant for the ideology of gender equality. It can be seen as a paradox that machismo is individualized by my informants and explicitly detached from gender issues, and that it is not a central topic in the work of the FMC. Instead, machismo is often denied and thus avoided as a topic for discussion. Rosendahl reports from the locality of her fieldwork: “The ideas of machismo are strongly fixed in the life of Palmera although they are seldom articulated in official contexts” (Rosendahl 1997: 77).

Bourdieu discusses the gender order as part of doxa. In his analysis, the expressions of a gender order, for example the practice of certain gender roles, confirm or ‘naturalize’ the same order. All expressions of gender roles that are in line with the gender order will be seen as confirming this order, and thereby ‘consecrating’ it (Bourdieu 2001: 8). Thus gender relations seem self-evident and their premises are not made subject to conscious reflection or judgment.

Because that which is unsaid is not easily subjected to discussion, bringing up machismo as a topic will involve an analysis of that which is implicit in how people reflect on gender roles. An arbitrary selection of examples from my material can illustrate such an analysis. Before my interview with Maria, her husband wanted to read my questions before he would let her talk to me, and he wanted to take part during the interview. When I said that the interview was between Maria and me, he said that he would cross-examine her after we had finished, and that I should interview more men if I wanted some good interviews. Afterwards, Maria told me that fortunately she was spared of
machismo in her personal life and that she would never accept it. During my interview with Alicia, her husband came knocking on the door several times and asked her to cook him food immediately or to come and help him with some petty jobs. When we had finished, he asked me whether it had been a good interview. I confirmed that it was, whereupon he commented that he could imagine it to be interesting as he was the one who had taught Alicia all that she knew. Alicia repeated many times to me that she was happy to have a husband that was not machista. Francisco told me that if women are treated badly, it is because they through their behavior provoke disrespectful reactions. Women who lead a disorderly life create machismo, because when men see this, they will no longer respect women. Another man continued this argument saying that “women who act like whores will naturally be treated like whores”. Regarding gender roles in Cuba, he explained, the point is not that men are jealous and do not want their women to go out with their friends, it is the women themselves who think that they should be with their partner to show him respect. He also explained that the reason why women spend a lot of time looking after their appearance is to show respect and love to men.

In my interpretation, these short illustrations show that controlling behavior by men is not interpreted as machismo and does not demand legitimatizing arguments. Instead, the existence of machismo can be actively denied. The arguments made by my informants above can be seen as reflecting an implicit frame of machismo, which itself is not made subject to discussion. Machismo can thus be analyzed as part of the doxic field, which is not itself discussed or legitimatized. As Bourdieu states: “The strength of the masculine order is seen in the fact that it dispenses without justification: the androcentric vision imposes itself as neutral and has no need to spell itself out in discourses aimed at legitimating it” (Bourdieu 2001: 9). Machismo not only ‘dispenses without justification’ as part of a doxic field, but can in my analysis also be part of a symbolic frame in which ‘gendering’ is not a category of explanation. In such a frame, interpretations of behavior as machista will be made difficult, as ‘gendering’ explanations are not ‘thinkable’. A frame in which ‘gendering’
arguments have been made impossible will not provide subversive tools to make conscious a doxic machismo.

In an analysis of gender roles on a symbolic level above, I compared the normative and desirable role of the revolutionary to a traditional male ideal. Earlier, I suggested that the ideology of gender equality is defined within present power relations. Analyzing the symbolic frame of these power relations as one of machismo, then machismo and gender equality need not be contradictories. Machismo can instead be analyzed to constitute part of a doxic gender order, which serves as the frame within which the definition of gender equality is created. Thus the ideology of gender equality can be seen as formulated within a machista frame. Following my discussion on the premises of gender equality, this could even suggest that the definition of gender equality can contribute to conserve machismo, as it does not question an underlying gender order. In the light of my argument above, denominating the symbolic frame in which gender equality is defined as ‘machismo-leninismo’ will seem as a fitting term.

Bourdieu quotes Lucien Bianco who states that ‘the weapons of the weak are always weak weapons’ (Bourdieu 2001: 32). Symbolic strategies of resistance remain dominated as their goals are formulated within the dominating logic. This in my discussion also applies to the ideology of gender equality that has a conserving function as its definition and goals are formulated within the premises of that which it was meant to criticize.

I earlier suggested a theoretical possibility that an explicit politicization of gender in the Cuban context may detach gender from the natural, and thus make changes in the gender order possible. However, if this same politicization is based on machista premises, the ideology of gender equality will not bring such a change. Politicization in this context will not involve dismantling the premises of the gender order, but rather the ideology of gender equality will preserve power relations. Through my discussion of a doxic gender order and the premises of gender equality, it seems comprehensible that machismo and gender equality can exist side by side and not constitute an open contradiction.
6.2 Is change possible?

My discussion on machismo as doxa can be fruitfully related to Bourdieu’s discussion on masculine domination when he argues: “... I have also seen masculine domination /.../ as the prime example of this paradoxical submission, an effect of what I call symbolic violence” (Bourdieu 2001: 1f). As suggested earlier, the power of symbolic violence lies in shaping and restricting our categories of thought. We are made to think within certain schemes of thought, where only some concepts are available or ‘thinkable’. To quote Bourdieu again: “When we try to understand masculine domination we are therefore likely to resort to modes of thought that are the product of domination” (Bourdieu 2001: 5). Bourdieu doubts that it is possible to criticize a gender order within its own premises, because we will then be forced to think within the frame of that which is subjected to discussion. Our arguments will be formulated on the premises of this system, and thus contribute to its conservation. This is a point where Bourdieu can be criticized for suggesting a structuralist idea about schemes of thought that are imposed on our minds in a unidirectional process leaving us without space of reaction or even reflection. It is very probable that the theory of Bourdieu might not provide the ultimate tools for interpreting individual actors consciously breaking norms.

Bourdieu has been criticized on this point and confronted with the question whether change of the gender order is made possible at all within his theory. He suggests a relative constancy in the sexual order through the theory of how gender relations are ‘naturalized’ and ‘eternalized’. He has been accused by his critics of denying and condemning changes in the situation of women. As a comment, Bourdieu asks rhetorically;

does not this quasi-analytical use of ethnography to historicize and so denaturalize what seems most natural in the social order, the division between the sexes, run the risk of bringing to light constants and invariants /.../ and thereby of ratifying and eternalizing a conservative representation of the relationship between the sexes[?] (Bourdieu 2001: 4)
His answer is just as rhetorical:

[D]o not the invariants which, beyond all the visible changes in the position of women, are observed in the relations of domination between the sexes require one to take as one’s privileged object the historical mechanisms and institutions which, in the course of history, have continuously abstracted these invariants from history? (Bourdieu 2001: 4)

Bourdieu suggests that his critics are ‘obsessed’ with what he calls a “naive and naively normative opposition” between change and constancy (Bourdieu 2001:vii). Any thorough analysis should try to make visible the frame around the gender order, to see how superficial changes do not automatically mean that asymmetrical power relations are disturbed. Pointing to permanence in the sexual order does not necessarily form a contrast to making change possible. On the contrary, he suggests; changes will presuppose such a dismantling of the premises of the very dehistoricization of the gender order. He argues: “Combating these historical forces of dehistoricization must be the most immediate objective of an enterprise of mobilization aimed at putting history in motion again by neutralizing the mechanisms of the neutralization of history” (ibid: viii). Such an understanding will analyze permanence in the gender order as a product of an active work of eternalization. This does not mean to “try to stop history and to dispossess women of their role as historical agents” (ibid: viii). Instead, the aim of analyzing the gender order as part of doxa is to introduce ‘competing possibles’ and to move the discussion from a frame where masculine domination does not even need to be legitimatized. In my discussion this has meant to disclose the premises or the symbolic frame of a normative ideology of gender equality, within which gender will not be an available category and ‘gendering’ arguments will be made impossible.
6.3 Concluding remarks

In this thesis, I have tried to dismantle the premises of an individualizing understanding of prostitution in Cuba today. This has been done through pointing at political interests underlying individualizing definitions of the causes and solutions of prostitution. I have shown how both individualizing and politicizing definitions can contrast prostitution with the current political system and thus serve to defend status quo. I have analyzed these definitions as reflecting a worldview based on implicit politically normative premises. Part of this frame is an ideology of gender equality that is formulated on the premises of current power relations, and functions to conserve these same relations. Gender equality is made part of a hegemonic ideology and thus becomes normative, which means that gender is normatively removed as a category of explanation. Within this symbolic frame, ‘gendering’ arguments will not be available. Neither the premises of gender equality nor machismo as part of the doxic field will be questioned within this symbolic frame. Thus it seems logical that the understanding of prostitution today has been degendered and individualized, in contrast to how the prostitution of 1959 was politicized, related to women’s situation in general and made a symbol of degradation and injustice.

My analysis of an individualizing understanding as a premise in discussions on contemporary prostitution has been done as an attempt to restore these individualizing arguments to a dynamic universe of thought. Relating this understanding to a wider symbolic frame can also suggest which categories of explanation that have not been available in the formulation of its definition. In line with the theory used in this thesis, I suggest that subjecting the premises of the understanding of prostitution to discussion may open for reflection, action and change. To make possible a change in the field of prostitution, will require a consciousness of the definition of its causes and solutions, and the symbolic power underlying this definition.
7. References


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