Todos somos jineteros

*Contesting Morality in Socialist Cuba*

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Master’s thesis

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November 2010
Todos somos jineteros – Contesting Morality in Socialist Cuba
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http://www.duo.uio.no/

Print: Oslo Kopisten AS
Abstract

Drawing on six months of fieldwork in Havana this thesis explores contradictory meanings of morality by focusing on groups of men who engage themselves with foreign tourists. The men, who seek to improve their living standards by making money off tourists, or by having sexual relationships with foreign women for the purpose of getting a visa out of the country, are called jineteros in the local language. Their activities are considered immoral by the general Cuban society because the men do not fulfill what is expected of them as good revolutionaries working and sacrificing themselves for the wellbeing of the socialist state. They therefore experience tensions between moral obligations put forward by the revolutionary society as opposed to their individual desires of mobility and freedom.

In the aftermath of the economic collapse in the 1990’s the Cuban people have been forced to engage in informal, often illegal, business in order to satisfy their needs. This means that almost all Cuban citizens may at times cross the line of what is considered correct behavior, and many people do activities that are closely connected to activities of jineterismo. Nevertheless, it is the “street people” and the black Rasta in particular, working en la calle (in the street) that stand as symbols of the moral decline in contemporary Cuba. The men who have relationships with foreign women often seek to distance themselves from the jinetero label, or attempt to fill the term with alternative meanings, in order to position themselves as morally good people or to enhance their status within the group.
Acknowledgements

There are many people who have made an invaluable contribution to this project. First of all I would like to thank my friends and acquaintances in Havana for making the fieldwork an exciting and unforgettable experience, and for including me in their lives and sharing their stories with me. I would like to direct a special thanks to “Clara” and “Maximilian” for opening their home to me. It has been an honor to know you.

I would also like to thank my academic adviser, Ingjerd Hoëm, for giving me helpful advice and feedback both prior to, and during the fieldwork, and throughout the writing process.

Thanks to everyone who has cheered me up and aided me in some way during the process. Especially I want to thank my mother for endless care, understanding and kindness. Thanks to my sister, Kjersti, for proofreading up until the day before giving birth, and for keeping up my good faith throughout the whole process.

Thanks to my niece, Frida, born 30.10.10, for spreading joy in an otherwise hectic and challenging period. Thanks to Helene, Mia, Yvonne, Vibeke, Margrete, Merete and Linda for fruitful discussions, support and encouraging words. Thanks to Siv Elin for good advice prior to the fieldwork and to Marianne for mental support and for academic discussions during the fieldwork. To all my crazy fellow students who have helped me keeping up my good mood, I wish I could name you all. Thanks to Lars and Astrid for giving me a nice, warm, comfortable and affordable place to live.

Last, but certainly not least, thanks to Alejandro for all feedback, advice, love and support, and to my Cuban family for receiving me with open arms.
# Table of contents

**Chapter 1: Introduction** .................................................................................................................................................. 1

Main objective of the thesis .............................................................................................................................................. 1

Theorizing morality and symbols ................................................................................................................................. 3

Methodological reflections ................................................................................................................................................. 7
  
Participatory observation .................................................................................................................................................. 7

Positioning in the field ....................................................................................................................................................... 8

Outline of the thesis ........................................................................................................................................................... 10

**Chapter 2: Socialism, struggle and surveillance - an historical, economic and social background to the understanding of the phenomenon of jineterismo** ............................................................................. 12

Under the same roof but with different means .................................................................................................................. 12

Socialism sustained by capitalist means .......................................................................................................................... 13
  
The collapse .................................................................................................................................................................... 13

Contradictions within the phenomenon of ‘jineterismo’ ............................................................................................... 15

Immoral acts and struggles for survival .......................................................................................................................... 16

‘Inventar’ and ‘luchar’ .......................................................................................................................................................... 16

Out of needs or out of desires? ........................................................................................................................................ 17

Keeping oneself on the good side ................................................................................................................................... 20

Relating to a revolutionary morality .............................................................................................................................. 22

‘El hombre nuevo’ ........................................................................................................................................................... 22

The moral discourse – emphasizing individual values .................................................................................................... 23

Desires for freedom ............................................................................................................................................................ 24

Mobility – moving between spheres .............................................................................................................................. 27

The tourist bus is better than the ‘guagua’ ......................................................................................................................... 27

The continuation of the tourist apartheid ......................................................................................................................... 29

Mobility within a concrete and a moral landscape ......................................................................................................... 30

Concluding remarks .......................................................................................................................................................... 31
Chapter 3: The zones of jineterismo from within - drawing the boundary between “good” and “bad”

Glimpses into the zones of jineterismo

A night out at La Bucanero

‘Jineteros’ versus ‘jineteras’

Habana Vieja – a heterosexual and male-dominated zone of ‘jineterismo’

The classic ‘jinetero’, the Rasta, the seducer and the prostitute

‘Todos somos jineteros’

Rastafari in Cuba and the story of one Rasta ‘jinetero’

Who’s the bad guy? - Negotiating the jinetero status

‘What are you doing here with these bad people?’

Boundary maintenance and the power of gossip

Being a foreign girl in a jinetero environment

The tourist as a possession

The fieldworker’s moral agonies

Concluding remarks

Chapter 4: Enhancing ones status - The art of playing the jinetero game successfully

I am a jinetero and I am proud of it

Normalizing the jinetero concept

Shame and satisfaction

The most famous ‘jinetero’ in Havana

What defines a successful jinetero?

Having sex with old and fat women

Romantic relationships with poor students

Proving oneself on the street

Status and respect

Being streetwise – ‘vivir de la calle’

Street capital

How to capture a tourist
Maps of Cuba and Havana

1. Source: www.worldtravels.com

Chapter 1: Introduction

Main objective of the thesis

This thesis explores how young Cuban men aspire to improve their living conditions by getting involved with foreign women, either sexually or by other means. I will argue that the reason for entering into relationships with female tourists is, in a broad sense, the need for increased freedom and mobility in a society where wages are extremely low and political, economic and social freedom are limited. Having foreign girlfriends can be a gateway to a world of consumerism, travel within Cuba and, not least, a possible ticket out of the country. However, the men’s search for freedom and mobility leads them to cross limits of what is generally seen as acceptable in Cuban society. Placing an emphasis on individual values might go against values of being a good Cuban citizen, who is expected to be working hard and sacrifice himself for the wellbeing of the socialist state. Moreover, having relationships with foreign women generates a situation where the gender roles are reversed; the Cuban man is no longer the main provider, meaning that he does not fulfill the role that is expected of him. I will argue that the men’s activities lead to tensions between what they actually do and what they ought to do.

Cuban men who have relationships with female tourists, or make money off tourists by working as “tourist guides”, are called jineteros (literally horseback riders) in the local language. The men who are the focus of this study are operating and/or living in what I will term “zones of jineterismo”, areas within the city of Havana where contact between tourists and Cubans takes place frequently. The reason why I chose to focus my research on the jinetero concept is the extreme forms of immorality

\(^1\) Jineterismo is the local expression for prostitution, but may involve other activities than direct transactions of sex for money. Furthermore, it is problematic to call all male and female Cubans having relationships with foreigners prostitutes. The jineterismo term is more fluid and multi-faceted than the prostitution term.
associated with *jinetero* activities. However, similar activities can be observed outside the zones of *jineterismo* as well. Since the economic crisis hit Cuba in the beginning of the 1990’s, the majority of the Cuban population has been forced to engage in illegal economic activities to be able to care for themselves and their families. The thesis’ title “Todos somos jineteros” (we [Cubans] are all *jineteros*) refers to the fact that, potentially, all Cubans may at times find themselves within the grey zones of *jineterismo*. However, as I will explain, it is the *jineteros*, as well as other tourist seekers like *jineteras* (girls/women), *pingueros* (homosexual men) and transvestites, who often stand as symbols for the decline of moral values in contemporary Cuba. Furthermore, it is the black male, often with a rasta style, visible in the streets in dense tourist areas, who stands as the prototype of a *jinetero*.

The main objective of the thesis is to explore **how Cuban men who get involved with foreign women negotiate the tensions between individual desires for freedom and mobility versus the social obligations of being a good man and a good Cuban citizen.** I thus explore how morality in Cuba is contested by focusing on how particular groups of men in a particular part of town at a particular point in time are negotiating their place within a moral landscape. Anyone operating in the zones of *jineterismo* has to cope with the contradictions of being a good man and a good Cuban citizen and at the same time, follow ones personal desires for increased mobility and freedom. Not working or studying is in Cuba considered anti-social behavior that can lead to persecution by the police and other agents structuring and reinforcing Cuba’s moral system. By keeping distance from the *jinetero* label or alternatively by turning the meaning of the *jinetero* term on the head, the men attempt to justify their activities and maintain themselves as morally good people. Furthermore, by having foreign girlfriends they do not accomplish what is expected of them as ideal and good men. Through finding various explanations for their behavior, they seek to sustain themselves as good men.

I do not attempt to do an in-depth study of contemporary Cuban gender relations, however, the structure of gender has important impacts of how the men negotiate
the contradictions of personal mobility and desires versus gendered moral obligations.

**Theorizing morality and symbols**

In Archetti’s (1999) analysis of football and tango in Argentina he is concerned with how the field of morality must be analyzed not only as shaping action, but also according to what is desirable for the actors. There has been a tendency to examine moral systems as sets of rules and obligations that direct action and structure social relations. Durkheim criticized Kant for emphasizing the obligatory nature of moral codes, and for undermining the aspects of desire, emotions and imagination in the moral behavior of groups and individuals (Ibid.). Inspired by Durkheim, Archetti stresses the importance of “[considering] the field of morality and moral analysis as a dynamic cultural code that informs, creates and gives meaning to social relations (Archetti 1999:117). He puts emphasis on the need for anthropologists to clarify paradoxes within people’s lives instead of giving a full picture of the overall moral order of society. In the book *Ethnographies of Moral Reasoning – Living Paradoxes of a Global Age*, edited by Karen Sykes (2009), the authors are similarly concerned with how actual people’s morality may at times be in conflict with dominant moral codes advocated by the society of which they are part. When an individual’s own viewpoint is in disagreement with dominant values of a community, moral dilemmas and paradoxes arise. The authors’ purpose is to describe how people in various locations become “moral reasoners” when caught up in situations where personal opinions do not coincide with the general values of the society. In the book’s afterword Gregory (2009:197) makes a division between ethical and moral discourse, the ethical discourse being moral rules imposed by the state or community while the moral discourse is concerned with how the individual or group create their own morality. The moral discourse can be used to justify the choices they make even though it varies from the ethical discourse. Both discourses are used to motivate behavior; individuals become moral reasoners when reflecting on the options
available and deciding what is best for themselves. In the streets of Habana Vieja, those who resort to activities of jineterismo must deal with the values of the ethical discourse that often stands in opposition to their own value system.

Archetti (1999) also emphasizes the need to consider social change in the study of morality. He leans on Durkheim who claims that it is especially in periods of “moral effervescence” and dramatic change that new moralities are adopted and that new symbols are shaped. Durkheim writes that “collective ideals...can only become manifest and conscious by being concretely realized in objects that can be seen by all, understood by all and represented to all minds: figurative designs, emblems of all kinds, written or spoken formulas, animate or inanimate objects” (Durkheim 1966, sited in Archetti 1999:121). From this perspective Archetti analyzes Argentinean tango lyrics from 1917 until 1930, an epoch where gender relations were dramatically transformed, and when some women challenged the dominant moral values by leaving their traditional roles as housewives. The lyrics describe the frustration of men concerning an apparent lack of emotional control over their women. The central prototype of the lyrics is la milonguita, a girl from the barrio who escapes her home to go to the cabarets of the center of Buenos Aires where she is seduced by rich men and starts living a life of luxury. Through the medium of tango lyrics, men could express their ambivalent feelings towards their women of whom they had no longer control. Archetti finds that there is a change in how the men express these feelings and how masculinity and morality of romantic love is contested and changed over time. In some lyrics the man presents himself as understanding and forgiving despite his lost love, while in others the man is figured as the compadrito, a man who wants to dominate and control the woman, and in some cases takes revenge by killing the woman’s lover. Towards the end of the century, by the time Archetti did the study, the compadrito had disappeared, while la milonguita and the man expressing romantic love and compassion still speak to the Argentinean people, and continue to have a central place in the lyrics of tango.
In the case of Cuba, the country experienced remarkable changes in the years of the revolutionary take-over at the end of the 1950’s. Fulgenio Batista’s regime (1933-1958) was overthrown and socialism introduced, involving a redistribution of the country’s resources and equal rights for all independent of race and gender. At the same time as being a political project, the revolution was also to a high degree a moral project aiming at transforming Cubans to morally pure people. The new Cuban citizen, or the so-called *hombre nuevo* (new man), was supposed to work for the principles of the revolution and to sacrifice himself for the country and for his family. Formulas, emblems and pictures of the great men, who have fought against imperialist influences during the revolution, stand as symbols for the independency and freedom of the country. These symbols are visible on each street corner, in every official office, on TV-screens, in some people’s living rooms, on banners along the main roads, in the literature and so on. However, these revolutionary symbols are contested by moralities that have been transformed in the years before and during the economic crisis in the 1990’s, another epoch with dramatic social change that continues to this day. Forrest (2002:97) writes that “in the imagination of many Cubans, *jineterismo* had become by the mid-1990’s an activity symbolizing the current plight of the country in general”. Thus the “street people”, associated with activities of *jineterismo*, might stand as symbols of the social change of contemporary Cuba. However, this social transformation has not yet become expressed in “collective ideals” that are shared by the Cuban population. For some, the phenomenon of *jineterismo* is seen to symbolize the decline in moral values, the failure of *el hombre nuevo*, while for others it is only another strategy to overcome life’s struggles and perhaps containing a hope for a better future.

In Abner Cohens’ *Two-Dimensional Man* (1974) he argues that it is the ambiguity and flexibility of symbols that make possible the continuity of social life. Symbols are interpreted differently by different people at different times and by the same individual, depending on the circumstances. So even though symbols can be said to
exist “in their own right”, they are also instrumental so that individuals and groups can manipulate the symbols to enhance or maintain their power. Men who engage themselves with tourists may manipulate the symbolic power of the *jinetero* label that is forced upon them. Either they seek to distance themselves from the term by claiming memberships to groups of good people that do not do activities of *jineterismo*, or they fill the *jinetero* term with alternative symbolic meanings. Another and newer perspective, that describes some of the same mechanisms, is the study on *street capital* by Sandberg and Pedersen (2009). They describe how drug dealers by the river in Oslo, who lack cultural capital in the general society, can acquire street capital by proving themselves on the street. The drug dealers perceive themselves as victims in the Norwegian welfare state, but by being “street-smart gangsters” they can enhance their status and gain respect on the street. In a similar vein, *jineteros* can acquire status and respect by being successful with female tourists.

Moreover, Cohen writes that symbols must go through a slow process of change to prevent social collapse. Even under radical political changes, like a revolution, established symbols from the previous regime will continue to exist under the new regime. For example, even if Fidel claimed to have eradicated racial differences when he gave everyone equal rights in 1959, racism and the hierarchical structure of race relations are still highly prevalent in today’s Cuba. The symbols that are “thrown upon the individual” (cf. Cohen 1974), causing some people to suffer from moral control and police control, may not only be products of the economic collapse in the 1990’s, but can be seen to have developed over time. The race hierarchy in Cuba today originates from before the revolution, from the time when there were still black slaves (see for example Martinez-Alier 1974; de la Fuente 2001). The prototypical *jinetero*, that is the black rasta operating in the streets, may have been shaped through years of social transformation, even if the label *jinetero* is relatively new and is seen to challenge *el hombre nuevo* produced by the revolution.
Methodological reflections

Participatory observation

The thesis is based on a six months fieldwork in spring 2009 conducted for the most part in Habana Vieja, the old town of Havana. The place where I met most of my friends and acquaintances was at La Bucanero, a club where Cubans come to meet tourists, dance, play music and hang out with their friends.

Since my friends and acquaintances were primarily searching for and hanging out with tourists, it was easy for me to find a group of people that was more than willing to accept me as part of their group. However, even if my status as una extranjera (a female foreigner) made it easier to get access to the field, it also made me face some challenges, something that will be discussed in more detail in chapter three.

During the fieldwork, I lived with three different families in casas particulares (private houses for rent to tourists and students) in two different parts of town; Vedado and Centro Habana. By staying with these families I got a deeper insight into class, race and gender relations, as well as how different families deal with the bureaucracy, how they overcome daily struggles, how they consume and what kind of food they eat, and, not least, their different views on gente de la calle (street people). I have been back to Havana three times during the writing process. Although the main purpose of my return trips was to visit friends, going back has been of great value for my understandings of the Cuban culture, the language, the system and the way of living, and it has widened my perspective on the jineterismo phenomenon. Living outside the zones of jineterismo I got an alternative understanding of what it means to be Cuban, what it means to luchar (struggle) and how people who live off tourists are viewed by people from the outside. This means that I have both the inside and the outside perspectives, which for me added greatly to the contextual understanding of the phenomenon.
The study is based primarily on participatory observation and informal interviews. I was hanging out with my friends and acquaintances at night, visited them in their homes during the day, met their families, went to the beach with them, went rock climbing with them, went on trips to the provinces with them, and ate lunch or dinner with them. During the time in Havana I also attended three weddings. By the end of the fieldwork I did a few semi-structured interviews with some of my acquaintances. I did not use a tape recorder, but I wrote down what I observed as soon as I had pen and paper or my computer available. Consequently when referring to direct speech, this is based on my own memories, except when I write the comments in Spanish. To protect the anonymity of my acquaintances all names are changed and some background information is altered.

**Positioning in the field**

Mintz (1979) writes that the way the fieldwork is conducted is closely connected to the personality of the anthropologist. Access to information in the field depends on what kind of relationships one has with the informants, and what position one gets in the community. The conduct of my fieldwork was affected by my status as *una yuma* (a female foreigner), a position that had important impacts on the information I was able to access. As I was a “tourist” myself, my acquaintances were reluctant to relate to me some of their strategies of attracting foreigners. Furthermore, my position as a girl in a masculine environment may also have had an effect on what kind of information I could get. Most likely I would have got alternative information had I been a male, especially concerning more detailed information on how men talk between themselves.

In earlier anthropology, objectivity was praised as a methodological tool for getting closer to the “truth”. The anthropologist’s personal encounters with the “locals” were a taboo topic of discussion and were not recognized as part of the real fieldwork (Fernandez 2010:8). It is not until recently that scholars have openly started to
challenge this taboo. By the end of my fieldwork I met my Cuban boyfriend, an encounter that has given me much insight, both on an academic and a personal level. Nevertheless, it has also made me face challenges, in part considering my aversion against identifying this relationship to those of my subjects of study. Pertierra (2007) tells of her need to distinguish between a professional role as an anthropologist and a personal life when she conducted fieldwork in Santiago de Cuba. When she entered into a romantic relationship with a Cuban, she experienced difficulties in maintaining this distinction, particularly during the preparations of her wedding. However, she realized that through the mixing of the roles, she came to understand and experience the topic of her study on a much deeper level. What is more, the relationship also made her feel a discomfort of being “one of a long line of foreigners” engaging oneself with the Cuban locals. This reminds me of my own effort of trying to distinguish my role as a student in social anthropology from my personal encounters.

The reason for including my private relationship here is also that it has had implications for my understanding of how the phenomenon of jineterismo is considered from the outside, and that it has given me a deeper understanding of the Cuban culture in general. It has enabled me to see much clearer how factors such as speech, family background and the neighborhood to which one belongs are hierarchically structured. Coming from a wealthier part of town, it took my boyfriend some time to understand how “a nice girl like me” could have spent my whole fieldwork hanging out with the “bad” people, los jineteros and los guapos (the tough guys) of the streets of Habana Vieja. Consequently this caused some heated discussions on what defines a good and a bad person; on what ought to be morally good or bad. I will not go deeper into this. Suffice it to say that this relationship has shaped much of my understandings, and if it was not for my boyfriend I believe this thesis would have looked fairly different.
Outline of the thesis

In chapter two I describe the background to the phenomenon of jineterismo. Even if almost the whole Cuban population must engage in illegal activities in their daily struggle to make a living, activities of jineterismo are considered the most immoral. Nevertheless, people do to a certain degree understand why some people engage themselves with tourists in order to live a better life. The economic and political situation leaves little freedom of movement to the Cuban population in comparison to the visiting tourists. By staying with tourists one can obtain more opportunities for mobility both within Cuba, and perhaps at a later moment, outside Cuba.

Chapter three gives a deeper insight into the zones of jineterismo. I describe the different types of tourist seekers and put special emphasis on how different groups are created and how the jinero concept is negotiated. Because of the bad connotations that are associated with the term, people seem to feel a need to distance themselves from the jinero label. Through the medium of gossip some men attempt to place themselves on side of the good in a moral landscape, and thereby maintain themselves as good people. Towards the end of the chapter I also discuss my own positioning in a masculine environment and how I, too, came to define people in the categories of good and bad.

In chapter four I discuss how the meaning of the jinero label can be turned on its head. At the same time as activities of jineterismo is perceived as bad, one can receive status and respect on the street if playing the jinero game successfully. Success is defined differently by the different men, depending on what one wishes to achieve by staying with foreign tourists. Success also depends on street experience, the ability to vivir de la calle (live off the streets), and street capital that is accumulated through the individual’s capability of attracting tourists.

In chapter five I argue that traditional gender roles, that symbolically connect the woman to the house sphere and the man to the street sphere, will have implications
for Cuban men’s relationships with foreign women. As I will explain, men still have
the need to control their women’s movements. With foreign girls, however, it is she
who forms the mobile part of the relationships, while the man has lost control and
has become the immobile part. I will discuss how the reversed gender roles lead the
men to exaggerate their need for sexual freedom and downplay the social obligation
of being good men for their women. However, because the foreign woman is not
available at all times, and because he has no control of her movements outside Cuba,
he attempts to justify his activities in this regard. Furthermore, by holding Cuban
women responsible for the hopelessness of maintaining a relationship with una
cubana, due to the women’s expectations to provide for them, Cuban men can
legitimize the necessity of staying with foreign girls.

Chapter six explores how Cuban race relations have implications for how some men
are swept off the street by the police, an act of power that contributes to the
immobility of some men who engage themselves with foreign tourists. I discuss how
racism still prevails despite the attempt of the revolution to abolish prejudices based
on race by giving all Cubans equal access to public resources. Living or operating in
Habana Vieja adds to the suspiciousness of the police, and to the prejudices of people
outside the zones of jineterismo, due to the reputation of a barrio inhabited by bad
people. The men need to cope with these restrictions and prejudices in their
everyday lives, something that may intensify the desire of leaving Cuba.
Chapter 2: Socialism, struggle and surveillance - an historical, economic and social background to the understanding of the phenomenon of *jineterismo*

**Under the same roof but with different means...**

...In the relatively poor area of Centro Habana two families live in the same building. Upstairs live Eugenio with his wife Elena, downstairs live Abdel with his father, mother and grandmother. Every day the two families watch the same news and the same ‘novelas’\(^2\) from one of the five state owned TV-channels, they share the same water tank placed on the roof top, they walk through the same dusty streets and they breathe in the same humid air affected by gasoline from the old American Plymouth taxies going up and down San Lazaro street nearby. They also have equal access to medical services, they get subsidized goods on the ‘libreta’\(^3\) and the children can take whatever education they want completely for free. But the similarities stop here.

When Eugenio and Elena want meat on the table, they walk a few blocks down to one of Havana’s shopping malls where meat is sold in ‘pesos convertibles’. When they need a new pair of pants or pair of shoes, want to change the window curtains or need a new load of coffee they find these goods in the same place. Elena especially loves shopping and appreciates the regular routine of passing by the shopping mall. Abdel, on the contrary, has only disgust for it. “I hate the shopping mall”, he says. It is made for people with money and it is therefore completely out of his reach. He is a student in computing and his monthly scholarship

\(^2\) Novelas= soap operas. They are very popular in Cuba, especially among the female elderly population. They often deal with themes such as love affairs, upper-class bourgeois’ daily problems, promiscuous daughters, protective fathers and so on. Much free time is spent on watching the novelas and discussing the dramas afterwards.

\(^3\) The *libreta* is a rationing booklet that gives Cubans equal access to necessary goods. The *libreta* is used in the local *bodegas* (grocery selling necessary food and other items), *carnicerías* (selling meet) and *panaderías* (selling bread) where you pay in *pesos cubanos.*
amounts to 90 ‘pesos cubanos’, which is enough for taking the bus back and forth to school every day, and for buying his lunch at school. It is enough for getting through the day. Unlike Elena, his mother cannot buy a new pair of pants when she wishes to. Instead she wears worn-out joggers and a pair of brownish leather sandals that look like they have survived fifty years of revolution. When they are out of coffee his father goes to the local coffee shop to buy already made coffee for one ‘peso cubano’ per cup, and fills his thermos with it.

In comparison to Abdel’s family, Eugenio and Elena are fortunate. Their sons and daughters have already moved out, so they have turned two rooms and one fully equipped apartment into rooms for rent for tourists and students. One of Eugenio’s daughters lives in the Bahamas and regularly sends her father money. Eugenio works for the local CDR\(^4\) and often expresses his support for the revolution and its ideas and principles. In Abdel’s house the situation is fairly different. When opening the door to his house a musty smell reaches from the inside. It is a smell of despair and years of struggle that has taken root in the walls and seemingly in the consciousnesses of the people who live there. Abdel is tired of the political propaganda of Fidel and Raúl. He laughs at the people who sing the national anthem when they are told to; he himself does not care about following orders. Abdel’s dream is to find a foreign girlfriend he can marry. In his opinion there is no future for him in Cuba…

**Socialism sustained by capitalist means**

*The collapse*

The United States’ economic blockade, that took effect in 1961, has made Cuba highly dependent on Soviet aid since the introduction of socialism. Soviet aid had a leading role in sustaining the Cuban economy and allowed for the exporting of the necessary goods to their socialist ally; it has also had an enormous influence on political ideology and political and economic organization. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, Cuba entered a new era announced by Fidel Castro as the *período*  

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\(^4\) Comités para la Defensa de la Revolución (CDR’s) are groups located in each neighborhood. They were created in 1960 for the purpose of organizing and keeping an eye on local residents.
especial en tiempos de paz (special period in times of peace). Cuba’s dependency on Soviet financial support led to an economic crisis that severely affected the whole Cuban population. To be able to sustain the socialist system, Fidel introduced economic reforms based on self-sufficiency and rationings of food, oil, gas and other supplies. The shift opened up for the previously frowned upon economic strategies of small-scale private enterprises, the legalization of the US dollar\(^5\), joint ventures between foreign investors and the Cuban state and the building of a new tourist industry. Hotels, beaches and so-called dollar-shops were opened and reserved especially for tourists. To open up the borders for foreigners to enter the country was to be the most income generating economic reform. Even as contradictory as it sounds, the highly capitalist tourist industry has become the most important contribution to the development and the persistence of the socialist state (Roland 2006). The tourists leave behind a lot of capital in the Cuban public purse.

Nevertheless, most Cubans continue to be paid in pesos while being excluded from the tourist economic spheres. Furthermore, goods that were previously sold in the bodegas, were transferred to the dollar-shops, which made many basic items unavailable to the general Cuban population (Berg 2004). This dual monetary system has been referred to as an economic apartheid (Eckstein 1994).

When Fidel Castro came to power in January 1959 his aim was to build a society based on economic, racial, and gender equality. This socialist goal was to a certain extent successful, but the special period has, however, led to substantial differences among the Cuban people. The legalization of the US dollar in 1993 opened up for those who left the country during the revolution, previously referred to by Fidel as gusanos (worms), to send remittances to family members in Cuba (Eckstein 1994). The

\(^5\) The US dollar was legalized in 1993. Before that only foreigners could pay with dollars, although the dollar was also illegally circulating among the Cuban people. In 2003 the US dollar was replaced by pesos convertibles, a currency that is regulated by the value of the US dollar. Most Cubans continue to be paid in pesos cubanos. In 2010 one dollar amounted to about 24 pesos cubanos.
fact that mainly the white part of the population 6 left Cuba around the years of the revolutionary take-over, makes white families benefit most from these economic transfers (Berg 2004). This has greatly affected the relative differences in incomes of the white and the black population.

The deteriorating living standards required most Cubans to resort to informal and often illegal economic activities, a situation that continues to this day. Today, an average Cuban earns around 350-500 pesos cubanos monthly (equivalent 15-20 dollars/pesos convertibles) from their state-provided jobs. There exists a reversed class hierarchy where professionalized personnel earn less than people working within the tourist industry or within the illegal black market, as for example jineteros. In effect, many Cubans have quit their jobs or changed their highly professionalized jobs to work in the more luxurious tourist industry or as taxi drivers during their free time.

**Contradictions within the phenomenon of ‘jineterismo’**

In the wake of the economic crisis and as a result of the desperate need for dollars, the phenomenon of jineterismo gained ground. However, the first signs of jineterismo could be seen in the early years of the revolution, but it was reinforced in the 1990’s due to economic hardship (Berg 2004). Prostitution has, under the socialist regime, been a silenced theme. Shortly after the triumph of the revolution, Fidel created the Federation of Cuban Women (FMC) that started the work of sending female prostitutes to rehabilitation schools (Smith and Padula 1996). The women were given ideological and vocational training and opportunities for work. Many women volunteered to join the rehabilitation camps and were thankful for the opportunity to study, while others, who refused to quit their profession, either left the country or were imprisoned (Ibid.). This reform is one of Fidel’s boasts, and thus, to claim that

6 Before 1959 the white part of the population were the landowners. When they lost the land they migrated to the United States. The black population had more to gain from the revolution and therefore had fewer incentives to leave the island. It was not before the 1980’s that hundreds of black people migrated to the United States and to other countries.
prostitution has existed during his years in power would be the same as saying that the socialist system has failed and the socialist morals declined (Trumbull 2001). Today prostitution, popularly known by the term *jineterismo*, is flourishing in the streets and clubs of Havana. Ironically, it is the prostitution that draws most tourists to Cuba, especially male tourists coming for the purpose of buying sex from *jineteras* (Trumbull 2001). At the same time as interactions between Cubans and tourists are heavily controlled by the authorities, especially by the police patrolling the streets of Havana, it could be disastrous for the Cuban economy to completely abolish *jineterismo*.

On one side of the coin, getting involved with foreign tourists is seen as necessary for survival, both on a state level and on an individual level, while on the other side prostitution is something inherently bad that threatens the moral system of the socialist state.

**Immoral acts and struggles for survival**

*‘Inventar’ and ‘luchar’*

In the aftermath of the economic collapse, the Cuban people have been forced to survive on their own, breaching the rules and socialist morals to fulfill the needs of subsistence. To make ends meet one is required to *inventar* (invent), using ones creativity, no matter if by doing so one may cross the line of what is considered correct behavior. Even if small-scale private enterprises have been legalized, the government still enforces rules and regulations on private-run businesses, something that makes complete legality a challenge (Barbassa 2005). Entrepreneurial practices, legal or not, may include renting out rooms to foreigners, running a *paladar* (an often illegal restaurant located in private homes), selling foodstuffs and other items from the streets or from the porch of the house, or driving a taxi intended for either Cubans or tourists. Other inventions, which in most cases would be counted as illegal practices by the state, include giving back the wrong amount of money in a
money-transaction, selling plastic bags that are supposed to be for free, selling goods obtained in other countries for a higher price, renting out videos recorded from illegal international TV-channels etc.

Whatever inventions and economic strategies individual Cubans may use to overcome daily challenges, the intention is to make their best effort to keep their lives as comfortable as possible for themselves and the family. This effort can be summed up by the popularly used term *luchar* (struggle) (cf. Pertierra 2009). The term was originally used during the war of independence with Spain and during the revolutionary struggle in Sierra Maestra in the years before 1959 (Roland 2006). However, *luchar* has been transformed into family issues and everyday life; today its meaning is more connected to the struggle for daily survival. As Roland says, it is quite ironic that the term is now used to describe often illegal activities, far from the original usage of fighting for independency and solidarity.

**Out of needs or out of desires?**

*Jinetear* is part of the concept of *inventar*, it is a kind of struggle (*lucha*), a way of finding the means to survive. However, it seems that among Cubans there are different opinions as to whether *jineterismo*-activities are done out of needs or simply out of desires for living a materially more comfortable life with possibilities of entering into places reserved for tourists, and for the possibility of eventually leaving the country. Yaisi, a family member in one of the *casas particulares* where I resided, and my Spanish teacher Katy, can be said to stand for two different views on *gente de la calle*:

Yaisi is a woman in her mid-forties who holds a high position in one of the big tourist hotels in Havana, and is used to see relationships between Cubans and tourists close at hand. In her opinion Cubans get involved with tourists out of economic needs. Thus, they are victims of a malfunctioning system that they are not in control of themselves. Talking to her over a cup of coffee one afternoon, she
warned me that I should be careful with whom I got involved with because Cubans nearly always have an ulterior motive when they establish a relation. She continued by saying that people have lost their moral values, and that it has become increasingly hard to trust people. However, at the same time as warning me about them, she expressed support for those who resort to jineterismo-strategies in order to be able to live a better life. Because in Cuba today it is necessary to think money, it is necessary for survival. In the end Yaisi concluded by saying: _Así somos, pero no somos mala gente_ (we are like that, but we are not bad people), as if she juxtaposed herself to the _jineteros/jineteras_, putting up with the fact that in Cuba all people have needs, not only the ones who live off tourists.

Katy is in her late thirties and a teacher at Universidad de la Habana. She is not married, but has a boyfriend and still lives with her family. Her opinion is slightly different from that of Yaisi. During one of the private Spanish lessons she gave me, we touched upon the topic of _jineterismo_. Her view is that young girls do not prostitute themselves out of the family’s needs, but because they want new material objects for themselves that they are not able to obtain otherwise. On the streets you can spot the ones getting involved with tourists by the type of clothes they are wearing. When I asked her if she meant to say that nobody in Cuba is forced to prostitute themselves for survival, she answered: “Yes, that’s what I mean. I for example do not prostitute myself, but I still survive. Everyone can live on the _libreta_; even if that means that you cannot eat meat every day or go out whenever you want. I am a teacher at the university, but still I have to be careful with the money I spend”.

Katy did not seem to be completely against activities of _jineterismo_, but saw prostitution as a choice that individuals make themselves and not as a result of a faltering system.

Having been through hard periods, the meaning of the words _struggling_ for survival and having _needs_ seems to be pervasive in the Cuban society. This discourse may
make prostitution relatively normalized and accepted. Even if there exist different views, it may not be a question about supporting *jineterismo* or not, but more about where a person is on a scale. Those located on the furthest end of the support side of the scale seem to be the ones who are familiar with seeing relationships between tourists and Cubans close up. Those on the other end of the scale seem to be those with the most prejudices against these relationships. From this observation I suggest that within the zones of *jineterismo* people are generally more supportive, like those who live in Habana Vieja, while people living outside of these zones are generally more skeptical. Stances depend also on to whom or where you express your opinion.

In public, or in what Goffman (1959) would call “frontstage”, it is necessary to put on a mask and perform a play to the outside world (the audience), while “backstage”, in the private sphere, the masks can be taken off. When I was sitting in the kitchen talking to Yaisi about prostitution, and she expressed rather controversial beliefs about the political system, the housekeeper told us to keep our voices down. Since it would be possible for the neighbors to hear the conversation, due to the construction of the house, she wanted to be on the safe side and avoid uttering counter-revolutionary opinions for the “audience” to hear. As being supportive of prostitution may be indirectly the same as saying that the revolutionary project is a failure, it is of vital importance to watch out for potential informers sneaking around in the neighborhood.

Also my Cuban acquaintances that operated within the zones of *jineterismo* seemed to have moral concerns towards activities of *jineterismo*. The term is loaded with negative connotations, something that makes it important for individuals to avoid being classified within the term or, alternatively, to fill the term with more positive associations than negative. According to Venkatesan (2009) it is through doing immoral acts that people especially need to reflect upon their actions, so as to make sense of what they are doing. Based on her fieldwork in Tamilnadu, India, she suggests that people make choices based on personal desires, responsibilities
towards social norms, to one’s family or towards God. The decisions people make become the subject of moral judgments by others, and through the act of gossiping, moral stigmas are reinforced. In the case of jineteros, especially those who define themselves as such or are aware that they are operating within the grey zone of jinetero activities, these aspects become important. By either gossiping about others doing even worse activities than themselves, that is placing themselves on side with the good in a moral landscape, or by turning the meaning of the jinetero term on the head, they attempt to justify their actions. Moreover, it seems to me that for all Cubans, within the zones of jineterismo or not, it is of much importance to define oneself in terms that are connected to being a good person.

**Keeping oneself on the good side**

Studying and working seem to be important elements in order to be defined as a good and decent person in Cuba. For example, when I told Katy I was going out with some university students, her comment was that they were probably buena gente (good people). As a matter of fact there is a law against vagrancy, reinstated in 1990, saying that not working or studying is illegal (Rosendahl 1996:116). Being caught on the street without an identification card telling the details of your profession or of your status as a student could have devastating consequences, especially if you are walking in company with a tourist.

When I met a neighbor in the street for the first time he said, without further ado: “Hey, my name is Gerardo! I have a job, and I work hard every day for me and my family! Do you want to go out with me?” It seemed to be important for him to state that he had a job before asking me out. By assuring me that he was hard-working he indirectly said that he was a good person, meaning that he was not after me for the money; he was not a jinetero. To approach tourists for their money is seen as something essentially bad, even if it happens quite often in locations where interaction between tourists and Cubans take place. The line between a pure
friendship and a friendship with benefits is hard to recognize and the line between
jinetero as the “other” and jinetero as a personal trait potentially characterizing all
Cubans is a blurred one. In theory all Cubans who have regular contact with tourists
may at times find themselves in a situation doing the activity jinetear, but they would
rarely or never define themselves, nor be defined by others, as jineros.

It is important to avoid being defined as a bad person (read: a jinetero) even if one
may cross the line of what is considered correct behavior. When saying that “we
have to think money”, what Yaisi meant was that sometimes it is necessary to cross
that line, but that it does not automatically make you a bad person. Jinerismo has
some inherently bad connotations attached to it, something that makes it necessary to
avoid being labeled with the term. In some cases these connotations may have
similarities to activities “ordinary” Cubans are doing themselves. What about the
inspector working for the local CDR who receives money from his neighbor for not
blabbing to higher authorities that he is illegally renting out rooms to foreigners? Or
what about the waitress employed in a state-run cafeteria always “wrongly”
calculating the checks and putting the rest in her pocket? What about the landlord
selling cigars stolen by a middle-man to his visiting tourists, one of the most
important income generating jinetero activities? These examples are inventions that
are necessary in the everyday struggle in Cuba, and these “immoral” activities
permeate the Cuban society at all levels, no matter what position you have in the
social hierarchy.

Doing illegal activities may have the effect that these “ordinary” Cubans position
themselves as good people by blaming the “street people” for the decay of the moral
values. That is hustlers, jineteros, jineteras, pingueros, transvestites, who are more
easily exposed to the moral police than those doing their activities inside their
homes. It is especially the black man in the street who is the most visible and most
vulnerable to police harassment, even if he is not necessarily engaging in the bad
activities of which he is accused. According to Roland (2006) illegal activities are “racialized”, meaning that the blacks are often accused of contributing to the moral decline. In other arenas and “under a white skin” it may be easier to hide from the watching eye of the police or other actors structuring today’s morals in Cuba.

Relating to a revolutionary morality

‘El hombre nuevo’

Along with the development of a new socialist society came also the concept of hombre nuevo, or “new man” proposed by Ernesto “Che” Guevara (cf. Guevara 1987). Highly influenced by the principles of Marxist-Leninism el hombre nuevo was to be a Cuban citizen fighting for the needs of the socialist society and at the same time undermining his/her individual (capitalist) desires. Good revolutionaries were supposed to be morally pure, hard-working and to sacrifice themselves for the advantage of the Cuban people as a whole, even by offering their own life. In Guevara’s words:

“It is not a matter of how many kilograms of meat one has to eat, nor of how many times a year someone can go to the beach, nor how many pretty things from abroad you might be able to buy with present-day wages. It is a matter of making the individual feel more complete, with much more internal richness and much more responsibility. The individual in our country knows that the glorious period in which he happens to live is one of sacrifice; he is familiar with sacrifice. The first ones came to know it in the Sierra Maestra and wherever they fought; afterward all of Cuba came to know it. Cuba is the vanguard of Latin America and must make sacrifices because it occupies the post of advance guard, because it shows the masses of Latin America the road to full freedom” (Guevara 1987:258).
Cuban people, then, are expected to work for the cause of the revolution by sacrificing themselves in war\(^7\), by doing voluntary work or by making an effort at their workplaces. From a young age, children are taught how to work for the society by doing collective work and attend mass organizations. At the same time the moral language of the revolution is impressed through for instance classes in history and literature, where the success of the revolution is emphasized. Also, Cuban youth are expected to attend official holidays that celebrate the revolution.

For example on the birthday of José Martí\(^8\), thousands of youth march through the streets of Havana with torches in their hands yelling *Viva Fidel! Viva Raúl! Viva el pueblo cubano!* (Long live Fidel! Long live Raúl! Long live the Cuban people!) Cubans, and especially the youth are expected to be present at these celebrations. If not it might lead to social sanctions. As one of my landlords put it; “it’s not like they will shoot you in the head if you don’t attend, but the next day at school they will ask you why you were not there”.

**The moral discourse – emphasizing individual values**

The idea of *el hombre nuevo* might go against those values presented by many of my Cuban acquaintances. According to Berg (2004:49) the development of *jineterismo* in the 1990’s can be seen as a challenge to the values connected with the new man. It shows that working hard for the revolution is difficult to uphold in a country where the youth is in desperate need of dollars. Many young people choose to live according to their own personal desires and economic needs, and de-emphasize the demand by authorities of sacrificing themselves for the Cuban nation. *Jineterismo* is thus, for many, taken as a proof of the moral crisis of the socialist nation.

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\(^7\) For example, thousands of Cubans were sent to give military and humanitarian aid in the Angolan Civil War from 1975-1988.

\(^8\) José Martí is Cuba’s most famous poet and politician, who had an enormous influence on Cuban politics and philosophy throughout the 20th century. His ideas of independence have formed an essential part of the core principles of the revolution. He died in the war of independence against Spain in 1895.
Pertierra (2009) discusses how Cubans implement revolutionary discourses, like the discourse of *luchar*, into their daily lives and use it for describing their individual struggles. Even if not supporting the system, they incorporate the language of the revolution into the way they speak. Following Pertierra it could be said that through struggling on the streets *jineteros* are making their own life trajectories. Working as a *jinetero* does not necessarily mean that one is against the socialist system; it is not necessarily a culture of resistance in the sense that they do their activities intentionally to challenge the existing rules and values (Elinson 1999). In any case it may be reasonable to think of their economic strategies as driven by individual desires as opposed to existing socialist values of working hard for the benefit of the society as a whole. They are thus creating their own moral discourse (cf. Gregory 2009), where “bad” values, according to the ethical discourse, are turned into “good” values. Hence, they are justifying their actions by turning the meaning of them in the socialist society to their own advantage. But while emphasizing a moral discourse, they will at the same time have to relate to the ethical discourse as forming part of their social reality. They are born and raised into the celebration of the revolution, and the majority of them seem to be proud of their country and their Cuban identity. Nevertheless, they have desires that do not always coincide with the values postulated by the socialist state. Through moral reasoning, however, they attempt to make sense of their actions, within the contradictions of emerging personal desires and socialist demands.

**Desires for freedom**

My acquaintances often talked about their lack of freedom as a reason for wanting to leave Cuba. The types of freedom desired can be divided in three, although these are by no means mutually exclusive: 1) the freedom of physical mobility, 2) the freedom of speech, and 3) the freedom of economic choice. In addition to these three types there is a fourth that will be discussed in further detail in chapter five; the sexual freedom, perhaps the only freedom of which they are not short.
One afternoon I was sitting in Parque Central with a group of rasta *jineteros*. We had opened a bottle of red wine, made in the Soroa district, which we poured into a small plastic cup that we shared among ourselves. While discussing the tastes of various kinds of wine grapes Josiel bursts out: “Cuba is so nice when the police are not around!” We had been sitting on the same bench in the shadow for about two hours without being bothered by the police asking for *el carné* (identification card). What Josiel was expressing was relief. He said that for a while he almost forgot how bothersome the police can be, never leaving any of them in peace. And if it was not for the police, Cuba would have been the best country to live in. The police always bother people, and restrict their freedom and mobility, only *por gusto* (for nothing).

Later that afternoon I observed Juanca in Parque Central walking in circles around the park, back and forth, never sitting down to rest. When he walked past me I asked him what he was up to and he answered that he could not stop walking. The police were after him and if he sat down they would take him to the police station.

For many Cubans the presence of the police is a constant threat. Potentially there can be undercover police or spies anywhere you go, contributing to a feeling of continuous surveillance. However, the most visible type of surveillance is the one taking place in the streets; the police restricting the physical mobility of the inhabitants, especially when in company of a tourist. People told me that the military tactics of Raúl, which in practice means more police in the streets, are aimed at punishing as many people as possible for the purpose of finding the few that do illegal acts towards tourists. This restriction is especially felt by the black part of the population, living in concentrated tourist areas like Habana Vieja, even when walking alone in their own neighborhood. It is particularly those resorting to the rasta style and the rastafari lifestyle that are stigmatized in the Cuban society (Hansing 2006), and very often the rasta style is linked to a *jinetero* identity. During my fieldwork I was stopped by the police many times in company with my afro-Cuban and rasta acquaintances, but never when in company with my white Cuban
acquaintances. According to Berg (2005) white Cubans are more easily able to pass as non-Cubans, and thus assume an identity as white Europeans. Likewise, Roland (2006) suggests that the increment of tourists entering the country has led to a “blackening” of the Cuban nation. What this means is that the tourists, mainly from the European and North-American countries, have come to be seen as “white” in relation to the “black” Cuban population.

The lack of freedom of physical mobility is connected to the lack of freedom of speech. Almost daily, I heard people expressing frustration towards the threats of the police. Yet to avoid being put in prison they cannot openly criticize the way they are treated, but have to obey whatever the police officer commands, even if it is only por gusto. According to an academic I met at Instituto Cubano de Antropología, you can criticize almost as much as you wish as long as you have well-founded arguments. The critiques just have to be wrapped into a good argument to be accepted. However, unless you are connected to a university or to an organization where discussions and social critiques run relatively freely among the members, there is little room for public critique and discussions. This excludes most of my Cuban (non-academic) acquaintances from the official debate.

For others, however, it is not only freedom of speech or police harassment that lead them to seek ways to live a better life or to leave the country, but also the freedom of earning and spending money as they wish. Since an average Cuban working at a state-based workplace earns too little for a living, many have little motivation for work in the long run. They prefer earning their money en la calle (in the street), by doing illegal business and hooking up with tourists.

Material articles, such as mobile phones and IPods, function as major status objects for many Cubans. By staying with tourists my acquaintances in Habana Vieja may receive such luxury items. Repeatedly I observed them asking their girlfriends if they could take possession of their mobile phones, and I got the question quite a few times
myself, for that matter. For some of my friends, brand clothes were considered important for living a better life. I met people with clothes more exclusive than mine, but when I visited them in their homes, I learnt that they barely had food to feed the whole family. The clothes they had obtained were given to them as gifts from overseas amigas (female friends), and were never purchased by themselves. One friend told me with stars in his eyes: “When I leave Cuba I am going to buy tons of shoes that I can pick and choose from every day”. The most important rationale for his wish to leave Cuba was to be able to manage his own money and buy his own shoes and clothes, and thus not be dependent on having to receive clothes as gifts. Much like Friedman’s (1990) Les Sapeurs, clothes are significant markers of status in the Cuban context. The Congolese Les Sapeurs spent all the money they had on expensive men’s wear on trips to Paris to enhance their social rankings in Congo. However, this was not merely a conscious strategy to manipulate the power structure; wearing these clothes also increased their prestige by linking their personality to outward appearance (Friedman 1990). In a similar manner, dressing in clothes connected to a “western” identity might have increased the feeling of moving into the tourist/western spheres for my acquaintances. In the case of the jineteros it might in addition be a strategy for looking attractive in the eyes of the tourists. But although the desire for wearing brand clothes is worthy of notice, it is not a general trend among all. Carlitos, who is a rasta, does not care about exclusive clothes; he prefers using comfortable clothing, something which he also connects to his identity as a rasta with a laidback lifestyle. Even if he could potentially receive expensive clothing from his handful of foreign girlfriends, he preferred to be comfortable rather than having brand clothes like Levis and Dolce & Gabbana.

**Mobility – moving between spheres**

*The tourist bus is better than the ‘guagua’*

On a rare warm and sunny day in the middle of January I went to the beach, just a short drive outside the center of Havana, with a peer student. Trying to spend as
little money as possible we took the local *guagua* (bus), which cost 40 *centavos* (equivalent 0.02 U.S. dollars) each way. Not surprisingly we got into a conversation with two young Cuban boys, Pillín and Camilo, doing their best effort to charm us by sitting on their sun beds playing the guitar and Cuban bongo drums, while offering us sips from a one liter bottle of Habana Club rum mixed into soft drink cans. My first thought was that these guys had to be relatively rich, having money to pay for the chairs (normally only used by tourists) and expensive alcohol and soft drinks. When we were about to leave the beach asking our new Cuban friends if they were going home with the *guagua* as well, they waved us off saying that they already had the ticket for the tourist bus (five dollars back and forth). While we tried to lower the costs as much as possible, it seemed that our friends tried to do the exact opposite.

Knowing them for a longer period I realized that the money they spent this day on the beach was all the money they had. They had been extra fortunate the night before when playing a concert at the local club, getting twenty dollars in tip from a Spanish tourist. This is the typical economic logic of many of my Cuban acquaintances. It seems that it is more important to live in the moment and to live “as if” they have money. There is no such thing as savings; having money means spending money.

Camilo later expressed that he never goes to the beach unless he has money to take the tourist bus. Never again will he wait endless hours for the *guagua*, being bitten by mosquitoes while watching over-crowded busses driving past him. At first I thought about the ridiculousness of his statement, after all it is not so bad to take the local bus, but at second thought I realized that it does make sense. Doing what the tourists do and spending all the money you have, means stretching the limits for what you are actually able to do. It tells something about the importance of being mobile; having the option of moving into the tourist sphere.
The continuation of the tourist apartheid

When Fidel Castro’s brother Raúl came to power in spring 2007, the Cuban people experienced a few political changes when he opened up hotels and beaches that had formerly been reserved for tourists. This means that in theory Cubans can enter anywhere they want as long as they have the money. But this is exactly the core of the matter. Unless you are fortunate enough to have relatives abroad sending remittances, have a successful business renting out rooms to tourists or are doing other dollar generating activities, you are left out of the tourist sphere.

Even if it is not illegal, it is still problematical for some Cubans to travel around the island, as their presence in other parts of the country might make the local inhabitants suspicious. During the fieldwork I experienced two of my Cuban acquaintances being arbitrarily imprisoned for longer periods when visiting other parts of the country. One of them was locked up when travelling with his girlfriend in Baracoa, located in the easternmost province of Guantánamo. The rationale for the imprisonment was that he had been registered with three different “girlfriends” in casas particulares during a short period of time. Although the court could not prove his motive for sharing a room with these girls, they accused him of being a prostitute and asked him “why don’t you date una cubana instead?” They gave him a one year and nine months sentence. After this incident, people told me that going to the provinces in company with a tourist, especially to Baracoa, is like walking into the lion’s cage. Often the local authorities practice a stricter communist policy, and people in general seem to be more in accordance with revolutionary principles, which can be seen from the increasing amount of political slogans on banners driving out from Havana and into the provinces. Also people from Havana might be seen as “matter out of place” (cf. Douglas 2002) when travelling into spheres where they are not supposed to be. This suspiciousness might be related to the fact that settling down in other provinces is illegal. Life in the provinces is often harder than in the Havana, and many wish to migrate to the city, although they may experience being
marginalized once settled in the capital (Rodríguez Ruiz et al. 2004). Seeing people from Havana doing activities they consider immoral, perhaps also with a tiny bit of jealousy, might increase the likelihood of blabbing to the authorities. For that reason many habaneros choose to stick around in Havana, where it seems to be safer concerning arbitrary imprisonments. Nevertheless, one can never be completely secure. There is always a risk at stake when staying with tourists, thus it is important to be able to know the codes of the street, to avoid being taken into custody.

Ahmed (2000, sited in Ånestad 2003) suggests that the mobility of one group of people adds to the immobility of the other. While seeing tourists coming and leaving, being able to enter anywhere they want and travel around the country without being subject to surveillance, Cubans must put up with the authorities controlling every single movement. Even if Raúl has made mobility into the tourist spheres a little easier, what Eckstein (1993) calls the tourist apartheid continues to a certain degree to exist.

**Mobility within a concrete and a moral landscape**

Mobility should be understood as taking place in both a concrete and a moral landscape. At the same time as restricting the movements of the Cuban population through laws and regulations, “street people” are also subject to further restrictions based on moral judgment. In the concrete landscape people’s movements are controlled through, for instance, police control, which was most prevalent in the daily lives of my acquaintances. While mobility within the concrete landscape is regulated through the rules structuring the concrete act of the police officers, the moral landscape is shaped through abstract ideas of particular people as morally inferior. As I will discuss in the next chapter, the “bad” jineteros are subject to both social and physical exclusion due to their place on the lower level of the moral landscape. Mobility can also be restricted for people with a certain type of physical
appearance; that is black skin and/or long dreads, physical traits that are connected with delinquency and anti-social behavior.

**Concluding remarks**

The main objective of this chapter has been to show how the phenomenon of *jineterismo* can be seen to permeate the Cuban society at all levels, in the sense that almost all Cubans must engage in informal activities. The daily struggles for survival, along with a continuous feeling of surveillance, are elements that structure the lives of most Cubans. Therefore, activities of *jineterismo*, as strategies for making a living, are to a certain degree normalized and accepted. At the same time, however, *jineteros*, and other tourist seekers, may stand as symbols of the social change, of the decline of moral values in today’s Cuba.

In the next two chapters I will proceed with a deep dive into the life within the zones of *jineterismo*. Chapter three focuses on how the men divide themselves into groups of good and bad people, and how being a *jinetero* is a little attractive label. In chapter four I will discuss how being a *jinetero* is at the same time something to be proud of, if you are lucky enough to be considered a successful *jinetero*.
Chapter 3: The zones of jineterismo from within - drawing the boundary between “good” and “bad”

Glimpses into the zones of jineterismo

A night out at La Bucanero…

…It is Friday night around 10pm when the taxi driver drops me off by the stairs leading up to the entrance of La Bucanero. I first bump into Yotuel who sits as usual on the steps chatting with his friends and looking out for tourists walking by. He says that he prefers to stay outside, breathing the fresh air coming from the ocean nearby; to enter the club is not his style, and besides there is no money to gain by staying inside having fun ‘por gusto’.

As I walk through the entrance I am hit by the reggaeton rhythms of the group ‘Gente de Zona’ who are belting out their frustration for Cuban policies: “…que ya está demostrado, que yo soy el animal…”\(^9\). Today La Bucanero is a hotchpotch of everything from a middle aged European man in company with his ‘jinetera’ or holiday girlfriend, a group of young female tourists dressed up for party and surrounded by a group of Cuban men flirting their way to a drink or two, and a couple of elderly women out dancing with what look like their dancing teachers, or could it be their boyfriends?

Through the crowd I see two of my friends sitting by a table with a couple of foreign girls I have not met before. Ramiro introduces one of the girls to me as his ‘novia’ (girlfriend). I can see by the intimate cuddling that she has been here before, and she has now come back to catch up with her ‘cubanito’. Luckily for her, and for Ramiro, his other girlfriend from Denmark already left for her home country two days ago. Elmer, on the other hand, has seen his chance to hit on her friend who seems to be genuinely charmed by his pick-up lines. When the live

\(^9\) The song makes fun of the fact that the penalty for killing cows in Cuba is higher than for killing a human being.
band starts playing a song by Buena Vista Social Club… “…en el cuarto de Tula, se cayó candela…”¹⁰, Elmer pushes her out on the dance floor and shows her his salsa moves.

When I am about to order ‘una cristal’ (Cuban national beer) in the bar, Carlitos, one of the men flirting with the group of foreign women, comes up to me and whispers: “Mary, it’s a bad day for business!” Shrugging my shoulders I reply: “Well, I see you are surrounded by beautiful women, so what’s your problem?” Jokingly, but with a touch of seriousness he then says: “But they are students. I hate students. They don’t have any money!”

The next moment Emilio comes up to my other side and asks: “What are you talking to that guy for? What does he want?” Then he takes his arm around my shoulder and leads me away from the bar and over to his table.

I am happy to see the face of my friend Pillín entering La Bucanero. He always comes when the club is about to close, when he knows that the live band will allow him to join in. He mainly comes here to play music and hang out with his friends. Pillín is already married to a foreign woman and is killing some time playing music and dancing salsa while he is waiting for his residence permit. He does two ‘vueltas’¹¹ with me on the dance floor before he joins my other friend, Pepe, and his band in the last live performance for the night.

When the club is about to close people gather on the outside to decide where to continue the party; at Malecon or in Parque Central. In Parque Central there is more police control, but on windy days it is more comfortable there than at Malecon. I end up going the same way as Ramiro, Elmer, Emilio, Pillín and Pepe, although I am thinking that I should have gone with Carlitos and his people, or maybe with Yotuel, because they are the “real” jineteros. Or are they?

Dollars are gathered to buy a bottle of rum; the tourists present put in a dollar or two, enough for surviving another night out. Most of these guys drink every day. When they drink they

¹⁰ Buena Vista Social Club is the band that made Cuban traditional music popularly known internationally.

¹¹ The Cuban “casino” (salsa) is famous for its many vueltas (turns).
are happy. On the Malecon promenade at night they are happy. They mingle with tourists and the tourists are delighted by their new exotic friends and boyfriends, by their musical talents, the joy, the tropical heat and the wash of the waves in the night-time. As one friend put it: “This is what we do. Exactly this. Staying here with our friends, getting drunk, singing, dancing. This is our life. ‘No hay más nada’ (there is nothing else)”

‘Jineteros’ versus ‘jineteras’

The jineterismo term is, in the literature, most often linked to jineteras; women who get involved sexually with male tourists in return for cash or some extra luxury like staying in hotels and entering the best restaurants and discotheques. The jineteras are often presented as prostitutes as opposed to men who are mainly presented as hustlers. Couceiro Rodríguez¹² (2009) explains how women who buy sex are not recognized as buyers, hence Cuban men are not as easily defined as prostitutes as women. The fact, he says, is that historically there have always been male heterosexual prostitutes and there still are in Havana, as well as lesbian and gay prostitutes.

The jinetero term is often more widely defined, involving activities such as finding a paladar¹³ for tourists in the street, selling Cuban cigars obtained illegally through contacts working in the factories, working as a type of pimp finding jineteras for male tourists and sharing her salary, or simply earning comisión¹⁴ by taking tourists to bars or clubs. In the literature, and particularly in tourist guides, the jineteros are represented as the bad guys; the men who rob you or fool you in some way or

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¹² According to the Cuban anthropologist, Couceiro Rodríguez, it took ten years to publish this book as he writes mainly about urban social problems, like prostitution and the problems of housing, themes that are not supposed to be spoken about in the Cuban public. However, as mentioned, it is easier to criticize within the frames of academia than outside official spheres.

¹³ A privately owned, often illegal, restaurant located in private homes.

¹⁴ For each drink (not beer) the tourist pay, the jinetero earn a certain amount by adding a couple of dollars to the actual price of the drink. After the job is done they collect the money from the waiter/waitress.
another for the advantage of getting some extra money. While experiences with these types of men on the streets of Havana are highly prevalent, the definitions of *jineteros* described in this literature do not cover all the layers of meanings of the term.

One of my acquaintances once told me that he preferred to call himself a *gigolo* or a prostitute because of the fact that he is selling his body to his foreign customers and not doing any of the other *jinero* activities. The *jineros*, he said, are the ones who sell tobacco and work as types of tourist guides. Most of all, however, I find that the term is used in a wide sense, also including activities of getting involved sexually with foreign girls, whether they define it as prostitution or not. My male acquaintances of Habana Vieja all had relationships with foreign women; some defined themselves as *jineteros* and some tried to distance themselves from that definition.

**Habana Vieja – a heterosexual and male-dominated zone of ‘jineterismo’**

Situated in the heart of Habana Vieja, *La Bucanero* is a place where men looking for female tourists gather, some on the inside and others on the steps and in the street outside. Due to the free entrance, live music and dance possibilities the club is an attractive place for tourists, and for Cubans searching for tourists. It is also a convenient place to meet friends and kill some time, like my friend Pillín, intentionally searching for tourists or not.

Habana Vieja is a clearly defined zone for heterosexual relationships between tourists and Cubans. The *pingueros*, on the other hand, operate further along Malecon in the crossroad of La Rampa (for literature on *pingueros* see Allen 2007; Forrest 2002; Hodge 2005). On this corner lots of people get together, especially in the hot summer months, to hang out with their friends, play music or search for a partner.

The *jineteras* operate at the tourist hotels, or about anywhere where male tourists go out. Women looking for tourists are less visible than men in the streets of Havana.
Based on what I have heard from Cubans and tourists who have travelled to Cuba at an earlier point in time, *jineteras* were more visible in the streets before than at the time of my fieldwork. People hold that the reason for this is the increase in police controls and a higher risk of being imprisoned. If a woman is observed alone in the street, especially when dressed up for party, it could be reason enough for a police officer to harass her or take her into custody (cf. Berg 2005). Some *jineteras* work independently while others depend on a *chulo* (pimp) to find customers. *Jineteras*, both the dependent and the independent ones, most often go to expensive discotheques to find their customers. Those who rely on a *chulo* normally enter for free to these places because their boss makes a deal with the doorman. Moreover, male tourists will in Habana Vieja most likely be approached by the *chulo*, and not the *jinetera* herself. The most visible tourist seekers of Habana Vieja are therefore the heterosexual *jineros*. They are often to be found in groups, in parks like Parque Central, along the streets of Prado, Malecon or Obispo or in clubs and discotheques at night.

*The classic ‘jinetero’, the Rasta, the seducer and the prostitute*

Some people living outside the zones of *jineterismo* may define all men regularly involving themselves with tourists as *jineteros*. Seen up close the term is much more multifaceted. It is a loosely defined category, and it is problematic to define a person as being either/or. What I find most interesting is how the different men relate to the term, and how they use the term for defining themselves and others within the moral landscape.

For analytical purposes I suggest that the different types of men in search of tourists, who operate within the zones of *jineterismo*, can be divided into four stereotypical characters. I find these relevant for understanding how the men distinguish between themselves and define one another, or how they interact with or attract tourists. The categories are overlapping, however, and should not be seen as mutually exclusive.
First there is the classic *jinetero* that travel guides, such as Lonely Planet, warns you about; the friendly and charming man who introduces you to your first Mojito on your arrival day. After having spent a nice time thinking that you have got a new Cuban friend, you realize that you paid double price for the drinks in a bar he told you was the cheapest in Havana. This type of *jinetero* do not necessarily get sexually involved with tourists, but he takes them to places, whether it is to bars, restaurants or houses for rent, and later expects a *comisión* from the owners in return for bringing the customers. Many of my acquaintances, who defined themselves as professional *jineteros*, occasionally did this kind of work in addition to having sexual relations to foreign tourists. Secondly we have the *Rasta*; the laidback, exotic looking guy with dreadlocks who is more than willing to introduce you to the off-the-beaten-track tourism. He may show you around town, introduce you to his friends, and take you to reggae concerts where no charter-tourists would ever set foot. Not all rastas are *jineteros*, but a large quantity of those growing their locks do so among other things to attract tourists and not necessarily for religious purposes (Hansing 2006). The third type is the *seducer*; the man who looks you deep in the eyes while singing and playing on his guitar, and afterwards teaches you his sensual salsa moves. He is so charming and nice so that in the end you cannot help falling in love with him. Besides, he never asks you for anything so it never occurs to you that he might be operating as a type of *jinetero*. Thus you gladly pay for his meals when you are out eating together. The fourth type is the *prostitute*; the man who gets sexually involved with women for the purpose of getting some extra and fast cash. Often he will say straight out what his job is and what he wants, and you pay him for the time you spend together with him. The prostitute term is far from static, but is often used by the men when they enter into relationships or have sporadic sex with women that they are not attracted to sexually.

All these types can potentially, although not necessarily, be classified as *jineteros*. Being classified as a *jinetero* or not depends on what purposes one enters into
relationships with foreign women, how long the relationships last, how often one
switches partner and perhaps most importantly to what group of people one
belongs.

Some of the men take the *jinetero* status as an essential part of their personality or as
their kind of profession. Their job, occasionally in addition to an official job, is
working with tourists and earning money by keeping them company. They may be
classified within any of the abovementioned types of *jineteros*. A typical income
generating activity is to bring foreigners to bars, thus working as a *classic jinetero*.
Quite a few resort to the rastafari style and many use strategies of seduction for
going in touch with female tourists. Some of them get involved with *mujeres viejas y
gordas* (old and fat women) because they are reputed to be well off and are willing to
pay more. In these cases they may define themselves as *prostitutes*. Others get
involved with women they like, but can still define themselves and/or be defined by
others as *jineteros* because they expect the women to pay for them and seek an
opportunity to eventually leave the country. Most of these men are aware that people
identify them as *jineteros*, but may not wish to be associated with the term. As one
rasta *jinetero* told me: “I know that you have seen me with lots of tourists and that
you see me as a *jinetero*. But essentially I am not. I am simply a *buscador de la vida* (life
seeker)”.

Then there are the men who have relationships with foreign women without
claiming identity as *jineteros*. They do not do the work of the *classic jinetero*, nor do
they ask for anything and claim not to expect anything from their foreign women.
They seek rather to keep distance from activities that are easily associated with
*jineterismo*. These men simply have relationships with foreign women because they
happen to meet them at their workplaces or the places where they hang out with
their friends. They may be musicians playing in clubs for tourists and consequently
hang more around female tourists than Cuban women. Some of these men claim not
to be searching for the tourists themselves; rather, they say, the girls are searching for them. Attracting the tourists intentionally or not, I would say that some of them use the strategies of the seducer, making the girls interested by showing off their musical talents or salsa moves. In any case all these men will have to relate to the jinetero term when hanging out in an environment where it is hard to define who is a jinetero and who is not. Because there is no clear boundary between men who work as jineros and men who claim to have relationships with tourists “by accident”. The jinetero term is therefore fluid, and depends on a great deal of factors. There exists a vast grey zone where people are crossing the boundaries to what can be described as jineterismo activities, negotiating their status as jinetero or not, and their status as either bueno (good) or malo (bad).

‘Todos somos jineros’

One day when walking with Manolón through Parque Central, a popular place for jineros to hang out, I asked my friend whether he could spot who was a jinetero and not. The answer he gave me was: Todos somos jineros, pero los hay buenos y los hay malos (We [Cubans] are all jineros, but there are the good ones and there are the bad ones).

My friend was a self-proclaimed good jinetero at the same time as he talked about the others as jineros and himself as a regular Cuban who just happened to have relationships with foreign women. Calling oneself a good jinetero might be a way to deal with the contradiction of not being a jinetero at the same time as seeing oneself approaching tourists in similar ways as the professional jineros. As a matter of fact, the word “bad” is implicitly attached to the jinetero term. Throughout the fieldwork I learnt that calling someone a jinetero can be taken as a great offense. One of the first days I talked with Yotuel, and he admitted to me that he defined himself as a jinetero, I asked Fernando sitting next to us if he was a jinetero too. He looked a bit uncomfortable, and did not give me a clear answer to the question. The day after he
came up to me, took me aside, and asked: “Do you think I am bad?” I answered: “How would I know? I don’t even know you”. But to Fernando it was not relevant whether I knew him or not; it was about being labeled a jinetero in the worst meaning of it. I believe he thought I had already placed him in the jinetero category, and hence thought of him as a bad person.

Given the inherently bad connotation attached to the term, positioning oneself as a good jinetero might put ones involvements with tourists in a better light. Those who do not define themselves as jineteros are aware that they operate within the grey zones of jineterismo. They are aware that they might be mistaken for a “real” jinetero. But by dividing the term in two, the essentially bad connotations connected to the term become modified.

Certainly there is no clear-cut boundary between a good and a bad jinetero, and there are different explanations as to what defines each of them. Some would say a good jinetero is the one who does not ask the tourist directly. Those who did not define themselves as jineteros often complained about the unpleasant behavior of the bad jineteros who constantly bothered the tourists with questions about money or other goods. Nevertheless, the good jineteros did accept whatever gifts they were given by the tourist, and might as well have expected the tourists to give them gifts.

The meanings of good and bad can also be associated with the term engañar (cheat). The bad jineteros are the ones who fool tourists, lie about their life situations, or pretend that they are in love with the tourist when in reality they are only after her money. When I discussed the term with Juanca he said: trabajar es engañar (to work is to cheat). What he meant by that was that when working with a female tourist he is not being honest about whom he is, thus he is cheating her. But when he was with Claudia, a girl from Canada, she was totally aware of his work as a jinetero. So even if she spent 30-40 dollars on him every day, it was not work. Engañar then, is when the tourists are ignorant of the game they are a part of. Emilio told me once that lying
about who you are or stealing from the tourists is *engaño*, while taking the tourists to bars, restaurants or houses for rent, make them pay more than the actual price and take the rest for themselves, is not *engaño*. In Cuba these things seem to be normalized.

For example, I was ripped off the first day in Havana when I went out from the hotel I stayed at to take a look around the neighborhood. My pale skin and my confused, curious and excited expressions must have revealed my recent arrival hundreds of meters away. After walking only one block I was approached by two Cubans, a man and a woman that he presented as his *prima* (cousin). The man said the typical phrases: “Hey lady, where are you from? Have you tasted your first Mojito yet”? As I already knew the tactics of Cubans bringing tourists to bars and making them pay for all the drinks, I knew what was going to come about. Even so, I let it happen since after all it was my first day in Havana, and I was eager to get to know some people. What I did not know was that they took me to the bar not only to have a free drink and “spend a good time” with me, but that they also wanted my money. I did not realize it at first, but later I found out that it was a student’s bar that only took *pesos cubanos*, so the drinks were far cheaper than what they made me pay. Obviously the couple had some kind of deal with the waitress, and when I had disappeared around the corner they probably went to collect their share of the money. In the aftermath I felt like a complete fool, having been cheated like that right before my eyes.

However, in Cuba this kind of work is not considered *engaño*. It is merely a job that all Cubans can potentially do in some way or another without being considered bad people. For instance, families who rent out rooms to foreigners will most likely send the tourists to another house if they do not have room for the night. For that they will receive about five dollars per night in *comisión*, but talking about cheating the tourists is in these cases completely irrelevant.
Lastly what defines a good or a bad *jinetero* also has to do with appearance. A black rasta with long dreadlocks will more easily be identified as a *jinetero* than a white man with straight or no hair. As will be discussed in chapter six the barrio in which one lives is also an important denominator for how one is identified. The neighborhoods of Habana Vieja and Centro Habana have the reputation of being inhabited by people with bad manners (Fernandez 2010), and the police control here is higher than in other parts of the city. The worst *jinetero* then, is the black rasta living in these barrios. They are considered bad, both by the police, by the general population and within the groups of those who get involved with foreign tourists. Hence, they are the most stigmatized of them all.

**Rastafari in Cuba and the story of one Rasta ‘jinetero’**

In Hansing’s monography *Rasta, Race and Revolution – The Emergence and Development of the Rastafari Movement in Socialist Cuba* (2006), she explains how the Rastafari movement in Cuba has come to be interpreted in a variety of ways. The first signs of Rastafari cultural elements emerged in the 1970’s. However, as there has been a limited flow of information about the Rastafari movement, as well as language barriers and lack of organization and leadership among the Cuban Rastas, people have been able to select the aspects of Rastafari that appeal most to their lifestyle. Hansing divides between Rasta as religion, Rasta as philosophy, Rasta as style and Rasta *jineteros*. Some Cubans have taken up the core principles of the Rastafari movement and live their lives according to beliefs of the Rasta religion, like worshiping “the second messiah”, Haile Selassie, being vegetarian and following strictly defined gender roles. Rasta as philosophy mainly applies to youth with a rough background, who have grown up on the streets, have been in and out of prison and have distrust in the system. What they believe in is Rastafari’s message of equality, liberty and justice for all. The Rasta style refers to Rasta as fashion and to an image of Rastafari “as a free and easy, fun in the sun, marijuana smoking counter-culture, as well as the all-natural, free and mystical Rastaman, most iconically and
mythically represented through Bob Marley” (Hansing 2006:171). Lastly, there is the Rasta *jinetero* who has converted the Rasta style into business, using it as a strategy for attracting tourists. Although my Rasta acquaintances were primarily adopting the latter type, Rasta *jinetero*, they also resorted to Rasta as philosophy and Rasta as style. This means they believed in equality and justice and were generally distrustful to the Cuban system, as well as dressing in a certain type of imported Rasta clothing often decorated with the colors of the Ethiopian flag. They grew their locks, smoked marijuana, listened to reggae music and often had Bob Marley as an idol.

The Rasta style has not been enthusiastically received by the Cuban authorities. The long dreadlocks and strange clothing do not fit in with the concept of a good revolutionary (Hansing 2006). The Rasta style is connected with delinquency, anti-social behavior and laziness. According to Hansing long hair does not coincide with the idea of *el hombre nuevo* because a good revolutionary should be bald. In contemporary Cuba what is seen as beautiful is a bald man without beard, consequently the Rastas stand in opposition to Cuba’s beauty ideal. Some of my Rasta acquaintances told me they had problems getting Cuban girls to like them because of their long hair. For them it was easier to date foreign women who are believed to be attracted to this type of men. In the eyes of the female tourists they are exotic and good-looking.

Yonnatan, a Rasta *jinetero* I came to know, has been working in the streets of Havana for five years and does not seem to have any problems finding beautiful foreign women willing to date him. He wants to move out of Cuba because, as he says: “There’s nothing for me in this country. I am only waiting for the right woman to get me out of here”. When Yonnatan leaves the country, he will never return, and he does not even care if he loses his Cuban citizenship. But he wants to find a girl he likes since he knows that once settled abroad the new reality will be staying with the woman he married.
When Yonnatan came to Havana five years ago he did not have a place to stay. Since settling down in other provinces without a valid excuse is illegal, one is dependent on relatives or friends to offer shelter. If you are not lucky enough to have any friends or family in Havana you will have to rent an apartment illegally, for a price I was told stretched from 50-90 dollars per month. Without legal residence in Havana one does not have the right to housing or the rationing booklet, something that severely complicates the living conditions. Resorting to a jinetero lifestyle is one way of overcoming these difficulties.

Yonnatan grew up in Holguin, in the eastern part of the country, but because of economic hardship he decided to move to Havana. He knew that in Havana there would be more dollars circulating and more opportunities for him. Also, as a Rasta, he said, it feels better to be able to move about rather than to be stuck in one place for the rest of one’s life. He wants to live up to his Rasta principles, meaning that he wants to be a free man, have a relaxed attitude towards life and smoke his marijuana whenever he wants. But in Cuba these things are hard to accomplish due to the restrictions the authorities put on them. Quite a few of my Rasta acquaintances expressed frustration towards these restrictions, claiming that in Cuba they could not fully live out their Rasta identity.

Since Yonnatan does not have a permanent residence permit for Havana, he has to pay some contacts to issue temporary permits for him. It is only possible to have a temporary permit for a certain period of time, which means that in some periods he lives illegally in Havana. This has caused him to be deported home to Holguin four times during his time in the capital. Because of his looks he is also more likely to be subject to police harassment, although he pays the police officers a dollar here and a dollar there to avoid them bothering him. Luckily for the jineteros, the police officers also have needs; as a matter of fact most policemen come from the provinces themselves to be able to live a better life in the capital, as the salary is relatively high.
compared to other professions and the living conditions in the city are generally higher. Even so, Yonnatan does not feel completely safe concerning police harassment and arbitrary imprisonment. He is in a fragile position as a *jinetero*, as he does not have a permanent residence and does not have job in a legal sense. What adds to this is that he is both black *and* a Rasta.

Yonnatan was aware that he was hanging out with a group of bad guys, consisting of both Rastas and non-Rastas, but still he did not consider himself bad. He was only trying to make a living, or in his own words *sobrevivir* (survive), by working the streets of Havana. In his opinion it was not his choice; it was the state structure that forced him to live like he did. Even if he knows that people look at him as a *jinetero*, he does not feel like that himself because he is not a bad person.

What makes some people bad and some people good? The following example shows how being “good” could be more connected to the belonging of a group of good people than to actual behavior.

**Who’s the bad guy? - Negotiating the *jinetero* status**

‘*What are you doing here with these bad people?’*

One night I was sitting outside La Bucanero with a group of *jineteros* who seemed to have some kind of get-together for sharing experiences and advising each other about what to do when they interact with tourists. Juanca, one of the most experienced of the *jineteros*, was upset because a young boy who was new in the game had obviously done something wrong. Juanca shouted: “*Asere*¹⁵, you have to take her hand when the police come!” The others nodded in the affirmative. To them it was obvious that when holding the girl’s hand it is less likely that the police stop them on the street asking for el carné. The boy was clearly ashamed, but listened

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¹⁵ Asere is a frequently used “pet name” used among Cuban men. The word comes from Yoruba and its original meaning is “little monkey”.

45
attentively and respectfully to the guys that had spent years on the streets living off tourists.

The next moment Ñico, a musician in his early twenties, arrived with his almost twenty year older Austrian girlfriend, Miranda. He greeted me in a typical Cuban way, kissing me on the cheek: *Qué bolá?* (What’s up?) And then he added: “Hey, what are you doing here with these bad people?” He said it loud so that everyone could hear it, without being afraid that the other men might get offended. He asked me who was inside and I told him that I just arrived. He then advised me to come inside as soon as possible. Ñico greeted the other men, shaking their hands saying: *Qué bolá qué bolá qué bolá,* before he took his girlfriend’s arm and entered the club. The *jineteros* and I stayed outside. The fee of entering *La Bucanero* is to bring a tourist. Most of these guys were not permitted entrance to the club unless they brought a foreigner or two.

Ñico could enter *La Bucanero* whenever he wanted, with or without a foreign girlfriend. According to my friends, and by the way the club’s staff treated him as a normal customer, Ñico was not a *jinetero*. Even if certain people were skeptical to his relationship with Miranda, they treated him with respect and always tried to justify his actions by telling me that he was in a difficult and desperate situation.

Ñico was probably aware that he was crossing some boundaries, even if he was trying to convince his friends, and perhaps also himself, that he was staying with her because he liked her. But his feelings for her were likely to be colored by the fact that loving this woman also meant living a materially better life and to have an opportunity to eventually escape the country. Having a relationship to *una vieja* (an elderly woman) makes it harder to avoid the *jinetero* label. I believe that to distance himself from that stigma, Ñico tried to define himself as a good guy, even if he might have engaged in activities that are closely related to what would be defined as “bad” activities. To be able to put yourself in a position as *una buena persona* (a good person)
there must exist the opposite; *la mala persona* (the bad person). Even if his statement was meant as a type of joke, I believe that there was also an underlying seriousness in telling me to stay away from the bad people and at the same time positioning himself as a good person.

The ways the professional *jineteros* are seen seem to be internalized, something I noticed by the way they speak about themselves. When talking to the “bad” people, they would sometimes confirm their status as bad. Yotuel, who works as a *classic jinetero* and a *prostitute*, confirmed this at several occasions. One day, after I had spent some time with a group of *jineteros* in Parque Central, he told me: “Mary, why are you hanging out with us? We are bad people! You should stick to your friends who are good *jineteros*”. He made this explicit by telling me that my friend, Camilo, is a good *jinetero* because he only stays with poor students and does not ask them directly for money, hence he is a good person. He himself, on the contrary, is a *prostitute* and he only cares about how much money the tourists have. It does not matter if the woman is ugly, pretty, fat, skinny, young, old; he takes them all as long as they pay him for his services.

At the same time Yotuel expressed frustration towards the fact that some people see him as a bad person, because after all he is not bad in the sense of stealing and murdering. These actions, to steal and to murder, seem to be the worst crimes one can commit in Cuba. Both can lead to high sanctions, especially if the crimes involve stealing from or murdering a tourist. As a matter of fact, only stealing from a tourist can lead to many years in prison. In addition, families who rent out rooms to tourists have the responsibility if anything happens to the tourists during his or her stay. However, even if killing a human being is highly sanctioned, killing a cow leads to even stricter penalty, like mentioned in the footnote above. The absurdity of this state law seems to be shared by many Cubans, and people often mention it as an example
of a law that makes no sense; it is a law introduced by the state/Fidel por gusto. Thus, killing a human being seems to be considered the most awful crime one can commit.

I often asked myself why some people were put in the “bad” box. When my friends warned me to stay away from certain people, they rarely gave me precise reasons for their advice, not even when I asked directly. Insisting that a person is bad seems to be reason enough to keep distance, even if it does not necessarily involve the bad actions of stealing or murdering. There was one time, however, that I went to a barrio in the outskirts of Havana to do an interview with one Rasta jinetero. When I later told this to one of my friends, he yelled: “Are you crazy! Do you want to get yourself killed? You cannot trust these people!” Even if he did not know this Rasta jinetero, the statement reveals that in my friend’s opinion there is a potentiality within the group of bad people for even the worst of all actions that can be made towards tourists. Yotuel tried, by telling me that he was not stealing or murdering, to prove that he was indeed not one of the bad guys. Although he was honest about being greedy when it came to money, he justified this by saying that this was a need he had. In his opinion the so-called good jineteros were wasting their time, and their money, staying with poor students. Much like Venkatesan’s (2009) informants, who went on begging trips to Malaysia, were justifying their “immoral” acts by telling the anthropologist why they had to do these trips, Yotuel, and many others of my acquaintances, were positioning themselves as morally good people by explaining the reasons for their actions.

**Boundary maintenance and the power of gossip**

There exists a strongly demarcated moral and physical line between those who work as jineteros and those who do not, even in cases where they engage in quite similar activities for the same kind of purposes. It is obvious that La Bucanero is highly dependent on the jineteros doing a good job bringing enough tourists to the club. Because of its rather hidden locality, the club is hard to spot if you do not already
know about it. Without tourists the jineteros are not allowed entrance to La Bucanero. Either they are thrown out or they are never let in. Several times when I was inside the club I saw my acquaintances, and sometimes people I hardly knew, waving at me to help them pass through the door. The trick was to tell the doorman that they were my friends and that I would buy them a drink. In company with a tourist they could usually pass without problems.

The boundary maintenance between the men on the inside and the men on the outside of La Bucanero is quite descriptive of how people have different opportunities for mobility. On the one hand I believe the club excludes certain people due to the perceived immoral traits connected to the professional jineteros. At the same time as being concretely and physically kept out of the club (cf. the concrete landscape), they also had to cope with the fact that they were morally excluded (cf. the moral landscape). On the other hand exclusion or inclusion is determined by whether or not one belongs to the group of good people. The question is how one defines oneself in the moral landscape, and most importantly how one is defined by others.

For example, I was walking home one night in the company of my friend, Pepe, when we started a discussion on jineteros. His opinion is that, since he has known the streets of Havana all his life, he recognizes a bad person only by looking at his face. In his view all jineteros are bad people, with no exception. I asked him if he thought of Ñico as bad. He disapproved, saying: “No, Ñico is part of the group. He is not bad”. In the moral landscape, the ones who are included as good people or not seem to me to a certain extent rather arbitrary. As explained in chapter two, the relationships one sees up close are more likely to be accepted than those far away. In a similar manner, people are protecting the choices of people who are close, justifying their actions by claiming that they have needs. People that are not near are more easily defined in bad terms.
In Barth’s introduction to *Ethnic groups and Boundaries* (1969) he stresses how boundaries between ethnic groups are maintained not by isolated characteristics of the respective groups, but by the very interaction and flow of information between these groups. When two groups of people meet, the notion of group belonging and the differences between them, are made “socially relevant”. Even though Barth’s focus is on the groups’ ethnicity, this process of boundary maintenance is applicable also on the type of group formation I observed in Habana Vieja. *La Bucanero* was a place where different people mingled, and where it was difficult for an outsider to distinguish one man with a foreign girlfriend from another man with a foreign girlfriend. In this contact zone the personal traits of good and bad were made socially relevant, and negotiations of identity through the creation of groups were taking place.

Although the group of self-proclaimed good people may have had the power to define where the boundary would go, it seems that the so-called bad people were fully aware of their status as bad. Through the experience of group exclusion and restrictions on mobility, the individual may embody and accept its place on the lower level of the moral landscape. When telling me that I had to stick to my own friends who were good people, Yotuel was confirming his low status. At the same time, however, he explained that even if some people may define him as bad, he had never stolen or committed murder. In comparison to those kinds of people he was essentially good. But since I had relatively more established friendships with the good *jineteros* he may not have been in the position to tell me how he defined the social relations; it was only those who recognized me as part of the group who could do that.

According to Robert Paine (1967) people gossip to protect their own self-interests (see also Besnier 2009 for a similar and more recent study on gossip). He claims that “important data concerning the ‘moral order’ of a group are the manipulations it is
possible for individuals to make concerning their interests, and gossip is a device used in these manipulations” (1967:282). These manipulations may, in the case of the jineteros, be the manipulating force of the term “bad”. In Paine’s view gossip is not used as a tool to maintain the groups or the social structure. This is because people may have their own individual interests outside the interest of the particular group, and may be included in what Paine calls “quasi-groups”. While Ñico was part of the group that was welcome at La Bucanero, I also observed him at times hanging out with the supposedly bad people. However, gossip can be a powerful device if it is used wisely (Paine 1967). By channeling information about his activities to certain people, the gossiper can seize the power to define the situation. It seems that Ñico gossiped to me about the bad people because he needed to protect his own interests. Not merely positioning himself as a good person, it may also have been important to him that I did not include him in the group of professional jineteros. If I knew he was up to something “bad” I could have talked to his girlfriend about the “real” reason for him to stay with her. Thus he may have wanted to define the circumstances before I defined it for him.

**Being a foreign girl in a jinetero environment**

*The tourist as a possession*

Pillín and Camilo, the two musicians introduced in chapter one, invited me to a concert at La Bucanero, and that was how I got to know this place in the heart of Habana Vieja. I soon realized that the club would be my main base for observing interactions between Cubans and tourists. Later I understood that I was not only observing; I was classified as a tourist myself and was as much part of it as any of the other foreign girls. Although strongly disliking it, I had to cope with the feeling of being seen as a “prey” that could potentially be “attacked” any time. Thus, my role as a student in social anthropology was easily downplayed, both by my acquaintances and by myself. First and foremost I was a foreign girl from a rich European country.
Because I was invited to the club by the musicians playing there16, I was adopted as part of their group. This group inclusion had important impacts on my understanding of the field; it gave me a lot of insight into a world of group inclusion and group exclusion, based on ideas of good and bad personal traits. Also, by belonging to a group, my movements were to a certain degree regulated. The people in my group repeatedly warned me not to talk to certain types of men, even if they knew that I was there as a researcher and that I had a particular interest in talking to different kinds of people. It happened quite often that they tried to lead me away from the people they considered bad, as described in the introduction to this chapter when Emilio led me away from Carlitos, and when Ñico advised me to come inside the club. I was half way into the fieldwork before I started talking with those who work as *jineteros* and define themselves as such. Later I realized that a reason for this was that the *jineteros* stayed away from me because I was already “captured” by my other group of friends, who brought me to *La Bucanero*. Did the people in my group warn me about other men to protect me from potentially dangerous people or because I was already in their possession? Did they gossip about the “bad” people to protect their self-interest and to keep me for themselves (cf. Paine 1967)? I do not have a clear answer to this, but I believe there was a combination of the two at work. They may actually have thought there was a potential danger for me to hang out with the perceived bad people, but at the same time they may have had a protective need of keeping me to themselves. This act of protection might be due to the general trend among Cuban men to make their women as unavailable as possible to other men (cf. Rosendahl 1997). Because as long as the woman is available, the Cuban man knows that he is able to capture her. But as soon as she is taken by someone, it is too

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16 Half way into the fieldwork they had to stop playing because they did not have the necessary papers for being musicians. This law has supposedly been introduced to protect the interests of professional musicians attending the musical universities, like El Instituto Superior del Arte. The choice of a career as a musician must be made at an early age to be able to attend the right schools. Cubans interested in music, who find out too late that they want to become musicians, are not able to obtain legal papers. Therefore, many play illegally, often in hotels, clubs for tourists or in the street.
late. For example, my friend, Frida, who came to visit me during the time of my fieldwork, spent some time with Pepe during her stay. Later, Rudolfo, who is a Rasta "jinetero, stopped me on the street. His eyes were filled with rage when he said: “I thought you were my friend! Why did you introduce your girlfriend to that guy and not me?” In his eyes, Frida was now in Pepe’s possession and thus unavailable to him, but had he been a little faster she would have been his. The girl’s own preferences, however, are not relevant.

The fieldworker’s moral agonies

The line between a mere friendship and a friendship based on material interests was at times difficult to draw. Coming from a country where friendship and money are not to be mixed, at least not in this manner, I often felt stuck between trying to understand and having moral agonies about what I experienced as bad acts. To what degree were my friends hanging out with me por interés (for the sake of personal gain) and to what degree did they actually enjoy my company? This dilemma was exacerbated when I was approached one day sitting on the wall of Malecon by a fortuneteller who told me that all those who said they were my friends, only wanted to take advantage of me. Another day I went with Clara, a woman I lived with for a few months, to a santería ritual. After the ritual the babalawo took me aside and held that one of the deities had told him that he had to warn me about my so-called friends; that I had to keep my eyes open and be very intelligent not to get fooled. When I told this to one friend, his reply was: “Don’t listen to them, they say that to all tourists”. Perhaps they do, but I still believe there is some truth to what the fortuneteller and the babalawo told me. It is indeed difficult to trust people and to know their exact intentions for spending time with you. Thus, I found myself also

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17 Santería is an afro-Cuban religion, a syncretism between Catholicism and the Nigerian Yoruba religion. During santería rituals animal sacrifices are made to the deities, or to the so-called “orishas”. A more common sacrifice among the Cuban people is to sacrifice a drop of rum, by pouring a little on the floor or the ground, before drinking the bottle.

18 The “babalawo” is the santería priest and means “master of the mysteries” in the Yoruba language.
judging between being good and being bad on the basis of what degree they took advantage of the tourists, and whether they treated the tourists with respect. Normally, I preferred staying with the people that I felt respected me, and who took least advantage of me as a tourist with more money than themselves.

However, even if the status as a foreign girl from an affluent country would never vanish completely, I believe staying in Havana for a longer period of time gave me an advantage compared to tourists on short visits. Observant as they are, seeing me not spending much money on drinks and the like, they started calling me una fritura (jinetero language for a tourist without money). I believe they understood that fooling me in some way or another would not lead to any significant income. Some were instead taking advantage of my position as a girl who had knowledge about the “Cuban way of life”. Often my jinetero acquaintances would introduce me to their recently arrived girlfriend, and talk of me to her as a girl they knew well, so that they would look like good and decent people in the eyes of the tourist. Others asked me to put in a good word for them to potential girlfriends. I was even offered a job as a “tourist seeker assistant”, and I was promised half the salary if we did a good job. As a fieldworker, eager to learn all there is to know about jinetero activities, the job was tempting, but in the end I decided not to do it. I knew I would have moral agonies towards cheating the tourists, making them believe that Cuba is more expensive than it is and even lying about my own reason for staying in Cuba. It was a role I did not feel comfortable with.

**Concluding remarks**

The aim of this chapter has been to uncover the fluidity of the jinetero term, and explain how everyone operating within the zones of jineterismo must relate to the term, whether they define themselves as jineteros or not. The men who engage themselves with tourists all try, in one way or another, to negotiate the dilemma between doing activities that are classified by the general society as bad and
following their own wishes for living a materially better life. There are some men, however, that can more easily avoid the jinetero term, due to personal traits and characteristics and to which group of people they belong. Others must deal with the fact that they are seen as moral delinquents, placed on the bottom of the moral landscape. Nevertheless, most of the men try to direct the meaning of the term to their own advantage. While some men know how to avoid the jinetero label, others attempt to fill it with a more optimistic meaning. As will be discussed in the next chapter, being a successful jinetero can give increased status and respect within the groups of men who get involved with foreign women. If staying with an elderly woman made Ñico ashamed, it may at the same time have made him proud. When he entered La Bucanero with Miranda he carried her like a trophy. He might have thought that this conquest was something the other men would be jealous of since una vieja often means the same as a walking dollar bill.
Chapter 4: Enhancing ones status - The art of playing the *jinetero* game successfully

I am a *jinetero* and I am proud of it...

“...Hey guys, listen to this! I went to Casa de la Música one time, and I hooked up with esa yuma... And guess what? It was my birthday that day so I had got a really expensive suit and Prada shoes from mi amiga de Suiza. What a lucky day, eh? So I was sitting there by the table drinking a Gin Tonic...you know, to match the style. And then this woman comes up to me and she asks: `how much`? I stand up...scan her from head to toe...and I say: ‘Six hundred for one night’. I sit down again and wait for her to leave, not expecting her to accept my offer. But you know what she says? ‘Why did you sit down, come over to my table!’ So I go and sit with her, order a new Gin Tonic. And later, while I am trying to look for a taxi, I hear this bip-bip sound next to me, and it’s an Audi asere! So she asks: ‘can you drive?’ and I say ‘of course I drive, I am a professional jinetero!’ In the hotel I take some Viagra and we keep it going all night! And in the morning you know...she was sooooo satisfied! I was laying there in bed and she took out her wallet. And she gave me the six hundred, and two hundred more as an extra gift! Aseeeere, esa vieja tenía dineerooo! Can you believe it? That was my best birthday ever! Business completed! De pinge asere!...”

(Duniet, 26 years)

**Normalizing the *jinetero* concept**

**Shame and satisfaction**
To ask someone directly if they are working as a *jinetero* can be taken as an offense, but simultaneously, being successful with the tourists is seen as a great achievement. At the same time as trying to distance yourself from the category, staying with a tourist that gives you a materially better life by giving you access to spheres that are otherwise inaccessible, may also lead to status and respect.
As Venkatesan notes, actions that lead to shame can at the same time lead to satisfaction if one is playing the game successfully. She describes how “both shame and satisfaction, which come out of different modes of reasoning, and different ways of valuing action, albeit seemingly contradictory, are co-present” (Venkatesan 2009:81). Even if those who are operating as jineteros are marginalized in the general Cuban society, the individuals can experience satisfaction if they are playing the jinetero game successfully.

The monologue above is one of many examples of how the professional jineteros attempt to enhance their status by bragging about their tourist conquests. Very often money is part of the discourse of what defines a successful conquest, especially, as I will discuss below, in the opinion of the professional jineteros. Money is in scarcity, and therefore is highly valued. Being able to earn a lot of money is in this sense satisfying, even if the means of getting there is not publicly accepted. The monologue also shows the importance of material objects symbolizing a life lived by the rich. To Duniet it was significant to state that he was wearing very expensive shoes and clothes, and that he was drinking the most expensive drink (Gin Tonic) to match the style. By telling this story he gave an impression of being the most successful jinetero of them all, as he left everyone around him astonished. Being successful seems to be a goal for many of those who regularly involve themselves with tourists, not only those who work as professional jineteros. When status as a successful jinetero is to be achieved as an end in itself, the men who engage themselves with foreign women challenge the existing negative connotations associated with their activities. By normalizing the term they reduce the harmfulness of their jinetero activities.

The most famous ‘jinetero’ in Havana

It seems to be an aspiration in itself to be considered successful with the female tourists, even if it may not lead to actual changes in the men’s lives, like a visa out of the country. Even those who did not define themselves as jineteros could look at their
previous conquests with pride in their voices. “Two years ago I was the most famous *jinetero* in Havana!” Emilio said one day. The reason for his success was that he dated a wealthy woman from Italy and lived with her for a couple of weeks in the famous Hotel Nacional. Living with a tourist in this hotel gives status, and is something I heard many times while listening to the men bragging about their tourist conquests. As Emilio said, there was even an electric flush for the toilet! I asked him if he enjoyed staying with her, and he replied: “No, I had to drink three *planchaoses* (rum in paper cans) to be able to have sex with her”. Emilio did not define himself as a *jinetero*, but he admitted that he had been crossing the boundaries at a few occasions. However, at some point he decided that he wanted to stay on the “good” side, and stopped working as a *jinetero*. Talking about *jineteros* he described their activities as *cochinos* (dirty), something that he does not support and that he wants to distance himself from. Even if the Italian woman could have got him out of the country, he decided he rather wanted to find a woman he liked. Nevertheless, his statements show clearly enough that being a *jinetero* is not merely a bad thing. It is at the same time something to be proud of, even if one sometimes has to make sacrifices to get to the point of being successful. Success, however, is not necessarily connected to material gain. There are various strategies for achieving success, whether it is sleeping with elderly and wealthy women or having long-term relationships with poor students.

**What defines a successful *jinetero***?

**Having sex with old and fat women**

There is a general distinction that can be drawn between the professional *jineteros* and those who seek to distance themselves from the category when it comes to how a successful *jinetero* is defined. Success means different things to different men. The general jargon among the professional *jineteros* is that the seduction of “old” and “fat” women is what brings in most benefits, and is thus considered the most intelligent path to go if you wish to succeed. According to Juanca, “old and fat
women pay well because they know they are ugly”. It is also assumed that elderly women have a stable income and a more settled life situation in their countries. By marrying a grown-up woman the process of getting a residence permit may be easier than with young people, who may be students without a regular and stable income. When Luis Eduardo, who is a rasta *jinetero*, came out from La Bucanero hand in hand with a foreign girl his own age, Yotuel was fast in commenting: *Con ella no gana nada* (with her he doesn’t earn anything). I asked him how he could be so sure of that and he replied: *Porque ella no tiene dinero* (because she doesn’t have any money). In Yotuel’s eyes Luis Eduardo was not successful because he reckoned he would waste his time staying with her. From his point of view her cute looks, her young age, her attitude and her company were not important. It seems that for him success can be summed up in how much money the tourist is able to spend. It is assumed that young women often stay in Cuba for a longer period with little money, while elderly women come to Cuba on short visits with the purpose of finding a Cuban man (preferably black) and to spend a lot of money.

For Yotuel it is a condition that the tourists pay him for his sexual services. He declares: “I always ask for payment first and then I have sex with her. I mean, imagine if the condom breaks, she gives me AIDS and I haven’t been paid for it!” However, I have questioned myself whether a direct transfer of sex for money is as common as some of the *jineteros* would like it to be. Do elderly women come to Cuba with the intention of paying a Cuban man to have sex with her? Nagel (2003:207) explains that most studies on female sexual behavior in tourist destinations conclude that women enter into “romance” relationships rather than “quick sexual encounters” with local men. In the novel *Snakk til meg* (2010), by the author Vigdis Hjort, the readers get a deep insight into the feelings of a middle aged Norwegian woman named Ingeborg who starts a relationship with a black Cuban man who works as a musician in the backyard of her hotel. Ingeborg might fall into the stereotype of a single woman coming to Cuba to spend her money and “explore her
sexuality” sleeping with a black Cuban man. She does not, however, plan to spend her holiday with a Cuban man, and least of all a black Cuban man. She is charmed by him, perhaps in love, something that makes her start a long and difficult process of getting him to Norway. Yet, she is not naively accepting his declarations of true love. Ingeborg is conscious of his likely incentives of staying in a relationship with her, and she keeps telling herself that he is probably fooling her, that he probably has another Cuban woman that he loves, and that he is probably lying about his work as a lawyer next to being a musician.

Even if having “old, fat and ugly” girlfriends was considered the cleverest strategy for earning money, I mostly observed the men with young girlfriends. I asked one jinetero about this and he answered that La Bucanero was not a place to pick up elderly women. For that, one needs to go to more fashionable clubs like Casa de la Música or La Florida. Did they after all prefer women their age? Perhaps elderly women can be seen to symbolize prosperity and easily earned money, but when it comes to the actual sexual encounter, the men’s preference might fall on women their own age.

**Romantic relationships with poor students**

The men who did not define themselves as professional jineteros mostly had relationships with women they liked as persons and felt sexually attracted to, preferably girls that were staying in Cuba for a longer period of time. They sometimes claimed that the professional jineteros were not intelligent enough to search for women they were likely to have a future with. To them it was better to enter into serious relationships with girls they enjoyed staying with. They did not consider it a job, and claimed that the reason why they only dated foreign women was due to the complications involved when having relationships with cubanas (Cuban women), a topic to be discussed in chapter five. Unlike the professional jineteros, they did not speak openly between themselves about their tourist conquests,
at least not when I was present. Apparently it was not a competition between them in the same way it was among those who consider searching for tourists a job where the level of income is a crucial factor. Moreover, by staying with fewer women for a longer period of time you may have fewer problems with the police. Even if they could be stopped on the street walking in company with a tourist, they were less likely to be taken into custody once the police had checked their identity cards. If you have a clean record, the police normally let you go, but if you have a long history of dating tourists there is a bigger chance of getting into trouble. By staying with many women the likelihood of being harassed is bigger, even if it might mean getting fast cash staying with elderly women on holiday with lots of money. According to one friend, the men who do this will never find themselves a woman to marry. They are not smart enough to think ahead of time. You have to be intelligent, to know the rules of the streets, of the system, of the bureaucracy, to avoid getting into trouble.

**Proving oneself on the street**

*Status and respect*

The level of status and respect of an individual appears to be changing according to the situation or the people with whom they associate with or to whom they compare themselves. Within the groups of people who involve themselves with tourists one may accumulate a high level of status and respect through, for instance, being a good seducer and having the skills of sucking fast money out of the tourists. As an individual Cuban citizen, however, one may not wish to be defined as a *jinetero*; a label that symbolizes the “bad” aspects of society and a decline in moral values. For example Fernando, the guy mentioned in chapter three, who asked me if I thought of him as a bad person, might have had a high status within his group of *jineteros*. But as an individual, perhaps with the Cuban citizenship as an important part of his self-identification, he may have realized that his work as a *jinetero* was on the lower ranks of the Cuban status hierarchy. Thus, as an individual, he did not feel comfortable
with being labeled a jinetero, and consequently being labeled bad. Status, therefore, depends on the circumstances. What gives status in the general Cuban society is standardized by the ethical discourse. That means status is accumulated through many years of education, a high-professionalized state-provided job, a nice house in a decent neighborhood, and perhaps through engaging oneself politically and working for the revolution. The jineros working the streets of Habana Vieja do not have many years of education, do not have high-professionalized state-provided jobs, do not have a nice house in a decent neighborhood and are not engaging themselves politically and working for the revolution. On the streets of Habana Vieja, status and respect are rather achieved through being streetwise (cf. Anderson 1990) and through the accumulation of street capital (cf. Sandberg and Pedersen 2009).

**Being streetwise – ‘vivir de la calle’**

I had been doing fieldwork for several months before I realized that the men on the streets of Habana Vieja were observing me just as much, if not even more, than I was observing them. In this environment most people are skilled at knowing what is going on in the streets. It is only by being “streetwise” (cf. Anderson 1990), by knowing the movements and the faces of everyone around, that one can survive in this environment.

Part of the concept of being streetwise in Cuba is to learn how to *vivir de la calle* (live off the streets), an ability that is also related to *inventar* and *luchar* discussed in chapter two. This includes doing diverse businesses or activities of jineterismo, no matter if by doing so one may cross the line of what is considered correct behavior. In my friend Pepe’s opinion, *vivir de la calle* also means learning how to define yourself as a person and to decide what people you want to spend your time with. You can decide whether you want to join los pandilleros (the mafia), the jineros, the gays, or like himself, the musicians. Earlier Pepe belonged to the group of pandilleros, but when he started to play music he understood who he was and who he wanted to
become. If you stay in the house for the rest of your life you do not learn how to relate to the people (relacionarte con la gente); it is important to know who is good and who is bad, to know who to talk to about personal things and who to talk to only por interés.

Being streetwise and having the ability to vivir de la calle are not skills that apply only to “street people”. All Cubans should know how to manage people in the street unless one wants to be cheated or robbed. It is important to have an eye for people in the surroundings and to know what intentions they have. Relating to the people is learnt through years of experiences in the street, through being confronted with dangers and through negotiating with different kinds of people (cf. Anderson 1990). People who grow up in wealthier parts of Havana might to a certain degree be protected from the life in the streets, and the parents might encourage their children to stay inside, especially after nightfall. In Habana Vieja, however, people literally grow up in the street. The houses are often overcrowded, so the street is a natural place to gather, especially for men (see chapter five for a discussion of the street as a male sphere). There are always people in the streets: kids playing baseball or football, men playing domino, people eating their lunch or drinking coffee outside private-run snack bars or coffee shops, men repairing their cars, families having extended their party from the house to the street, other men hanging out on the street corners seemingly with nothing else to do than shouting sexually charged and often offensive phrases to women walking by. From a young age the inhabitants of Habana Vieja are accustomed to interact with other kids, with neighbors, with family members and at an early stage they learn to know the rules of the street and to relacionarse con la gente.

The ability of relating to the people around, be it the police, friends, potential enemies or tourists, is vital for the groups of jineteros. It is important to know how to manage confrontations with the police, how to talk oneself out of a difficult situation,
how to talk to strangers and how to establish stable contacts and friends in the street that will help you in times of need. Being streetwise is also crucial in the hunt for tourists. Especially those who work as professional *jineteros*, who spend much of their time in the street and are constantly searching for tourists, are particularly skilled at knowing the female tourist’s movements. They know how much money she has, if she is a rich tourist or a poor student, how she moves her hips, which places she goes out, who she is talking to and who her friends are, if she is already captured by a Cuban man or not, and hence whether she is available or not.

**Street capital**

Sandberg and Pederson (2009) introduced the term *street capital* in their study on drug dealers along Akerselva, the river running through the city of Oslo. The term is inspired by Bourdieu’s cultural capital, except that the competence that is acquired and developed is limited to a violent street culture. The cannabis dealers experienced being marginalized by a Norwegian bureaucratic system, thus in relation to the oppressive mainstream society the drug dealers perceived themselves as victims. However when selling cannabis by the river they could prove themselves as “street-smart gangsters”. Within this particular street culture it was crime and drug dealing that defined their success. Like Sandberg and Pedersen (2009:35) write, “[s]treet capital result from having little to lose in mainstream society and is a form of power that the structurally oppressed can use”.

Even if Habana Vieja is deemed as a zone with a relatively high rate of criminal activities after nightfall (at least towards tourists) compared to other barrios\(^{19}\), I did not experience or observe any violence during my stay. I have only been told of some episodes, happening at times when I was not present at La Bucanero or the surroundings. However, although street capital in Sandberg and Pedersen’s use of it

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\(^{19}\)There are, however, barrios that are considered more dangerous with a higher rate of criminality, like Povolotti, Buena Vista, Atare and El Fangito.
refers to a *violent* street culture, it can be applied also to the men dealing with tourists in Habana Vieja. What contributes to define the *jineteros’* street capital, in addition to being streetwise, is their ability to capture tourists. The men who engage themselves with female tourists may experience being marginalized in their own society, especially the black rastas. In this context street capital is about winning back the pride of being a *jinetero*.

The men are many in comparison to available female tourists, something that makes it important for each to differ in a way that makes the foreigner swallow the bait and pick you in preference to the others. By being popular with female tourists they can gain respect within the group, and by making use of their *bodily dispositions*, distinctions are created as well as possible positions of power towards the others (cf. Bugge 2002). Bodily dispositions, or habitus, are part of Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital, and refer to types of embodied knowledge that is learnt and acquired through social practices. These forms of knowledge include for example education, language skills, knowledge connected to certain appearances, knowledge of social codes and so on. An individual’s habitus makes a person capable of acting and reacting in certain, and often unconscious, ways. In Habana Vieja skills are learnt through years of interaction in the street, both with friends, enemies, police officers, and most importantly, with tourists. Through a social learning process the skills needed to attract foreigners become part of the individual’s habitus, so that often the flirting, the various techniques and the ways of communicating, are taken for granted. At this point one might have reached the point of being a successful *jinetero*.

Here I have included four embodied, although not always conscious, strategies for capturing a tourist; the ability to communicate through language and body language, playing on a black sexuality, dancing salsa and playing music to attract females, and lastly the ability to hide, that is not to be defined as a *jinetero*. The latter strategy is concerned with people who are not part of the street culture, and hence do not need
to compete with others the same way as those operating in Habana Vieja. *jineteros* in Cuba are not confined to a street culture, but stretch beyond the limits of *la calle.* Perhaps the most successful *jineteros* are those who do not need to prove themselves on the street, but can attract tourists on the basis of their good manners, good education, perhaps white skin, high status, and a high level of cultural capital accumulated in the general society.

**How to capture a tourist**

*Language and communication*

I was often asked to teach my acquaintances English or Norwegian phrases that they could call out to passing tourists to catch their attention. Many of them had learnt a little English simply because they were interested in the language or they had years of experience communicating with tourists in English. Others only spoke a few words and it was a challenge for them to have conversations in languages other than their mother tongue. Consequently, Spanish tourists were preferred by some men because it made the communication much easier. According to Rudolfo, however, language skills are not important; what counts is the *vibration* between him and the tourist. Rudolfo has worked as a *jinetero* for many years, but he still does not speak English. Even so he manages to communicate with the tourists, only by knowing a few English phrases and by knowing how to use his body language.

One strategy for catching the tourists’ attention is to have an eye for what country they are from, and then talk to them by using humorous phrases in their local language. This way of talking to the tourists can be referred to by what Simoni (2008) calls “nationality talks”. For example, what I heard many times in Norwegian was the expression *Hva skjer’ a Bagera?* (directly translated: What’s happening, Bagera?) That phrase could be enough to catch the Norwegian tourists’ attention, and could cause laughter due to the very local meaning of it and the out of place setting to utter it.
Once having caught the attention of the tourists it is important to keep up the good communication and play the cards right. For a person who wants to have success with tourists social skills are extremely important, something that is acquired through time in the street and through interacting with foreigners. Significant skills in the hunt for tourists are for example the ability to predict people, to know what the tourists want and think, to have control over the conversation and be funny, and to know how to communicate to obtain the things desired. In Goffman’s (1959) words, what a tourist seeker needs is to “put on a show” and “convince his audience” (the tourists) that he is worth spending time with.

**Playing on a black sexuality**

“I know why women go to Cuba – they go to find themselves una pinga negra!”, Duniet shouts out one night while discussing his work experiences with his friends. He refers to his black penis that is supposedly the reason why foreign women want to enter into a relationship with him or have sporadic sex with him.

Sleeping with a black man is believed to be one of the most important tourist attractions for single white women on holiday in Cuba. Cuban men seem to know exactly what a white woman wants. Typical phrases are: “You need a black man who can protect you”, “what you need is a black man in bed” or “you will regret it for the rest of your life if you go back to your country without having slept with a black man”. It is said that a white man, on the other hand, will always be afraid that his woman runs off to el negrito, because due to his skin color he has less to prove in bed. As one acquaintance expressed it “there is more sexual electricity between a black man and a white woman than between a white man and a white woman”.

Even if they may experience racist attitudes by the mainstream society, within the realm of tourism black Cuban men can play on their black sexuality in their encounters with female foreigners. Towards white foreigners they can present themselves as hot and exotic. By performing blackness (cf. Nagel 2003), playing on
their black identity, the jineteros can manipulate the stigma that is forced upon them, turning blackness into something beautiful and attractive. This manipulation also applies to Rastas, who often grow their locks to be able to attract tourists. Like blackness, the Rasta style is believed to be exotic and attractive for female tourists. After growing his locks, Luis Eduardo claimed that he had more luck when it came to get the tourists’ attention. It was worth it although he experienced increased problems with the police. Ramón, on the other hand, had to cut his locks in panic when he discovered that some lice had settled down in his scalp. With short hair he could walk freely in the street, however, after a while he decided to sew them on again. Without the locks he felt he had lost part of his identity as a Rasta, and perhaps also his ability to attract tourists.

Dancing salsa and playing music

Dancing is a medium of communication that I have observed many times in interactions between tourists and Cubans. Being a good salsa teacher may give you an advantage when it comes to seduce tourists. “Look how happy she is”, a friend of mine visiting from Norway commented while watching a dancing couple on the dance floor. The salsa teacher did a perfect job leading the woman, turning her smoothly with controlled and skilled movements, smiling to her when catching her eye, charmingly moving his hips to the salsa rhythms. The dancing woman was a visiting tourist, obviously at the beginning of her salsa classes, but seemingly happy of what she had achieved so far.

Cuban men are experts in making foreign women glow. And dancing is one way of getting in touch with the tourists, as many women who come to Cuba are interested in learning to dance Cuban casino (salsa). Being a good salsa teacher can also be of crucial importance if your language skills are limited to your mother tongue. In her study on salsa dancers in Hamburg, Germany, Wieschiolek (2003:130) notes how her informants use salsa as a type of “non-verbal communication”. Through the dancing
one can sense the feelings of the dancing partner, thus making salsa an “easy communication with the opposite sex”.

Musicians also have advantages when it comes to capturing tourists. Juanca, who was normally not allowed entrance at La Bucanero, expressed what I understand as envy towards the musicians as follows:

“It’s too easy to pick up girls here at La Bucanero. Those friends of yours make it too easy for themselves. They don’t know anything. They think they can capture the tourists just because they are musicians. But I, I am the one with experience. I pick up the tourists in the street, in front of the police, because I like challenges”.

Playing an instrument, either as a hobby or as a job, might make it easier to get in touch with tourists and also to attract tourists by giving impressive performances on stage. It is also convenient because the musicians often work at places that are frequented by tourists. For a musician, then, it is easy to get in touch with the tourists as they come to see them play; there is no need to go out on the street to search for them. This way one can hide jinetero activities by wrapping it into an identity as a professional musician who just happens to play music at places where there are many tourists. Juanca, on the other hand, could not easily hide behind a musical instrument. He had to go out there, to lay himself bare in front of the police, because he did not have a mask in which to cover himself. Perhaps his comment was more a result of frustration towards the fact that his activities are visible to the police, and to everybody else, rather than genuine ridicule directed against the musicians.

Deceitful appearances

It is to a certain degree possible to hide jinetero activities working as a musician or a salsa teacher. However, perhaps the cleverest way to capture a tourist is to operate outside the zones of jineterismo; that is pretending to be someone else. Lorenzo is a student at the University of Havana. When I first met him and his Japanese girlfriend
on a visit to one of the provinces, I thought of their relationship as a genuine one, unlike some of the relationships I had observed in Habana Vieja. However, a few months later I met Lorenzo in the street, but now hand in hand with another girl from Italy. When I later met him for lunch he told me of his life as a tourist seeker, how he enjoyed eating at fancy restaurants, and how he managed a double life with his tourist girlfriends on the one side and his more stable relationships with a Cuban girl on the other. I was surprised and ashamed because it made me realize that I too put labels on people, defining relationships on the basis of status in the social hierarchy. There was not much difference in his way of dating tourists, but he may be seen to be more successful due to his ability to hide his jinetero activities. As a white academic operating outside the zones of jineterismo, he did not have the stereotypical jinetero characteristics, and could steer clear of the stigmatizing force of the jinetero label. He could walk freely in the street without being bothered by the police or by people judging him and placing him on a ladder within a moral landscape. Even if a man with black skin color is believed to be the most attractive partner for tourists, as a white Cuban he could more easily pass as a tourist himself and few would ever think of him as a jinetero, perhaps least of all his foreign girlfriends. Thus, he did not have the need to justify his activities the same way as those operating in Habana Vieja. Lorenzo was the least visible and least obvious jinetero of them all.

**Concluding remarks**

The main intention of this chapter has been to illustrate how men on the streets of Habana Vieja attempt to manipulate the jinetero term to undertake new symbolic meanings (cf. Cohen 1974). Even if having status as a jinetero is seen as something inherently bad, the jineteros themselves do not approve of the symbolism that is forced upon them by the general society. Through the accumulation of street capital, acquired among other things by having many foreign girlfriends, along with years of experience on the street, they can gain respect within their group of male peers. As I
argued, however, the cleverest tourist seeker may be the one operating outside the zones of jineterismo. If it is correct that todos somos jineteros, that being a jinetero is a trait potentially characterizing all Cubans, it is better to pretend to be someone else than to have to compete with others on the street always with the constant risk of being taken into custody.

In the next chapter I continue by discussing a different topic, namely how Cuban gender relations have implications for relationships between Cuban men and foreign women. The topic is, nonetheless, closely related to life on the streets, and to the men’s dilemmas of personal freedom and mobility versus moral obligations. I explain how the men attempt to maintain their masculinity despite their inability to accomplish their role as good men towards foreign women. In these relationships the men have lost control over the woman’s movements, something that may make them surpass the limit of what is generally acceptable.
Chapter 5: Freedom, control and sexuality - The Cuban man and his women

The story of Los Faranduleros...

...It is Saturday night. Yaneisi and Solangel stand in the queue outside the entrance of Occidental, one of the most expensive and fashionable discotheques in one of the nicest hotels in Miramar. The two girls have dressed up for the night, wearing high heels and slinky dresses, and have spent hours fixing their hair at the local hairdresser. Suddenly a fancy car drives up in the parking lot and out step two well-dressed and good-looking men. The driver locks the car with his automatic key and the guys walk nonchalantly up to the entrance of the club. “Did you see that?” Solangel whispers excitingly. “Yes, who are they? I have never seen them here before,” Yaneisi replies.

The two men are Manolón and Rafael, two relatively poor men from the barrio of Habana Vieja. Earlier that day Rafael had received a few dollars from his brother in Spain, and together with his friend Manolón, he decided to do an experiment: Pretend to be ‘faranduleros’ for one day.

‘El farandulero’ is a man who likes to live a life of luxury. He listens to reggaeton and enters the most fashionable discotheques in town, frequented by wealthy people, tourists, ‘jineteras’ and people who aspire to live the life of the rich.

Manolón and Rafael rented a car from a friend and put on their nicest clothes. Rafael gave some money to Manolón so that it would look like they were both rich. And for the first time they felt like real Cuban men. Beautiful ‘cubanas’ gathered around them and they could have any of the girls if they wanted. “But for what?” complained Rafael. The next day they would go back to their normal selves. Sleeping with a Cuban girl for one night ‘es por nada’ (it is for nothing)...
**The Cuban man and la cubana**

*Desires of Cuban women and obligations of Cuban men*

Yaneisi and Solangel introduced above are fictions; they represent the prototypical Cuban girls presented to me by many of my male acquaintances. What Yaneisi and Solangel are searching for is a life of luxury. They never date Cuban men unless they have money enough to take them out to expensive clubs and buy them shoes and clothes. Many of my male acquaintances declared that they had been abandoned by Cuban girls who were tired of never having money to go out and have fun. So they left them for another, richer man, perhaps a foreigner.

By listening to how the men talk about Cuban girls it seems that they have given up on *la cubana*. Since the man is expected to provide for the woman and to ask her out, a man without money is unable to fulfill his obligations as a man, and will fall short in relationships with Cuban women. According to Fernandez (2010) women tend to choose their partner according to skin color and status in the social hierarchy. White women for example will rarely pick a black man on the lower level of the social ladder, and if they do choose a black man it is because of his high status (see chapter six for a further discussion on race relations). It also counts which neighborhood the man comes from, what kind of house he lives in, whether he has his own room and so on. Thus, when choosing partner it is vital whether he will provide them with better living conditions and a better future. Most of the men who engage themselves with foreign tourists do not fulfill these expectations. They can be found on the lower level of the social hierarchy; they live in bad reputed barrios of the city, most of them do not have higher education and a high proportion of them are considered black or *mulato*. For many of the men in Habana Vieja the easiest way to find women is in places frequented by foreign tourists.

The prototype of a Cuban girl might be compared to Archetti’s (1999) *la milonguita*, the girl portrayed in Argentinean tango lyrics (see the introduction chapter). *La*
*jinetera* might be seen as a character that represents the changing gender relations in contemporary Cuban society. She is the extreme version of a Cuban woman with desires of living a better life, and like *la milonguita* she is a girl who has “stepped out”. The Cuban girl, or *la jinetera*, may represent both the modern woman who takes care of her family by stepping out in difficult times of severe material need, at the same time as she represents a threat to the moral values. Like Durkheim says, it is in times of turbulent social changes that contradictory meanings emerge (cf. Archetti 1999). The prototype of a Cuban woman is not fulfilling the role as a good housemother, nor is she any longer available to the Cuban man, at least not to the poor Cuban man who is not able to satisfy her needs. By holding *la cubana* responsible for the changing gender relations, one can attempt to justify the need of staying with foreign women, and in so doing, escape the obligation of providing for one’s woman.

**The man in the street and the woman in the house**

In her book *Inside the Revolution – Everyday Life in Socialist Cuba* (1997) Rosendahl defines the street and the house as “emic concepts that imply different gender ideals and an ideal gendered division of the lives of men and women”. The ideal place for women is in the house, in the private sphere, while the ideal place for a man is in the street, in the public sphere. While the man is expected to work outside the house and to support his woman, the woman is expected to “belong” to the house, even if she may also have an additional full-time job. In the house the woman takes care of all the cleaning, cooking and ironing, and if she wants to do errands outside the house she is seldom alone. The man, on the other hand, is free to run around by himself in the street to hunt for other women and to spend a good time drinking with his friends. Rosendahl’s study was conducted in a place called “Palmera”, a municipality located in the south of Cuba. In Havana, however, the gendered division may not be as strict as in Palmera. Rosendahl writes that because of the municipality’s largely rural area people live relatively isolated lives, and therefore the gender relations have
gone through few changes since before the revolution, despite the fact that there are many more women who work outside the house now than earlier. While in bigger cities, like Havana, and especially among educated people, the ideals of machismo may have lost some of its influence.

In Havana, girls and women walk around as they wish, go to work, go out with their friends at night or do other activities outside the house. Although women do much of the household tasks, their husbands, sons, boyfriends or brothers may help with chores such as cooking and dish washing. I even met some men who considered cooking a hobby, something they enjoyed doing. Some of my acquaintances, especially those who came from other provinces and did not have any family in Havana, lived alone or shared a house with a friend. They had to cook, clean and wash their own clothes. In Havana today, it is outdated to be a machista (Ørmen 2004); a man who expects his woman to do all housework, who is jealous, and who attempts to control every single movement of his wife or girlfriend. However, although women seem to have shaken themselves free from the house as their full-time domain, the house and the street still work to symbolically structure today’s gender relations in Havana. One of the main roles of the man is still to provide for the woman and to have a certain control of the woman’s movements, while the woman still expects the man to provide for her materially (Ibid.).

For example, the street as a male sphere can be seen through how boys, from a young age, are encouraged to head for the street. Pepe told me how he, as a kid, had spent most of the time inside the house helping his mother whose husband had passed away. However, the house was not an accepted place for a boy that was soon to become a man. People in the street started gossiping about whether he was maricón (gay), and Pepe felt obliged to prove the opposite. So when he was twelve years old he went to a discotheque with a friend, but when he came home his mother exploded in fury and grounded him for three months. After this point he continued to break
the limits and to salir a la calle (go out to the street), thereby assuring the neighbors and the people in the street that he was not gay.

Pepe’s story shows how identity is produced and how men are judged, based on how much time they spend in the house as opposed to in the street. Since the house can be seen as a predominantly feminine domain, it is important not to spend too much time inside and to head out for the streets to fulfill the role of being a man. To be accused of being maricón is a big insult for most Cuban men and should be avoided (Rosendahl 1997). Women, on the other hand, are evaluated according to how they fulfill their roles as good mothers and housewives, and how good they are at doing house chores and making food for their husbands. Even if the revolution has given Cuban women increased freedom and autonomy, women’s identity is still connected to the sphere of the house. Although most women are free to go out on the streets by themselves, many men do not permit their female counterpart to go out by herself after nightfall. If a woman is seen in the street by herself after dark, without a man or a group of friends, she will most likely fall into the categories of una jinetera or una loca de la calle (a crazy street girl), two labels that often have the same meaning. When a woman is out in the street alone, especially at night, she is making herself available to other men. For Cuban men, then, it is necessary to control the woman’s movement as much as he can, to make her as unavailable as possible to other men. Rosendahl (1997) notes how the men’s need of control is connected to their pursuit for honor within the street’s masculine community. If a woman spends too much time in the street, or worse, if she is unfaithful, it can reflect negatively on the man’s honor, hence he must have a certain control of her not lose face. The search for honor is connected to desires of having a good reputation among men in the street (Ørmen 2004). The ideal Cuban man, however, will find a balance between what Wilson (1969) coined “reputation” and “respectability”.

76
**Being a good Cuban man**

Wilson’s (1969) division of *reputation* and *respectability* has been much applied in studies of gender relations in the Caribbean. In Wilson’s use of the terms, women seek to be respectable by doing what the community expects of them, by keeping the house clean, going to church etc. The women’s respectability stands in opposition to what is expected of the men, that is maintain a good reputation among other men, spend money and treat his friends and brag about how many girls they have slept with. Wilson has been criticized, however, for placing these ambiguous expectations into absolute categories (cf. Eriksen 2001). The contradiction between respectability and reputation is something all Caribbeans will have to relate oneself to, either they are men or women. Rosendahl (1997) writes that men in Palmera must relate to being respectable on the one side and having reputation on the other. The ideal Cuban man finds a balance between these two expectations. On the one hand he is expected to be a good man who supports his woman and his family. On the other hand he must show that he has the ability to take lovers. This, however, must be done in secrecy out of respect to his wife and children, although not in so much secrecy that it goes completely unnoticed. It is necessary to show to other men that he can be a real womanizer, and consequently a real man. If a man does not take other women, if he puts too much emphasis on being respectable and being good to his woman, he might be considered weak in the eyes of other men (Ørmen 2004).

A *good* Cuban man is, in addition to being a good revolutionary, defined by his ability to provide for his family, to take care of his woman, to invite her out and to resolve things outside the house, like doing business that will contribute to the household’s economy. Being a womanizer, run around in the street, get drunk and take many lovers is, in Havana, normally not accepted by the family and by the society in general. Ørmen (2004) suggests that men’s roles might be more connected to the house sphere now than earlier due to the economic crisis that hit Cuba in the 1990’s. Water shortages and rationing of food and electricity have made household
tasks more time consuming, something that has required all family members’ assistance. Moreover, as a result of economic hardship it is less acceptable for a man to hang out in the street throwing away valuable time and money. This social change might have moved the roles of the man closer to the house sphere. My own impression is that running around in the street in search for other women is considered bad behavior, both by the wife, the family and by the man himself. Even though it is a quite common phenomenon for a man to have several women, many men do not feel comfortable with being unfaithful to their wife or girlfriend20.

Nevertheless, when the woman is not available to the Cuban man, meaning that she is not physically in the same place as him, staying with other women can be legitimized. This is quite telling in the Cuban film *El cuerno de la abundancia* (2008), when the main character is disloyal to his wife. He leaves Camagüey for a few days to do some business in Havana, and with him he takes his lover whom he met at his workplace. However, when they are back in the province where his wife lives, and *la otra* (the other woman) wants to continue what they started in Havana, he says: *En La Habana sí, pero aquí en Camagüey no!* (In Havana, yes, but not here in Camagüey!)

Being unfaithful with the distance, or when the wife is not present, can to a certain degree be tolerated. Given that staying with another woman goes unnoticed, no harm is done to his wife or his family.

To what degree do men who engage themselves with foreign tourists fulfill the requirements of a good Cuban man? Some men who have relationships with foreign women might contribute to their Cuban family’s economy, thus, fulfilling their role as the household’s provider. Some may also have a Cuban girlfriend and children that he supports by staying with foreign women. However, as Ørmen (2004) writes,

20 It is very likely, however, that the men spoke differently to me than to their male peers. I do realize that my observations might be colored by the fact that I am a female, and I may therefore not have got the complete picture of how men talk about their female conquests between themselves.
there is much shame connected to jineterismo activities, making it difficult to accumulate status as a respectable man in the general society. It is only through emphasizing reputation in the street that he can maintain his masculinity. By for example treating his friends with beers and rum, paid for with the tourist’s money, he attempts to receive a high status among his male peers (Ibid.). Moreover, as I will discuss below, the Cuban man exaggerates his reputation by sleeping with many women, so as not to lose his masculine identity. In relationships with foreign women it is indeed difficult to carry out the role as a provider and a good man, as it is the foreign female who is the main provider. Perhaps the most important reason for his actions is that he loses control of the woman, and with that some of what it means to be a man in Cuba. However, by blaming the unavailability and uncontrollability of his woman, he attempts to justify his activities and maintain his status as a good man.

The Cuban man and la extranjera

The woman’s mobility versus the man’s immobility

In the spatial anchoring of the street as a male sphere and the house as a female sphere, it is implicitly assumed that the man is the mobile part having the most freedom of movement, while the woman’s movements must be regulated. In relationships with foreign women the gender roles are reversed, making women spatially connected outside of Cuba, while the man is “stuck” in what I might call the Cuban “house”. Like I mentioned in chapter two, the mobility of one part may add to the immobility of the other (Ahmed 2000, in Ånestad 2004). In relationships with foreign women this becomes highly accentuated because of the extreme mobility of the women versus the extreme immobility of the man. As many of my acquaintances expressed it, Cuba feels like a prison because they are not easily permitted to leave. They can catch a glimpse of Miami on the other side of the ocean, but they know that it might take years and much effort, to get to the point of actually being there; outside Cuba. Their girlfriends, on the other hand, can come and go as they wish. It
is the female who is in control of the relationships, who decides whether she wants to return to her Cuban boyfriend or not, how serious she wants the relationship to be, whether she wants to go further by marrying him, and perhaps eventually whether she wants to give him the opportunity to leave Cuba and to go to live with her in her home country. Many men express frustration towards the fact that they never know if the girl is coming back to them or not. Some may have several serious relationships with foreigners at the same time, and by this means assuring themselves that at least one of them will come back to catch up.

Another concern for the Cuban men is that they “do not know what she is doing out there”. Foreign girls are impossible to control. They are out in free space, potentially available to the whole world. What adds to this is that foreign girls, and especially the Spanish, are reputed of having a very liberal sexual morality. It is said that many European and North American girls, who come to Cuba, find themselves a Cuban man, even though they have a boyfriend at home.

Even if some men say that they feel more “natural” in relationships with female tourists, they lose the ability of realizing the roles as protectors, providers and of being good men for their woman. In these relationships he is the weaker partner; he is dependent on her, both materially and in view of his ability to leave Cuba. His sexuality, on the other hand, is exclusively controlled by himself.

*Freedom and sexuality – taking the control back*

Perhaps it could be said that the only domain where the man is in complete control, and where he enjoys almost unlimited mobility, is within the frames of his own sexuality. It is commonly accepted that when the foreign girlfriend leaves, when she is no longer in his presence, the man is free to have sex with whoever he wants. Moreover, having sex with other women might relieve some of the frustration of his immobility as opposed to the woman’s mobility, and of his inability to control her.
If being respectable is doing what the society expects of a man, both in the sense of being good to his woman and being a good revolutionary, having reputation means that the man has the freedom of doing whatever he wishes to; hang around in the street, get drunk with his friends, hunt for women and sleep until late in the morning without going to work to fulfill his duty. This is the life of many, although not all, of my Cuban acquaintances. When the man is not able to fulfill the expectations of being respectable, he might put emphasis on having reputation to maintain his masculinity. By being a womanizer, and especially through his capability of having many foreign women, he can enhance his status on the street and gain respect among his male peers.

Some of my acquaintances expressed guilt, and did not feel comfortable with the life they were living, but said that once they had settled down abroad in their girlfriend’s country, they would change their attitudes and become good men. However, by blaming external factor that force them to live like they do, they try to maintain themselves as good men. Because of their inability to control their women, because she is sexually unavailable to them, but sexually available to other men outside Cuba, they can justify their own desires of having sex with other women while she is gone. This is also legitimized by the “universal fact” that a man needs sex every day. He cannot survive without it.

**Concluding remarks**

The purpose of this chapter has been to explain how gender relations in Cuba are going through a process of change and how expectations towards the genders have implications for Cuban men’s relationships with foreign women. The Cuban girl, or the *jinetera*, who has “stepped out” might be seen a symbol representing the changes of the time. The men who engage themselves with tourists claim that it is impossible to hold on to Cuban girls, a dilemma that leads Cuban men to search for foreign women instead. But even if they may feel more natural in these relationships, not
having to worry about the material desires of the woman, they nevertheless lose some of what it means to be a man in Cuba. To maintain their masculinity, and perhaps to relieve frustrations concerning the lack of control over their foreign women, the men may surpass the acceptable by stretching the boundaries of their own sexuality, perhaps the only domain where they benefit from nearly limitless mobility.

The next and final chapter deals with the wider structure of race relations in Cuba. I explain how some men are more likely to be exposed to police harassment due to their skin color. Furthermore, Habana Vieja is defined as a “black space” and is considered a zone inhabited by “bad” people. This reputation affects the residents of Habana Vieja, and the people operating in the area. I will argue that the restrictions set on some people contribute to an increased feeling of immobility and therefore an even stronger wish for freedom. It is thus a vicious circle, creating fury towards the state, and leading to the only desire of getting out of the country.
Chapter 6: Restrictions on freedom and mobility - Morality, racism and state control

The arrest...

...It was sunny day in the end of January when I was walking down Calle Soledad in company with my Norwegian friend, Karina, and two Cubans, Abdel and Gerardo. We had just been to Callejon de Hamel, a colorful and nicely decorated alley where talented musicians perform rumba every Sunday afternoon. While walking cheerfully down the street after having spent a good time listening to the afro-Cuban rhythms, a car suddenly drives up in front of us and out steps a police officer. Before I have the chance to think, Abdel holds his arm around my shoulder, and signals to Gerardo to do the same with Karina. Abdel knows that if it looks like we are two couples, it is less likely that the police will ask for ‘el carné’. It does not work this time. “El carné!” the police officer demands in a strict and serious tone, his face expression showing no sign of mercy. While he checks both cards talking in his walkie-talkie with the local police station, we continue our talk, trying to stay calm as if nothing has happened, still pretending that we are two couples out on a normal Sunday walk. The police officer, however, is not convinced. When we think he is going to give back the identification cards and let us go, the other police officer comes out of the car as well. Without further ado, one of them takes Abdel while the other takes Gerardo, and in a fast and skilled manner they are ransacked, handcuffed and thrown into the car by the two men. Gerardo is shivering with fear. Abdel, by contrast, looks a bit worried, but he manages to stay calm.

We are left alone in the street, confused and gaping in amazement, while feeling an emerging anger towards what the officers just did to our friends, without any obvious reason. People around us, who have observed the arrest, seem to be as much surprised by the police’s actions, and ask us what happened. To that we do not have a clear answer...
Race and racism

Protecting tourists from dangerous Cubans

The arrest happened when I was living with Eugenio and Elena, the relatively well-off couple from Centro Habana, introduced in chapter two. In the flat downstairs lived a black family with their son Abdel, whom I was introduced to by Eugenio, and right across the street lived Gerardo.

Eugenio is a white pensioner and seemingly a big supporter of Fidel and the revolution. After the incident, I talked to him about what happened, but he was by no means surprised. He merely shook his head and said that I had to understand that there are many bad negritos en la calle (black kids in the street), and that the police have to take action to eradicate the problem of Cubans cheating tourists. He thus supported the actions taken by the police, even though the one suffering from it was a neighbor he knew and considered a good and decent person. Abdel was a hardworking student, and thus a good Cuban citizen, but in the police’s view he looked like one who was up to something. The official reason for imprisoning Cubans walking with foreigners is to protect tourists from dangerous Cubans trying to cheat them or steal from them. This discourse is also reflected in how many Cubans outside the zones of jineterismo support the way the police are handling the “problem”.

Later, I also discussed the incident with Ricardo and his Argentinean girlfriend, Susana, who rented another room in Eugenio’s apartment. Their opinion was that the boys were arrested because Abdel looked like a stereotypical jinetero. Ricardo was a white Cuban and had never been stopped walking with Susana. He then continued the conversation by explaining how bad the “real” jineteros are. His opinion was that they come from the provinces to sponge on the tourists, and they are too lazy to work so they live illegally in Havana. Ricardo did not support the police’ actions, but
at the same time complained that there are many bad people in the street that do not even have a legal residence.

Black Cubans are often aware that some people look at them as dangerous criminals, and seem in general to be prepared for what is likely to come about when walking on the street in company with tourists. It was obvious that Abdel was more prepared than Gerardo in dealing with the police, as he knew more or less how to handle the situation. Abdel was aware that there was a possibility for him to be stopped, which was also why he strategically pretended to be the tourist’s boyfriend. Gerardo, who did not have a stereotypical jinetero look, would most probably not have been caught if Abdel had not been present. As a white person, one can more easily pass as a non-Cuban, and avoid troubles with the police. Abdel and Gerardo were not what one would think of as professional jineteros, nor did they hang out with people who were, yet they are reminded that interacting with tourists is not accepted by the authorities and that one should be careful walking with tourists on the street, especially if one happens to have a specifically “suspicious” appearance.

**The reproduction of the race hierarchy**

The discourse of blackness and judgments towards the black “race”, have a long history, dating back to colonial times when the trade of black slaves was still common. In Cuba slavery was abolished in 1886. However, the notion of whites as the most civilized race, as opposed to the inferior and uncivilized blacks, could legitimize the continuing ruling position of the whites in the nineteenth century and into twentieth century Cuba, as well as in other Latin-American countries (Wade 1997). Strategies of whitening, a social progress aiming at racially improving the nation, both physically and culturally, have its roots in nineteenth century European racist science of human biology (Ibid.). It was assumed that the white race had a stronger blood type that would naturally outstrip other types. In addition, white
European immigration was encouraged while restrictions were set on the immigration of blacks.

Influential figures like the poet and politician, José Martí (1853-1895), and the ethnologist, Fernando Ortíz (1881-1969), have played key roles in promoting equality and racial integration in Cuba (Fernandez 2010). Nevertheless, despite several attempts at abolishing racial discrimination, racism endured in pre-revolutionary Cuba, and excluded the black part of the population from spaces that were reserved for the whites. When Fidel Castro came to power he aimed at eradicating the social differences between the races by giving everyone equal rights. Racism was associated with capitalism and class exploitation, and therefore, to utter racist expressions in public was considered counter-revolutionary (de la Fuente 2001). However, in the wake of the economic crisis in the 1990’s, the Cuban government lost much of its popularity and legitimacy, resulting in a rise of social acceptability towards racist ideas. Yet, racism has been a silenced theme during the revolution and it is not until recently that Cuban academics have started to openly discuss the problem of race in Cuba (cf. Dominquez 2008; Rodríguez Ruiz 2010).

My first two weeks in Havana I spent much of my evenings watching soap operas with Elena and Eugenio. The plot in one of the Cuban produced novelas was centered on a high class white family, who was served by a black skinned housemaid or perhaps a slave. I was surprised to see how notions of race were represented in such an explicit way through an official TV-channel. I later read an article by the Cuban anthropologist, Esteban Morales Dominguez (2008), who argues that one of the problems of the time is how the race hierarchy is reproduced through media and in everyday interaction, despite the revolution’s attempt to eliminate racial differences. Alejandro de la Fuente (2001) notes how blacks are similarly excluded from movies, and if they do have a role, it is mainly in movies dealing with slavery, or with questions such as criminality and marginality. Moreover, ideas about Afro-Cubans
being primitive and uncivilized, and that they are incapable of intellectual progress despite having access to higher education, still prevail in common Cuban discourse (Ibid.).

Later in the fieldwork I was to experience much more provoking situations than watching *novelas*, like several arrests and police harassments. Many black Cubans experience the police control as a constant threat to their right to walk freely in the streets. The men’s possibilities of increased freedom and mobility are affected by how they are publicly seen and how they are swept off the streets by the police. It thus becomes a vicious circle where the search for freedom and mobility requires activities that make them less free, especially if you have stereotypical *jinetero* looks. As de la Fuente (2001:329) elegantly expresses it “…racism is a self-fulfilling prophecy: it denies opportunities to a certain group due to their alleged insufficiencies and vices, and in turn, lack of opportunities creates the very insufficiencies and vices initially used to justify actions”.

**Restrictions on mobility**

*The ‘bad’ inhabitants of Habana Vieja*

During my time in Havana I got to know four different parts of the city, all with its different characteristics and reputations; Miramar, Vedado, Centro Habana and Habana Vieja. The different neighborhoods of Havana bear the marks of stability with few people moving in and out, the same families living in the same houses for generations (Fernandez 2010:86). This is due to the strict regulations on housing; it is not legal to sell or buy a house, so instead it must be traded with someone else. However, to trade a house is time consuming and requires the right contacts and knowledge about the bureaucratic system. Therefore, although they may wish to move, relatively few people take the step of actually exchanging their house. The barrio in which one lives has thus come to be one of the most important markers of identity, and each barrio bears with it a certain kind of reputation (Ibid.). Miramar is
recognized for its embassy area, its clean and spacious streets and outdoor areas, its coastline and beaches and its many luxurious tourist hotels. Vedado is famous for its safe neighborhood with decent people inhabiting nicely and relatively well-renovated houses. Centro Habana is by contrast known for its dusty and dirty streets, rundown buildings and by the “bad” manners of its residents. Habana Vieja is a special case. As a tourist doing a guided tour through Habana Vieja you may never recognize the dilapidated buildings, the water shortages and the relative poverty of the people living there. You may wander through the beautifully renovated streets, admire the colonial styled buildings, eat at a good restaurant and listen to the rhythms of Cuban “son” music reaching you from one of the tourist cafes thinking that this is Cuba. In reality most of the people living in Habana Vieja are squeezed out of these sights, restaurants and streets renovated and designed especially for tourists. Berg (2005) writes that Habana Vieja is constructed through a narrative of a colonial past in a way that represents Cuba as a primarily white nation. She argues that there is a direct link from the colonial times to the present, not including the history of slaves and the African heritage or the history of the Cuban revolution. Consequently, Habana Vieja symbolizes a place for the white elite, excluding the predominantly black population that inhabits the area, from the official discourse. The reputation of Habana Vieja is much like that of Centro Habana, two barrios that are perceived to be populated by so-called guapos, men up to trouble, fighting in the streets, using vulgar language, being lazy, not wanting to study or work and operating in illegal businesses (Fernandez 2010:96). The overcrowded houses, squeezing people out in the street, may also add to the reputation of Habana Vieja as a barrio filled with guapos, locos and drunk people en la calle. So, despite the racial integration put forward by the revolution, the city of Havana is still divided into zones based on a racial and social hierarchy. Personal identity is largely connected to the barrio in which one resides, a label that can be difficult to get away
with. This contributes to the immobility of those who live in Habana Vieja, both physically and symbolically.

*Coping with the ethical discourse*

Those who work as *jineteros* and define themselves as such are often aware that they are considered bad people. They are forced to cope with the ethical discourse in their everyday lives; they are aware that the life they are living is not collectively accepted. The commentaries that followed the arrest of Abdel and Gerardo are examples of how the ethical discourse of being a good and hard-working Cuban citizen is expressed, a discourse which can also justify the actions taken by the police. In the fourth month of my fieldwork a group of men working as *jineteros* asked me whether some of the families I lived with had ever warned me about them. I told them about the family in Centro Habana and they all laughed about it making fun of Eugenio’s warnings. It was obvious to all that he did not understand much about their life situation. Through for example police control the men are constantly reminded that walking with tourists is considered incorrect behavior. This constant reminder of their immoral behavior can, at least partly, explain how the men who engage themselves with foreigners constantly try to run away from the definition of a bad person. They therefore try to justify their way of living by blaming external factors like the state structure that does not give them another choice, or, as I have discussed, the material desires of Cuban girls. However, some of the men can be said to have given up positioning themselves within this ethical discourse, and have turned against the system and against their Cuban identity. To them, it does not matter what people think of them; they do not let the dominant value system judge whether they are good or bad, whether they are worthy Cuban citizens or not. It seems that all they want is to leave the island for good and never return.
The bodily experience of police harassment

Habana Vieja is one of the barrios with the highest rate of police controls. Based on what I have been told, there was much more violence towards tourists in the 1990’s, something that led the authorities to take action. The amount of police in the streets increased, and higher penalties for violence towards tourists were introduced. Perhaps the police make the streets safer for tourists, but they can also be quite displeasing to those operating there or inhabiting the area. Through the actions of the police officers, the state disseminates the dominant values of society, while discouraging the values that the “street people” represent. When stopped by the police, or when harassed and perhaps imprisoned, the “street people” are reminded that there is not room for all kinds of people and all types of activities within the realm of the socialist state. The bodily experiences of being handcuffed, being questioned at the police station, and perhaps being locked up for a few hours, or even for a few days, might exacerbate the feeling of being outcasts. There is a tendency that white men, or black men living outside the zones of jineterismo, who have never been exposed to police harassment, are more supportive of the political system and the police’s methods to handle the problem of “bad people in the street”. For example, a white acquaintance, living in Habana Vieja, said one time that the only problem with Cuba is its economy. Having heard from other acquaintances that the main problem with Cuba is the bad treatment of its own people, I argued: “You say that only because you have never been persecuted by the police”. He then replied: “The police have their reasons; there is evidence that there is a lot more crime among black people than white people”. And so the discussion went on. It seems that police harassment must be bodily experienced by the individual for strong negative feelings towards the state to be produced. Even if my acquaintance from Habana Vieja had seen his black friends having trouble with the police, he did not seem to consider the police’s actions a big problem, perhaps because he had never bodily experienced police harassment himself. For him it was working fulltime
without getting enough money for a living that was the most severe issue of Cuban politics.

The bodily experiences of police harassment and persecution might produce disgust towards the state, and, with that, desperate desires for leaving the country. Some of my acquaintances, all of them rastas, told me that once they leave Cuba they will never return as Cuban citizens. Having been through harsh confrontations with the police, there might be little left of positive sentiments towards the Cuban state. Perhaps they still feel emotionally attached to the Cuban people, the Cuban culture, music and tropic climate, but to identify themselves with the Cuban revolution and the Cuban dominant values produced by the state are something they rather want to keep distance from.

**Concluding remarks**

Morality, racism and state control are factors that structure the daily lives of my acquaintances. The black Cuban population, especially those living in badly reputed areas of town, may experience being harassed by the police in a much higher degree than the white part of the population that can more easily pass as non-Cubans. Like discussed in chapter two, Cuba can be seen to have “blackened” due to the increment of foreign tourists visiting the country (Roland 2006). Even so, prejudices against the black race date back to colonial times when the blacks were held as slaves, and still exist in today’s Cuba despite the attempt of eradicating discrimination based on ideas of race. I argued that Cubans, who are repeatedly bothered by the police, may feel less emotionally attached to Cuba, as they suffer from being judged and marginalized in their own country. This restriction of mobility may trigger off anger towards the state and increase the desire finding a woman to be able to leave the island.
Chapter 7: Concluding reflections

_Simplemente soy un hombre que ha luchado por salirse de las cadenas que lo ataban a la realidad de la vida. Conocí a una mujer preciosa por fuera y hermosa por dentro con la cual me casé el día 15 de mayo del 2009 y con la cual he decidido formar una familia y vivir juntos futuramente y eternamente._

_I am simply a man who has struggled to set myself free from the chains that have tied me to the reality of life. I met a woman, gorgeous on the outside and beautiful on the inside, with whom I married the 15 May 2009, and with whom I have decided to create a family and to live together in the future and for all eternity._

(Edgar, 28 years)

As I proposed in the introduction, the main objective of this thesis has been to show “how Cuban men who get involved with foreign women negotiate the tensions between individual desires for freedom and mobility versus the social obligations of being a good man and a good Cuban citizen”. The moral dilemmas experienced by the men who engage in different kinds of relationships with female tourists must be seen in light of an epoch of dramatic social change. Like Durkheim says it is particularly in times of “moral effervescence” that new moralities emerge and new symbols take shape (Archetti 1999). In the years before, and especially in the wake of the economic crisis in the 1990’s, _jineteros, jineteras_ and _pingueros_ came into view in the streets of Havana. These are prototypes that may be seen by some to represent the moral decline in contemporary Cuba, and as threats to the ideas and values presented by the socialist state. People in general are expected to agree to the revolutionary principles and to honor the “big men” (Fidel, Raúl, Che Guevara, Camilo Cienfuegos among others) who symbolize the triumph of the revolution, the freedom, the anti-imperialism and the open politics devoid of lies. If one does not agree to the dominant meaning of these symbols, one might risk being labeled _gusano_.
worm), counter-revolutionary, antisocial etc. To utter counter-revolutionary opinions in public could have devastating consequences for the individual, so most people avoid these labels by expressing their political disagreements in private. Perhaps it was challenging for people to give everything in the name of the revolution prior to the economic crisis. However, in contemporary Cuba it seems that it is nearly impossible to entirely carry out the expectations of el hombre nuevo. To sacrifice oneself for causes other than the nearest family is difficult in periods of severe material need and shortage of everything from basic food supplies, to gas, oil and clothing. Even though many Cubans may work and study hard, do voluntary work or engage themselves politically, one must at the same time carry out illegal business and other activities to be able to fulfill individual material needs and in order to feed ones family. Many people realize the shortcomings of the system, and may disagree to some parts of it, but are nevertheless still supportive of the basic principles of the revolution. What is underlying is also the pride of being Cuban, of being a citizen of the only country in Latin-America that has managed to fight against North-American political invasions. One good friend of mine said once that if Cuba was to be attacked by outside forces, he would fight for his country. He declared that this mentality is something that rests latently in many Cubans, even though they may not completely agree to the socialist ideals of contemporary politics. Perhaps this pride is what makes many Cubans adhere to an identity as good revolutionaries and good Cuban citizens, regardless of the fact that they at times have to cross the line of what is accepted by the socialist state. The phenomenon of jineterismo may be permeating the whole society and can be seen to symbolize the current situation in the country (cf. Forrest 2002). However, jineterismo is mostly seen as a phenomenon exclusive to certain parts of the city and to gente de la calle. Thus, it is, in particular, the black man, visible in the bad reputed streets of Havana who is blamed for the moral decline in today’s Cuba. The appearance of the black man, perhaps with dreads, may in itself represent an immoral lifestyle, even if
some of the men with this look might not engage in the kind of activities that they are accused of. This symbolism, however, did not emerge as a result of the economic crisis, but has developed through decades. As Cohen (1974) argues, to avoid social collapse, symbols must go through a slow process of development. Like we have seen, the race hierarchy in Cuba today carries with it the legacy of the past. Blacks are still to a certain degree seen as second-rate citizens, and often is delinquency associated with the black race.

The symbolism that is forced upon the blacks, and especially the black rastas, are, however, not quietly accepted by its recipients. The *jineteros* in the streets of Habana Vieja attempt to manipulate the symbols, turning the meaning of them to their own advantage. Everyone who engages with foreign tourists and who operates within the zones of *jineterismo* must deal with the symbolism of the *jinetero* label. While some men direct the meaning of the term by keeping distance from it, or by dividing the term into *good* and *bad*, others use it to gain respect on the street by being successful with female tourists. In this manner, the dominant symbolism of the *jinetero* label is contested. This very ambiguity of the symbols is, according to Cohen (1974), what makes possible the continuity of social life. Besides, even if the men are aware of their bad behaviors, as defined by the dominant ethical discourse, they can hold external factors responsible for their need to engage themselves with tourists; the historical processes that the individual has no control of, the faltering economy, the unjust political system, the unreasonable conduct of the police officer imprisonment people without obvious reason, the strong material desires of Cuban girls and so on. Through this rationalization of their activities the men in Habana Vieja can cope with the everyday moral dilemmas. It is necessary to do these moral reasonings in order to live meaningful lives.

Every time I come back to Cuba I hear the words *se fue* (he left). *Juanca se fue para España, Yonnatan se fue para Canada, Emilio se fue para Italia, Yotuel se fue para Suecia.*
They all leave. It does not matter if their strategy was sleeping with old and fat women or sleeping with poor students. Somehow everyone finds a woman who is willing to marry them. Getting out of the country is the goal for most of those who regularly date foreign women. For many youth, the emblems and “big men” symbolizing the triumph of the revolution become almost insignificant as they feel like victims in their own country. The constant feeling of limited mobility, the fear of being taken into custody, even when walking around in their own neighborhood, might add to the desires of leaving Cuba. Perhaps the tourist, symbolizing prosperity, mobility, a life outside Cuba, a life in freedom, might have more influence on some men than the symbols the government has impressed on them since childhood. As one acquaintance expressed it the first time he set foot outside Cuba:

*Estoy libre cojone!* (For my balls sake I’m free!)
Contradictory values

“Revolution is: No more lies, no more violation of ethical principles”

“Long live the hell in Cuba”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amigo/a</td>
<td>Amigo/a</td>
<td>Friend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asere</td>
<td>Asere</td>
<td>Pet name between men, literally: little monkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bodega</td>
<td>Tienda</td>
<td>Shop with items sold in pesos cubanos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buena gente</td>
<td>Buena gente</td>
<td>Good people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bueno/a</td>
<td>Bueno/a</td>
<td>Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dinero</td>
<td>Dinero</td>
<td>Money</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calle</td>
<td>Calle</td>
<td>Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carné</td>
<td>Carné</td>
<td>Identification card</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casa particular</td>
<td>Casa particular</td>
<td>Private house/room to rent for tourists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casino</td>
<td>Casino</td>
<td>Cuban salsa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chulo</td>
<td>Chulo</td>
<td>Pimp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cochino</td>
<td>Cochino</td>
<td>Dirty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comisión</td>
<td>Comisión</td>
<td>Fee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De pinga</td>
<td>De pinga</td>
<td>Swearword related to male genitals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engañar</td>
<td>Engañar</td>
<td>Fool/cheat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gente de la calle</td>
<td>Gente de la calle</td>
<td>Street people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gordo/a</td>
<td>Gordo/a</td>
<td>Fat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guagua</td>
<td>Guagua</td>
<td>Bus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish Word</td>
<td>English Translation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guapo</td>
<td>Touch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gusano</td>
<td>Worm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Habanero/a</td>
<td>A person from Havana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hombre nuevo</td>
<td>New man</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extranjero/a</td>
<td>Foreigner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fritura</td>
<td>Tourist without money</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inventar</td>
<td>Invent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jinetear</td>
<td>Verb for seeking tourists</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jinetero/a</td>
<td>Tourist seeker, literally: horseback rider</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jineterismo</td>
<td>Prostitution in Cuba, literally: horseback riding</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La cubana</td>
<td>The Cuban girl/woman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La/el yuma</td>
<td>Foreigner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Libreta</td>
<td>Rationing booklet</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loco/a</td>
<td>Crazy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luchar</td>
<td>Struggle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negrito</td>
<td>Black kid</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novela</td>
<td>Soap opera</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Novia</td>
<td>Girlfriend</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mala gente</td>
<td>Bad people</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malo/a</td>
<td>Bad</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maricón</td>
<td>Gay</td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paladar</td>
<td>Private restaurant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pandilleros</td>
<td>Mafia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinga negra</td>
<td>Black penis</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinguero</td>
<td>Homosexual tourist seeker, derives from ‘pinga’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planchao</td>
<td>Rum in paper can</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Por gusto</td>
<td>For nothing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Por interés</td>
<td>For the sake of personal gain</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prima</td>
<td>Cousin</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qué bolá?</td>
<td>What’s up?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacrificarse</td>
<td>Sacrifice oneself</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sobrevivir</td>
<td>Survive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viejo/a</td>
<td>Old</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vivir de la calle</td>
<td>Live off the street</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vuelta</td>
<td>Turn (in salsa)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


