

# The Neglected Voices Amidst the Noise

Exploring personal narratives and international media's absence  
through Cuba's 11<sup>th</sup> of July Social Movement



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<sup>1</sup> Photo from the 11<sup>th</sup> of July 2021, Cuba. A peaceful protester with blood on his flag from the attacks of the military police in Havana during the demonstrations.

Photo provided by JAR (Jóvenes de la Resistencia) on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2024) (JAR, 2024)

## Summary

This thesis explores how personal narratives offer a nuanced understanding of Cuba's political situation and highlight the significant absence of comprehensive international media coverage, focusing specifically on the context of the July 11 uprising. The research is anchored by three primary arguments that advocate for the use of personal narratives in understanding the Cuban situation: the integration of macro and micro history, the validity and significance of personal narratives, and the potential of these narratives to combat censorship. These arguments serve as the central themes throughout the thesis, guiding the analysis and discussion.

The study utilizes four semi-structured interviews to delve into the experiences and perspectives of Cuban individuals, revealing how the Cuban government imposes false consciousness to maintain its hegemonic power and suppress resistance. This imposition is evident through various government strategies, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, the harsh repression of July 11 activists, stringent internet control measures, and the monopoly on communication channels, all of which are designed to maintain dominance and stifle dissent.

Additionally, the analysis uncovers the Cuban state's use of hyper-recognition, a process where the regime imposes severe and unjust punishments on activists and dissenters. These punishments often lead to severe personal consequences such as house arrest, job loss, and forced exile. This underscores the totalitarian nature of the Cuban regime, demonstrating that all forms of resistance, whether minor acts of defiance or major mobilizations, face harsh repercussions.

Personal narratives play a crucial role in this study, as they provide a window into the lived experiences of Cubans and expose the profound lack of rights and freedoms within the country. These narratives reveal several critical themes, including the absence of media coverage, censorship, the plight of political prisoners, deteriorating health conditions, the psychological impact of living under an oppressive regime, political manipulation, and the inadequacy of in-depth investigative reporting.

The thesis also discusses the role of international media in covering the Cuban situation. While some human rights organizations do provide critical and uncensored coverage of Cuba, their reach and impact are limited compared to larger media outlets. These larger outlets often preserve and

propagate the anti-imperialist discourse promoted by the Cuban government, resulting in a significant gap in the coverage of the true conditions and struggles faced by the Cuban people.

In conclusion, this thesis emphasizes the critical need for more comprehensive and uncensored international media coverage of the Cuban situation. By prioritizing and amplifying personal narratives, this research highlights the urgent necessity for profound and thorough reporting that goes beyond superficial interpretations and second-hand sources. The findings underscore the importance of giving a voice to the Cuban people and ensuring that their stories and experiences are heard on a global scale, ultimately contributing to a more accurate and holistic understanding of the political realities in Cuba.

## Acknowledgements

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I want to extend a huge thank you to my supervisor Óscar García Agustín, who has been my guide and teacher through my five years of academic research, always encouraging me to hear the voices of the people, and to follow my passions, no matter how difficult it might be. Thank you, Óscar.

This thesis would never have come to life, if it hadn't been for the help of my mentor Kiele Cabrera. Kiele has been disponible for months and has helped me gain a unique insight to the situation of her homeland and has done so without hesitation, no matter how challenging the conversations have been. It is because of devotees like Kiele, that we see an uprising in the Cuban society, and that big change will come soon enough, I'm sure of it.

Kiele, we did it. An enormous thank you to you.

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## Introduction

Cuba, 2021. The pandemic is at its highest in Cuba, and the Cuban government is imposing more restrictions on the everyday life of the Cuban people (ECLAC, 2022). Therefore, many are confined to their home during the pandemic, and that is the keyword for the 11<sup>th</sup> of July, 2021. People staying home and spending time on social media, while they communicate, discuss, and compare stories, becomes the trigger for the national manifestations of decades of dissatisfaction with the Cuban regime on the 11<sup>th</sup> of July 2021.

To understand the extent of this social movement and the buildup to the 11<sup>th</sup> of July 2021, one must go even further back to 2018. In 2018 the San Isidro movement was formed by artists, intellectuals and journalists in Havana, Cuba, as a peaceful protest against the censorship, the regime was putting on Cuban art (Amnesty International, 2020). Mobilizations were arranged, songs were written, people were gathered, but unfortunately, the pandemic arrived ashore on the island, and complicated life further in on the island.

In the meantime, the artists behind the crucial song, “*Patria y vida*”<sup>2</sup> (red. Fatherland and life), which is a contrast to world famous slogan of Che Guevara “*Patria o muerte*” (red. Fartherland or death) (Lima, 2019), released this song, which would become the hymn of the 11<sup>th</sup> of July movement, and from that point, it all accelerated in Cuba.

On the 11<sup>th</sup> of July more people than ever before were demonstrating in the streets of Cuba, shouting “*down with the dictatorship*” and “*Patria y vida*”, as a result of many years of economical collapse and little governmental support to the inhabitants of Cuba (Human Rights Watch, 2024). Unfortunately, the mobilizations were met with the dictatorship’s undemocratic and inhuman strategies of dealing with uprisings. Killings, imprisonment, torture, exile, and house-arrest were just some of the fates which met the brave protesters of the 11<sup>th</sup> of July in Cuba (El Funky, 2024).

All these gruesome destinies have been hushed down in international media due to political reasons, or simply not prioritized by the popular culture (Wolfe & Femenias, 2021). Time after time again, the Cuban people have experienced violation of their human rights, but little effort has been made from the outside, to tell the stories of the modern heroes of Cuba. Those who aren’t printed on

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<sup>2</sup> A song released in 2021 by: Descember Bueno, Gente de Zona, Yotuel, Maykel Osorbo, and El Funky

tourist t-shirts or wear black barrettes and green uniforms.

It's *that* story, which I have decided to dedicate my thesis to. To use my privilege as a European academic to speak up about the oppression, which is persisting in Cuba, and to be able to forward the inspirational stories, which I have come to know through this investigation. Drawing from the methodology of semi structured interviews and personal narrative analysis, this thesis employs a lens of social change, particularly focusing on the 11J movement, to analyze individual narratives within the broader context of societal transformation. Through unfiltered accounts and firsthand sources, the goal is to present an authentic portrayal of Cuban experiences, challenging generalizations and stereotypes perpetuated by mainstream media.

Analyzing the personal narratives through terms as *false consciousness* imposed by the dominant power, and *intent* and *recognition* of resistance, my goal is to give a profound insight to the political situation in Cuba, and to provide a counternarrative to the *absence* of international aid, which I have encountered through my years of academical and personal interest in Cuba (Scott, 1990; Hollander & Einwohner, 2004; de Sousa Santos, 2016). By amplifying marginalized voices and countering prevailing stereotypes, the aim is to foster a more nuanced understanding of Cuba's socio-political dynamics, ultimately contributing to positive social change.

In light of these considerations, my problem formulation for the thesis is as following:

**Why do personal narratives contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the political situation in Cuban society? And how can the prioritization of personal narratives in the context of the 11<sup>th</sup> of July uprising showcase the *absence* of international media in Cuba?**

## Methodological framework

### Researcher positionality - contextual backstory to the thesis

In initiating this thesis, I find it significant to provide contextual background for a better understand of the process it has been to write this thesis, and the positioning of myself as an investigator. Throughout my academical career, I have at every opportunity focused my projects on Latin American problematics, and especially on Cuba as my main interest throughout my bachelor and master's. I was fortunate enough to travel to Cuba for a month back in March 2019, where I was

absolutely taken aback by the beautiful hearts of the Cuban people and the uniqueness of Cuban history, so it was elementary that my most prominent thesis to date would focus on Cuba.

In October 2023, I engaged with an Instagram profile named JAR (JAR, 2024), where we established a common interest in sharing the stories of the Cuban people. This collaboration between myself and JAR was facilitated by my mentor, Kiele Cabrera, an integral figure in the Cuban fight for freedom, overseeing JAR (Jóvenes de la Resistencia), an organization disseminating uncensored content from Cuba (JAR, 2024). Kiele Cabrera enabled the contact with interviewees and offered unwavering support throughout this transformative journey.

It is crucial to clarify that I never positioned myself as a "white savior" presuming superiority over Cuban writers. Rather, I acknowledge my privilege of free speech and the pathway it provides for academic exploration. Through this experience, I had the privilege of encountering numerous Cuban individuals willing to share their personal narratives on the July 11<sup>th</sup> movement and their lives in Cuba. This has left me filled with admiration for a people, I already consider family.

However, this project has not been without personal repercussions. The likelihood of being blacklisted in Cuba and allied nations appears prominent on my behalf, which brings notable personal consequences with it. Forewarned of this risk, I encountered impediments such as Instagram lockouts and restricted content access, one time due to a Russian blockade in my social media. This interference underscores the geopolitical interests at play, and how crucial the silencing of the situation in Cuba has been for several worldwide governments, through decades.

Despite these challenges, I persevered, recognizing that my personal sacrifices pale in comparison to the ones of the politically active Cubans, living in continuous threats from the government (Amnesty International, 2020).

It is evident that the Cuban situation underscores the imperative for further investigation into the extensive, controversial collaborations between certain third-world countries and governments. It also prompts reflection on the potential impact of academic research in catalyzing global discourse and advocating for oppressed voices, as I, a Danish university student succeeded in aggravating three continents - what wouldn't a full team of professionals be able to accomplish in the name of free speech and ensuring human rights?



## **Semi-structured interviews - The heart of the methodology**

In preparing this thesis, the most significant methodological decision has been to base the project on the semi-structured interviews with the personal angle, I have chosen. Prior to this, I had never worked with interviews or focused on the direct discourses. The thesis came to be, because of my devotion to working with Cuba, and the opportunity of the exclusive interviews, and so, I constructed the thesis around (what were to become semi-structured) interviews.

I will now present my positioning and adaptation of the on the *why, how, and where* to do semi-structured interviews, as well as argue for its suitability in relation to my area of research.

### **Why do semi-structured interviews?**

My methodological approach to making these interviews, has been to have a semi-structured interview guide as a base for my investigation. A semi-structured interview gives the advantage for the interviewer, that it's preparable, and it gives a sense of support to have already written questions in comparison to informal/unstructured interviews (Bryman, 2016).

It has been important to me, to perform these interviews as disciplined as possible, but at the same time give space for the personal narratives and opinions, which inevitably will surface during these interviews on sensitive subjects.

Looking at validity and the possibility of finding "precise" conclusions to my problem area, a fully structured interview or even a questionnaire might have provided results, which are easier quantified (Bryman, 2016). However, it would be highly tactless to ask Cuban exiles to describe life-long trauma on a scale from one to ten, and so I quickly moved on from the more quantitative interview methods and settled on making 15 semi-structured broad questions with space to ask elaborative questions. (See: Appendix 1, The interview guide).

### *Sampling the interviews - The experience of working with people and not data*

The sampling process has been relatively long comparing the quantity of interviews, from November 2023 to April 2024, due to busy schedules on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, but I have the impression, that the longer sampling period has provided the investigation with more depth and time for consideration. Because it *is* challenging to work with people from another culture, another continent, who have their own lives to tend to. This has cost me a few interviews, as some Cuban exiles could not find time in their new-settled lives, which is highly understandable.

Another perspective to these cancellations of interviews is the mental burden, it is for the Cubans to

talk about distressing situations from the homeland, they just left (Turati, 2021).

To prepare myself for this collaboration, I have consulted with journalists, as well as searching for tips on how to interview traumatized people, and these collected recommendations has helped form my interviews in matter of *setting, format, and technique* (Turati, 2021). An example on the *format/technique/setting*, where I prioritized the people over the continuity of my methodology, was after a while of searching for interviewees, I concluded, that it might be less intimidating, if I presented the possibility of answering the questions in writing. With this procedure, I would lose the opportunity of asking follow-up questions, as well as I wouldn't be able to present myself personally, and *create visual contact* (Turati, 2021). Consequently, two of my transcripts are directly completed by the Cuban interviewees, and not a transcript of an interview. This *format* came to be, as I was *preparing my interviewees with the questions beforehand*, and then an interviewee asked, if the questions could be answered in written form, thus it became to be a jointly developed *format* (Turati, 2021).

An approach to my interviews, which were in "person" (online), has been offering my undivided attention to the screen, and *avoiding taking notes*, but instead keep the interview as a memo, and later produce the transcript. This implicates the risk of later overlooking relevant "thoughts of the moment", but as I didn't have the opportunity to travel to USA to meet in person with the Cubans, I prioritized being present through the zoom-calls (Turati, 2021), (See also: *Researcher positionality - contextual backstory to the thesis*).

To conclude on my sampling, it is my assessment, that even though there has been challenges in time, location, and handling, I have collected impact interviews and personal narratives from the volunteering Cubans, which certainly will contribute to the official discourse about Cuba.

### *The micro- and macro effect*

The subject of the contribution to the official discourse about Cuba, puts the effect of my semi-structured interviews up for discussion - Because what do they provide within the international debate of Cuba?

In my search of theory, in the book "*Narrative Sociology*" by (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, The use of personal narratives in social science and history, 2019), I uncovered a consideration on the *micro history* and the *macro history*, and how personal narratives taken from interviews and alike,

contribute to the merging of the two, and the hegemonic compensation this brings along - to prioritize the history of the people. The chapter quotes this observation as such: “(...) *personal narrative analysis pushes the investigator to move beyond the distinction between what sociologists call the macro and micro levels of analysis (...) and instead to focus on the connections linking them*” (p. 54 , l. 3-7) (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, The use of personal narratives in social science and history, 2019).

In my context, the *macro* level of analysis is the contextual sources from international media as well as international policies, which I will be using in my discussion, to account for the *absence* in relation to media coverage about Cuba (de Sousa Santos, 2016). The *micro* level of analysis is taking personal narratives and basing my analysis on these, prioritizing the micro history, with the intention of equalizing the hegemonic relationship between the state and the Cuban people, which is evident in today’s Cuban society (Human Rights Watch, 2024).

In the approach of *micro* level analysis, it must be recognized that my field of investigation does not hold a larger quantity of interviews. In some perspectives this might be seen as not representative, but in this case of the above argumentation, it would have been representative even with just one interview, because of the stabilization of societal power the prioritization of personal narratives gives (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, The use of personal narratives in social science and history, 2019).

If I had e.g. 20 interviews, it would have provided me with a broader field of evidence of *absence*, but ultimately, every individual word from the interviews count as a counternarrative to the advantaged international media and repressive Cuban state (de Sousa Santos, 2016; Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, The use of personal narratives in social science and history, 2019).

## **The interviews**

Searching for the most utile way of initiating conversation with the Cubans, and at the same time consider that I am doing an academical research, semi-structured interviews seem to be the most controlled method, at the same time as it is “humane”, when one reflects upon the delicate subject of the Cuban political situation.

Semi-structured interviews are described as “(...) *more powerful than other types of interviews for qualitative research because it allows for the researcher to acquire in-depth information and evidence from interviewees, while considering the focus of the study. Second, it allows flexibility and adaptability for researchers to hold their track as compared to an unstructured interview,*

*where its direction is not fully considered.*” (Ruslin, Syam, Sarib, Mashuri, & Alhabsyi, 2022), hereby supporting my point of the great adaptability this method has to my project.

### *Procedure of the interview guide*

My procedure of applying semi-structured interviews to my thesis started after I established the collaboration with JAR and subsequently started to build up my knowledge of the 11<sup>th</sup> of July movement, researching the happenings, rather pragmatic and superficial, as I did not want to be influenced by too many layers of storytelling (See: *Telling stories - Intersubjective understandings and cutting to the bone*) (JAR, 2024).

I started making a chronological timeline of the happenings before the 11<sup>th</sup> of July in terms of the social events leading up to it, the social movements who created the 11<sup>th</sup> of July, socio-political occurrences which served as a push-factor for the 11<sup>th</sup> of July, etc.

After the timeline, I started forming my 15 questions for the interview guide. Here, I focused on amplifying my questions, so that they would be open for interpretation to the interviewees, and as a result of broad questions, their personal narratives had the opportunity of showing a larger range of narrative blocks, than if the questions were more specific (See: Appendix 1, The interview guide) (Riessman, 1993).

As an additional measure concerning the interview questions, I submitted them to my mentor Kiele Cabrera to review, to ensure adherence to cultural and personal sensitivities. Her approval of both the original questions and the Spanish translation was sought to maintain consistency of intention across language barriers during the interview process.

### *A strategic sunbeam in a somber investigation*

I wish to acknowledge a highlight in my interview strategy in terms of focusing on the confidence and individualization of the person, I interviewed. These responses made me realize just how formative the human experience is, when working with academia.

Coming from an oppressive state, the Cubans are infrequently asked their opinion, and are used to logistical and collective questions, rather than individualized and innovative questions.

Thus, I started out with a formal presentation of the interviewee and their life before the 11<sup>th</sup> of July and ending the interview with a status-enhancing question as *“Is there a message you would like to add to this interview and send out to the world?”*, which has in my case proven to be a brilliant

course of action (See Appendix 1, The interview guide).

This, because the interviewees get to show their positionality and dreams for their personal future, and express political beliefs and values, whether they include Cuba or not. I believe, this left the interviewees with a heightened self-confidence, being asked to contribute to the international discourse as an individual, without any following critiques or limitation of speech. The joy of individualization and the importance of separating individuals' opinions are the reasons to why I refer to my interviewees by their first name in the analysis. To make sure that e.g., Ms. Cabrera, doesn't refer to Kiele's mother or sister, but that Kiele's opinions are her own, and that she gets the credit deserves for coming forward with her story.

### *Demographic considerations of the interviewees*

In reference to the individuals, I didn't personally choose my interviewees, but I was directed towards some possible interviewees by my mentor.

Our focus for choosing the interviewees has been based on *experience* and *variety*. *Experience* in the sense that we have chosen adults, who has lived through the political situation in Cuba, and thereby have a strong memory of their life in Cuba/How their lives in the US has been affected by the situation in Cuba. Signifying, that we haven't reached out to teenagers or younger, or adults who fled Cuba as small children.

In terms of *variety*, we have reached out to people who was "confronted" with the 11<sup>th</sup> of July under a *variety* of circumstances. This means that I have an interviewee, who were part of the mobilizations in Havana, two interviewees who were in Cuba, but put under house arrest by the government on the 11J, as well as I one interviewee, who were already in the US, when the 11J took place, thus *variety* in settings for the personal narratives.

Where the *experience* is important for the representative quality of the thesis, the focus on *variety* as well as being a part of representativity, is a nod of acknowledgment to the American Cubans, who were born on the northern side of the Florida Strait, but still hurt from being exiled from their homeland - thus, an interview of an American born Cuban has been included.

### *GDPR - Processing of the data collected*

I have managed my interviews after the GDPR laws, focusing on the interviews being "personal data in a project" (AAU, 2018). I have done this according to the AAU guide for GDRP in projects (AAU, 2018).

The first step in terms of GDPR, is getting consent from my interviewees in terms of publishing their *sensitive personal data* as political opinions belongs to this category of data (AAU, 2018). I have presented the possibility of anonymity to my interviewees, but all wished to appear personally. After gaining written consent in terms of the *sensitive personal data* and *general personal data* as well as informing my interviewees of their right to withdraw their statements anytime, I've informed my interviewees about the *purpose* of this collection of data. My main purpose is giving the Cubans a space for expression and prioritizing their narratives in a context of advocating for individual, personal narratives, as well as the importance of *micro* history and de-generalization in relation to the political situation in Cuba. Thus, making the data collection *legal* (AAU, 2018). In terms of storage of the data, all the raw material (sounds files, personal notes, and transcripts) will be deleted before the 1<sup>st</sup> of July, thus the only product of personal data remaining, will be the thesis itself. Working with interviews, and especially the translated interviews can raise some difficulties, if they were to be perceived without context. Therefore, the material will be deleted from all platforms after my thesis exam is conducted. It is in this context, that I have chosen to directly color-code in the interviews for my analyses, to avoid over-interpretation and repeating sensitive statements more than necessary (See: *The colors of personal narrative*). For storing my data, I am using my own desktop, as well as a private folder on Google Drive. I have received sound files on an encrypted WhatsApp thread as well, and so there are no physical security breaches which can occur (Loss of USB, physical notes, letters, etc.) (AAU, 2018). Having a copy of the thesis on an online platform is to ensure any technical issues wouldn't disturb the writing of the thesis.

### **Where did the interviews take place?**

As all my interviewees are USA-based Cuban exiles. As mentioned above, I considered about going to the States to do the interviews in person, but due to the possible security risks explained in *Researcher positionality - contextual backstory to the thesis*, I went directly from my 9<sup>th</sup> semester internship in Bolivia and back to Denmark.

I have reflected on how my investigation could have benefitted from having done the interviews in person. There, I see aspects of the possible loss of body language you can't see on a small screen, as well as a more relaxed/respectful atmosphere, I find personal meetings to have rather than the online meeting platforms, as being consequences to the online interview style.

However, I have been highly pleased with the quality of the WhatsApp/Teams calls, and the flexibility online meetings have provided for the interviewees and myself.

## Telling stories - Intersubjective understandings and cutting to the bone

In my production of this thesis, I have learned of an underlying problem in everyday media distribution, which I, essentially, have not previously considered in depth, before diving further into the process of producing stories for media etc.

In the telling of stories and manufacturing information, there are three actors - *the narrator, the analyst, and the audience* (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, Introduction: The use of personal narratives in social science and history, 2008). Thus, there are three links of interpretation, which include intersubjective understandings of the story being told. I find this extended process to be of great relevance to my project - being aware of storytelling processes and thereby maintaining a just criticism toward *absence* in international media (de Sousa Santos, 2016; Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, Introduction: The use of personal narratives in social science and history, 2008).

Returning to this process in the telling of stories, one is firstly introduced to the *narrator(s)*, which in my case are the Cuban, whom I interviewed. Secondly, the *analyst* of the story is myself, and the *audience* of the story, are whom reads my thesis. This method of storytelling provides a quite direct process from the personal narratives of the Cuban interviewees to the audience, who interprets the story I exhibit (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, Introduction: The use of personal narratives in social science and history, 2008).

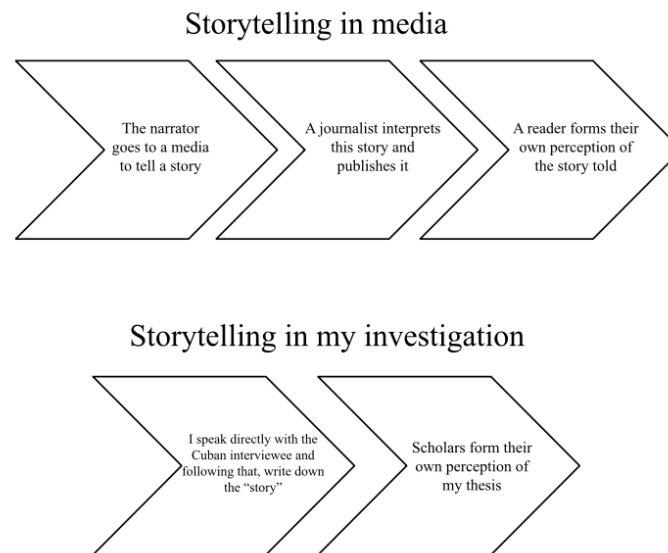
However, my contention is that this directness from source to audience is not frequent in modern telling of stories in media, as it's often seen, journalists reporting from political hotspots, can't be given access to contact people directly, and much of the information circulating the rest of the world, is second-hand sources, whereas my thesis is based on first-hand sources in terms of the interviews (Journalism Research News, 2017)

This way, I get to shorten a link of the chain of intersubjective interpretations, and mediate a story closer to the source, and leave the additional interpretation to the audience, instead of another journalist or informant.

My motivation for undertaking this observation, is to establish early in this thesis, my awareness of the multi-layered nature of storytelling. I aim to encourage readers to critically evaluate the news stories they encounter daily, cautioning against unquestioning acceptance merely based on their source's societal influence.

To illustrate my thoughts about this process, I have constructed a model, to show the advantage it has given me to work with firsthand sources.

### **Illustration to show the advantage of using firsthand sources in terms of storytelling**



*H. B. Houmann, 2024*

### **Narrative analysis - methodologically**

#### **Narrative analysis - Providing more space for the person than the ideology**

In my selection of my main tool for analysis, I have chosen to do a narrative analysis, where I originally thought, I would do a critical discursive analysis. I chose to change my theoretical/methodological turning point, as I dove more into the purpose of my analysis, where I will be focusing on personal narratives, and the "direct" story. This, rather than the political structures of the discourses of the interviewees, to ensure an empathetic approach to a sensitive subject, as well as protecting the narratives of the people rather than facilitating the ideologies, which the Cubans are the proposed counternarrative to.

#### **Narrative analysis - Literature- and methodological base**

My base for my theory and methodology in terms of narrative analysis, includes the book "*Narrative Analysis*" by Catherine Kohler Riessman (Riessman, 1993). Although, this book has



surpassed 30 years since its publication, I find it to have a modern, pragmatic, and logical approach to narrative analysis, which can become an unmanageable term if not broken up into well-explained chapters.

Riessman is a research professor from the University of Boston, where she has a background in sociology, which I find to be compatible with this thesis in terms of my work with social movements and my research on individuals (and groups) within the society.

Another main theoretical work I will be using is the book “*Narrative Sociology*” by Leslie J Irvine, Jennifer L. Pierce, and Robert L. Zussman (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, The use of personal narratives in social science and history, 2019). This book has provided this thesis with an extensive theoretical background to narrative analysis, as well as arguments for the use of personal narratives as “legit” sources of information. To use the science of sociology in this thesis, appears becoming for its objective - to study social change (11J movement) - and so analyzing on social change with the perspective of individualism (personal narrative), is a suitable scientific base of theory.

My third theorist in the methodological base of narrative analysis, is Alan Bryman and his work “*Social Research Methods*” (Bryman, 2016). Bryman’s broad and equitable conceptualization of methods of interviews, coding and possible limitations, provides a steady base to build this thesis upon.

#### *Topical narrative and methodological approach*

Starting out by defining the selected type of narrative analysis, I will be using *topical narrative analysis* rather than the *life story narrative analysis*, because I have focused on my participants’ narrative surrounding the 11J movement (Riessman, 1993). However, I have included some questions about their personal lives before the 11<sup>th</sup> of July 2021, but this has still been in the context of the topic - the 11J movement. Additionally, I have solely made one interview per person, and so, it couldn’t be a *life story interview*, because one would need a longer series of interviews to cover a full life story (Riessman, 1993).

*Inductive method of narrative analysis* is my approach to analyzing the transcripts of my interviews, as I will go through them, “break up” the transcripts by narratives, compare and contrast the narratives from the interview, and after doing that with all interviews, I will be left with some core narratives (the narrative blocks) which I can use to analyze on the *absence* of international media in terms of Cuba and the 11J movement (Riessman, 1993) (See: *Model of analysis*).

### *The colors of personal narratives*

In my analysis of the semi-structured interviews, I have chosen to do a color-coded approach to the formalities of the interview and transferring them to the analyses. Practically, this means that I will be choosing a color for each element of analysis: *false consciousness (mental/material)*, *Intent and recognition*, and individual colors for the three narrative blocks of the *narrative analysis*. I have chosen color-coding due to its dynamic nature in comparison to a more quantified table of analysis e.g., (Bryman, 2016) (See: *GDPR - Processing of the data collected*)

Color coding is a strategy of analysis used to organize elements of attention in longer texts, e.g., interviews, and it provides the possibility of visually identifying recurring narratives blocks/elements of analysis within interviews (Bryman, 2016). The specific color codes will be indicated in the transcripts of the interviews (See: Appendices 3-6).

### **Limitations**

The most challenging limitation to writing this thesis has been the limitation of *resources* and *data collection methods* (Bryman, 2016). I have found it difficult to obtain the information and interviews I needed, and as written above, the collection of the data took me more than 6 months, due to the dynamic nature of working with people (See: *Sampling the interviews - The experience of working with people and not data*). The geographical distance, which includes time zones, culture, and different lifestyles, has had me in a waiting position several times, which has given room for reconsideration (See: *Sampling the interviews - The experience of working with people and not data*).

Having a *time constrain/resource limitation* on the thesis, are relevant limitations as well, where I would have liked to have several years to investigate and possibly travel to Cuba or the United States, to immerse myself into the environment, and get a deeper understanding for the situation, which I am writing about (See: *Researcher positionality - contextual backstory to the reach of the thesis*). Thus, an *external factor* to this thesis, which I could not help, is the political issues, which

comes with criticizing a government like Cuba, which is allied with highly influential governments (See: *Researcher positionality - contextual backstory to the reach of the thesis*).

Due to the exceptional situation in Cuba, generalizability could be difficult to apply entirely to this thesis. However, there are a lot of sub contexts, which apply to the world in general. For example, in my selection of *intent* and *recognition* in my theoretical section, one could generalize to expose police/legal brutality and advocate for the necessity of individual *intent* to be able to call an action for *resistance* (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004). This could apply to countries like the USA, where police brutality is rising and affecting minorities all over the country (Levin, 2024).

## **Conclusion to the methodology**

Concluding on my section of methodology, I have presented the heart of the methodology - the semi structured interviews, and my positioning in the use of this method of data collection, as well as the academic works, I have chosen to support the methodology.

I have mentioned my journalistic approach to this thesis in terms of storytelling, and continuing, I have showcased the methodological base of narrative analysis, which will continue in the theoretical framework, placed below the upcoming State of the Art.

## **State of the Art - Can Cuba scroll its way towards freedom?**

In this section of State of the Art, I will be providing an overlook on the current debates and problematics surfacing in and around Cuba. I will give a historical context to the development of Cuba with a special focus on democracy and social media, relating itself to this thesis, as my general problem area includes social movements and promoting social change in Cuba, which is highly defined by a wish for democracy, and social media as a tool for obtaining it (JAR, 2024).

Beginning with the historical context, one must start out with the revolution of 1959, and the tremendous effect it has had on the Cubans and the world, even though it is an acknowledgement of a destructive discourse, which this thesis deliberately navigates around, prioritizing giving a voice to the neglected people.

Back in 1959, when Fidel Castro, alongside his guerilla army overthrew president Baptista and his North American influenced government, it kickstarted the hateful discourse, which would keep Cuba trapped in a time slot for decades to come (Lopez & Yaffe, 2017). This discourse of anti-imperialism, hatred to the “capitalized” world, convincing the Cuban people of the hostility of the United States, has successfully isolated Cuba and influenced many of its people to such a degree that it appears challenging to attempt to rectify the damage of the Castro regime (Lopez & Yaffe, 2017).

Going from the revolution in 1959 to current day Cuba, the Cubans haven’t experienced a free election, private economy, freedom in mobility or religion, etc. which are some of the constituting pillars in a free society, as well as in creating an individual identity (PEN International, 2023). It is this imposed collectivity, which my analysis of personal narratives is meant to counterpower. It is difficult to imagine generations without an independent identity, that goes beyond nationality and politics, but however, that is the reality of Cuba (JAR, 2024).

But now, there is a new variable to the Cuban equation - the internet.

The mobile internet arrived in Cuba in 2019, as written above, which itself seems like a modern atrocity considering that the northern neighbors in the States, have been equipped with internet since the late 1980’s (Science and Media Museum , 2020).

Due to the polarization between Cuba and USA, the modern world has been kept from influencing Cuba until recently, where the global progress couldn’t be stopped, and mobile (censored) internet was installed. It is this reality, which makes Cuba unique in societal structure, because the international debaters have the possibility to investigate how internet changes a totalitarian society, which never has been seen in this type of political environment before.

## **Cuba and the internet - Liberation by web**

It would be negligent to position my thesis in the field of social movements of Cuba without mentioning the huge impact, the internet access has had on the island, especially knowing the international impact social networks has had on other societal structures.

Looking back on the Arab Spring, academics advocated for the term “Liberation by web”, as the catalyst for the Arab uprising back in 2010 (Wirtschaft, 2021).

Liberation by web and the possibility of organizing groupings independently from the state, is

significant in the discussion of the internet's influence on Cuba's social movements, including the 11J movement, which this thesis is based on (JAR, 2024; Wirtschafter, 2021).

In the early start of Cuba's social networks, the most widely known platform of communication was the blogs circulating the internet, when the internet was still a stationary, public library-luxury, which not many Cubans could attend.

Fighting against the censorship imposed by the state, a few independent journalists started the internationally praised blog-network Generation Y in 2007, which evolved into the independent news platform 14yMedio in 2014 (ICFJ, 2024).

The main architect behind these social networks is Yoani Sánchez, a Cuban philologist, who managed to build her own computer, and have her blog translated into 17 languages, showing a real insight into the Cuban daily life, and gaining international recognition for her work in conveying her personal narrative from her life in Havana (ICFJ, 2024). Sánchez put down the groundwork for what would shape a new culture of information-sharing and organization of the Cuban people, due to her personal narrative focus, and a counternarrative to the media monopoly the Cuban state holds.

Examining more current tendencies of social movements, personal narratives, and internet influence in Cuba, Facebook live has become the biggest platform for independent citizens to use in broadcasting their experiences living in Cuba (Wirtschafter, 2021). The advantage of a Facebook live, is that it cannot be erased in the same way a "static" social network post can, as well as its unfiltered nature, which cannot be manipulated. The drawback of the live streaming is the personal consequences this has for the broadcasters.

One of the most prominent political prisoners in Cuba right now, is Maykel Osorbo<sup>3</sup>, a Cuban rapper who is one of the writers of the earlier mentioned song *Patria y Vida*, a founding member of the San Isidro Movement, and one of the first live broadcasters in Cuba, showing his life through Facebook live, documenting the harassment he encountered from the Cuban state police due to his advocacy for a free Cuba (PEN International, 2023). Osorbo is now facing 9 years in prison due to his liberation through web-intent, which according to the Cuban lawmakers was a crime against state security. This highlights the paranoid and hateful discourse against the Western world, suggesting that Osorbo was risking national security by documenting his life through a dynamic

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<sup>3</sup> This is the "Maykel" mentioned in my interviews with El Funky and Kiele Cabrera for context.

platform (Wirtschaftler, 2021; PEN International, 2023; Lopez & Yaffe, 2017).

It is this paradoxical limbo of the Cuban life with internet, which is crucial to understand in the investigation of social interactions in Cuba. They have internet, they have the possibility of mobilization through online communication, but on the other hand the Cuban people face countless power-shutdowns a day, prosecutions, extreme censorship, and surveillance of their online activities (PEN International, 2023; Amnesty International, 2020). Therefore, I have placed my thesis in the field of personal narratives, and firsthand source interviews. Ensuring no manipulation of texts and providing space for unfiltered opinions.

However, outside of the Cuban government, the international media can also be filled with political biases, which often affect Cuba negatively, due to the tense polarization between Cuba and the United States, whereas the United States holds the general dominance in the media (Statista, 2024) (Lopez & Yaffe, 2017). Not necessarily hostility coming from the USA towards Cuba, but the international perception of Cuba being colored by the outdated polarization between the USA and Cuba (Gómez Masjuán, 2010). It is within this “extra” obstacle, that I have placed my testimonies and sources completely with the Cubans and prioritizing international media only as a contextual source in the discussion instead of a main component to the analysis, avoiding excessive regard for international inherited, or intentional, bias coming from European, North American, etc. media.

### **Advocating for democracy and planting a hope for the future - the 11th of July, 2021**

Reviewing the overall condition of Cuban democracy, they score a 12/100 on political rights and civil liberties in 2024. This places Cuba as the second least democratic country in Latin America, only surpassing Nicaragua, according to statistics from the platform Freedom House (Freedom House, 2023). This shows the undemocratic environment, which the Cubans live in. Especially looking at the highly influencing internet freedom, which only scores 20/100 (Freedom House, 2023). These hostile conditions have been challenged by Cuban social movements in the latest years, with the progression of the internet and the possibilities this brings (JAR, 2024).

If one takes the San Isidro social movement in 2018, and their activities as the catalyst for the use of online platforms for the social movements, and moves forward to the 11<sup>th</sup> of July uprisings, one

sees that internet activity is steadily rising through these years, and then abruptly discontinued the days after the 11<sup>th</sup> of July (Wirtschaftler, 2021). This testifies of the power of the internet and as well the power of the monopoly on the internet. During the 11J uprisings, the news of the mobilizations got out on social platforms the morning of the 11<sup>th</sup> of July 2021, and because they were not removed “in timely manner” from the perspective of the government, the mobilizations came to be one of the most substantial demonstrations in Cuban history (JAR, 2024). Here, the Cuban people was once again met with the counterreactions of imprisonment, violence, and killings of civilians during the 11<sup>th</sup> of July 2021 (HRW, 2021). Despite this hardship, the 11<sup>th</sup> of July movement sparked a hope in the Cuban population, and the possibility of coming together against the regime, as a collective group formed outside the political indoctrination.

However, a Cuban social movement face a great challenge in triumphing through with their objectives, as the focus on Cuba internationally seems to be still focused on the political polarization between communism and “Western ideologies”, rather than the societal changes coming from the people of Cuba (JAR, 2024; PEN International, 2023; Gómez Masjuán, 2010).

Consequently, to promote a democratic transition and civil rights, the access of uncensored and free internet proves to be an essential element, which the Cubans are lacking, and therefore caught in a societal limbo. Thus, the next step internationally would be investigating how internet can be brought to the island. President Biden suggested after the 11<sup>th</sup> of July 2021, that the United States would investigate the possibility of providing Cuba with internet through alternative solutions, but those are yet to be presented to the Cuban public (Swinhoe, 2021). Until other help provided, the Cuban social movements continue to communicate and mobilize via internet in- and outside Cuba, striving for their civil rights to be met (JAR, 2024).

Thus, concluding on the State of the Art in Cuba in terms of internet access and possibility of mobilization, I see the repressive societal environment as the largest challenge, and an angle to the issue, which is not investigated enough, in comparison to the polarized discourse, which media tend to support in the discourse of Cuba. The lack recognition of the counternarratives coming from the Cuban people, is where the focus should be put, and why I have chosen to focus on the personal narratives of my Cuban interviewees.

## Theoretical framework and conceptualization

I have based my theoretical selection upon three arguments of why personal narratives and resistance make important components in understanding my case of the 11J movement.

Firstly, my argument for the importance of macro/micro history, which is evident in making a cohesive understanding of history, due to the marginalization of personal narratives. The timelines would simply not be complete, without the narratives of the people, as it is us, who create history, further explained below here in *Narrative Sociology and Absence*.

Secondly, apart from the historic “correctness” or “completeness”, I see personal narratives as a valid source of information, which has been neglected by the academic culture for a long while, due to the doubt of validity of the sources. This withdrawal from subjectivity seems hypocritical as the humanistic and social science field are created by these subjectivistic interpretations.

Thirdly, in the campaign against censorship, the international world needs these individualized statements, as no totalitarian government is going to actively showcase the resistance of their people, and this fact makes it impossible to create social change in repressed societies, which is why I have focused my thesis on giving a voice to the Cuban people.

### Narrative analysis - Theoretical considerations

The theoretical base for my project, regarding the argumentation of using personal narratives to expand the views on the 11<sup>th</sup> of July movement, is found within the book of “*Narrative Sociology*” in the chapter “*The use of personal narratives in social science and history*” (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, The use of personal narratives in social science and history, 2019).

A quote from the beginning of this chapter, which I find to be addressing the crux of the matter in terms of my considerations for my theoretical/methodological choices is; “ (...) analyses of personal narrative have served to introduce marginalized voices (...) and they also have provided counternarratives that dispute misleading generalizations.” (p. 52, l. 1-4) (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, The use of personal narratives in social science and history, 2019). This is resembling my motivation for this thesis - to give a voice to the marginalized people of Cuba, and at the same time provide a counternarrative for the generalization/stereotypes, I find to be influencing the international view on Cuba.

Analyzing and giving creditability to personal narratives in terms of a historical/societal context,



provides not one, but two temporalities to consider, hence my first argument of micro/macro history importance.

One thing I have been aware of while conducting the interviews, has been to balance between obtaining the information, that I needed, but at the same time consider that I was sitting across from humans, who have lived a full life with interfering happenings, which will be meddling with their perception of the events, they're describing to me. This is furthermore described in the chapter as "*Historical time conceptualizes a life course, even while the narrator's moment in the life course affects how he or she experiences remembers and interprets historical events*" (p. 53, l. 32-34) (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, The use of personal narratives in social science and history, 2019). In the quote that *historical time conceptualizes a life*, I find the basis on why personal narrative must be part of our history, in the sense that history is what makes us, forms us and our life course, but at the same time, regarding social history, it takes humans to construct and "perform" it (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, The use of personal narratives in social science and history, 2019).

Hence, my argument of the marginalization of personal narratives, I have encountered a bit of a theoretical paradox, within the personal narratives in parallel with the promotion of democracy. This is that, superficially, the narrative analysis focuses on the individual and considers the voice of few people in a context of a larger timeframe. In terms of inclusivity and democracy, this could be problematic, and I have contemplated this paradox in my investigation. However, looking further into the paradox, the book argues that "*Once the individual life is explored in its subjective detail and temporal depth, the line between the individual and the social tends to dissolve*" (p. 54, l. 7-8) (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, The use of personal narratives in social science and history, 2019). What I define from this, is that any human life story is representative, when explored adequate, and that one cannot present a personal narrative without involving other actors, and so it cannot be avoided to have a representation of the social in the personal narrative, thus providing this type of methodological approach with an angle of collectiveness. Furthermore, my theoretical base also includes the term of *resistance*, which is both a social practice as it is an individual practice, as explained in my *social circuit* in the model of analysis (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004) (See: *Model of analysis*).

Addressing the benefits of subjectivity, I wish to promote, which proceeds personal narratives as an empirical source, the book suggests that the space between the individual and the social is being

opened, and “(...) *thus address critical dimensions of social action that are otherwise opaque.*” (p 56, l. 19-20) (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, The use of personal narratives in social science and history, 2019). What I understand by this quote in relation to my investigation, is that the dimension being opened, is the space between citizens and government, which I see in the Cuban context, as the social movements and the resistance present in Cuban society, being “located” between the individual and the government. Consequently, I argue that the use of personal narratives as a source of valid information, creates a societal change in the sense that it can approach the dialogue between the government and its citizens, and as mentioned above, and dissolves the line between the individual and the social, thus further opening more fields for investigating (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, The use of personal narratives in social science and history, 2019).

Putting personal narratives into a modern-day context, it is my assessment, that we have become more attached to the personal narratives, to grasp the extension of the challenging reality, in which we live. The generalized stories, which run on the news, do not get as much mention, because of the continuous news flow, and society’s need for a personalized narrative to be captured by a story (Holman, 2021). Historically, the chapter mentions the feminist movement from the late 1960’s as the first movers in using personal narratives to tell “(...) *stories about themselves and their lives and that the process of telling reveals past oppressions that had been suppressed or unrecognized.*” (p. 57, l. 12-14) (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, The use of personal narratives in social science and history, 2019).

Revealing oppression through personal stories, has become a crucial part of modern social media strategics and journalism. This is described as making “*history from below*” (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, The use of personal narratives in social science and history, 2019). In the case of my investigation, I conclude that the history from below comes in the form of *resistance* from the Cuban people, as it can be seen alike in an international context.

The most prominent examples in modern times could be George Floyd, and how his individual resistance sparked the Black Lives Matter Movement all over the world, or alike Masha Amini, an Iranian activist, who was killed by the morality police, and thereby evoked the Iranian protests for personal freedom (Silverstein, 2021; Zand, 2023). These examples are enhanced by the death of the narrator, and so the narrative stops there. However, as a final example of the continuous personal narratives, exists Greta Thunberg, the Swedish founder of Fridays for Future. In her case, the world was captivated by the charismatic girl, who refused to go to school, and demanded climate action

(BBC, 2024).

Consequently, there is proven to be a great potential in the personal narratives in capturing attention, and mediating important messages such as anti-racism, gender-equality, and the climate crisis. In this sense, I am committed to, through the previous examples of influential personal narratives, to provide a broadened window of attention to the situation in Cuba on the 11<sup>th</sup> of July and the aftereffects.

Hence my third argument, another potent area of interest in the chapter is the discussion of how personal narratives combats biases and breaks censorship, by disrupting the silence and being a source of information, which cannot be discussed in the same way as an “objective” source can be; “(...) *personal narrative sources can reveal a social or historical dynamic that has been deliberately silenced or distorted by interested parties.*” (p. 59, l. 18-20) (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, *The use of personal narratives in social science and history*, 2019).

From a relativistic, Nietzschean perspective, one could be tempted to proclaim that there is no sole truth, only interpretations, and therefore the subjective, personal truths are equal in significance with the proclaimed objective truths, because everything undergoes interpretation (See also: *Telling stories - Intersubjective understandings and cutting to the bone*). And so, to combat this deliberate silence, one must define what this deliberate silence that consists of, or where it comes from. It could be called bias, or generalization, but instead I will refer it as *absence* as written in my problem formulation (de Sousa Santos, 2016). In the problem formulation, the term can be understood both literally and theoretically.

*Absence* is a theoretical concept described by Boaventura de Sousa Santos in his dissertation of *Sociology of Absence* (de Sousa Santos, 2016). Here, he describes it as “(...) *the systemic erasure or neglect of certain social realities, voices, (...) within academic discourses and societal narratives.*” (de Sousa Santos, 2016). De Sousa Santos advocates for a more inclusive, emancipatory approach that actively engages with the *absences* and silences in mainstream knowledge production (de Sousa Santos, 2016). Which in the context of my thesis, is what I investigate regarding Cuba and international media coverage - the systematic neglect, through the analysis of personal narratives. Thus, the *absence* of international media in Cuba covers media coverage neglect, and it is in this discursive context, that I use the word *absence* in my problem formulation. My discussion will be gravitated towards discovering the narrative themes of Cuban live, which suffer *absence*, after using

my model of analysis, and with the addition of international media examples as contextual sources (See: *Model of analysis*).

## **Resistance and false consciousness - Conceptualizing the situation in Cuba**

In understanding the situation in Cuba, one must look profoundly into the history of Cuba and the political landscape, which has formed the island through decades. In my attempt on understanding the political situation in Cuba, without it being a historical examination, I have narrowed the Cuban society down to two key concepts, which explain the strategy of the political system (*false consciousness*) and the reactions of the Cuban people, including the 11J movement (*resistance*) (Scott, 1990).

### **False consciousness**

Beginning with defining the catalyst of the Cuban uprisings, one must understand the strategy of the ideology ruling the island, and how the government operates to ensure the survival of their ideology. Indeed, Cuba belongs to the far left, and have a pronounced communist regime - or Marxist-Leninist socialistic republic, as the current president of Cuba announced it back in 2019 (Pedreira, 2019).

To be able to preserve the ideology imposed by the Castro-brothers, I find it theoretically appropriate to claim that the Cuban government has been strategically implementing *false consciousness* into the lives of the Cuban people (possibly, since the revolution of 1959 (Lima, 2019 ; Scott, 1990)). I have come to this conclusion after my own travels in Cuba, but as well through my interviews and conversation with Cuban friends, and starting my theoretical base.

The term *false consciousness* is a concept further developed by James Scott<sup>4</sup>, one of the most cited writers in the field of resistance and power analysis, from his book *Domination and the arts of resistance* (Scott, 1990). It refers to the continuously indoctrination, coming from the highest placed hegemonic group and imposed upon the subordinate groups of society (Scott, 1990). In other words, cohesive persuasion, or “well-calculated” political brainwash.

I find this term to be significant, when discussing the groundwork of this thesis - Why should we

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<sup>4</sup> False consciousness is originally a Marxist term used by economists and philosophers:  
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/4194332>

focus on the Cubans, if they have lived their lives under this regime, without resisting it?

I have been met with many alike critical questions during my time of research, and I can only reply with; “*It’s because, we don’t know half of the things going on in Cuba. We take our democracy and rights as a matter of course*”. If we did investigate further into the strategies of the government, I dare say, we would be comparing Cuba to the Soviet Union and the psychological experiments, which took place after World War II (Hudson, 2021).

In this context, it is applicable to add that Scott advocates for that *false consciousness* can only be applied to people to a certain degree, and where there are people and public discourses, there will always occur some type of resistance, because resistance is “*a constant feature of social life*” (Scott, 1990). Luckily, it hasn’t been 100% possible for the Cuban government to discourage all resistance, as we see in my personal narrative analyses of the interviews. This present resistance doesn’t have to be interpreted as resistance in the form of grand mobilizations, but everything down to a haircut or wearing a branded t-shirt, can symbolize resistance (Scott, 1990; Hollander & Einwohner, 2004). This point of the existence of degrees of resistance, but nonetheless an intentional action affecting society, resonates well with my main objective of advocating for the importance of micro history being equally prioritized with the macro history (See: *The micro- and macro effect*).

Acknowledging that resistance manifests itself in collective and individual form, is relating itself to the Cuban reality in how social movements keep existing/renewing after +60 years of dictatorship, as well as it is the point of my *social circuit* in the model of analysis (See: Model of analysis - *The circuit of collective- and individual actions*).

Returning to the conceptualization of *false consciousness*, one of the key strategies of an autocratic regime, is to ensure that the ideology presented to the people, is attractive and non-negotiable in terms of possible benefits from this ideology. Scott formulates it as such: “*the dominant ideology does not entirely exclude the interests of subordinate groups, it operates to conceal or misrepresent aspects of social relations that, if apprehended directly, would be damaging to the interests of dominant elites*” (p. 71, l. 26-28) (Scott, 1990).

I understand this as e.g. the dominant elite (the Cuban government) presenting new laws in an appealing manner, but without transparency, and therefore creating false promises without presenting the consequences of the new law. This, going on for decades in Cuba, has made it possible to sustain the ideology, because whole generations are born into the political discourse, of

the “generosity” of the state, and therefore lack of criticism towards a state, which seemingly “provides for all” (Nuñez, 2021).

An example of imposing *false consciousness* is when the current president Diaz-Canel was elected, he promised improved internet conditions (Augustin, 2018; Scott, 1990). What he “failed” to inform about, was that the upgrade of the internet would be ruled over by the state. This government-monopoly of the internet, has made it possible to shut down communication on the entire island, leaving the regime in charge of deciding when/what its people can interchange via internet or electric devices.

This creates an emotional/material sense of *false consciousness* in terms of controlling electricity, internet-communication, heat/cooling, food-preparation, light, etc., where the Cuban government creates a false reality for the habitants, based on the lawmakers’ political agenda, when they initiated this discourse with promises of improvement.

This type of false reality or *false consciousness* has been a weighty consequence to the social movements of Cuba, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of July 2021 as well, in terms of organizing and mobilizing, and has complicated personal narratives leaving the island through the last 5 years, ever since Cuba installed mobile internet (JAR, 2024; Amnesty International, 2020).

This strategy of isolating the Cuban people creates the base of the survival of the ideology - As Foucault put it; “*Solitude is the primary condition of total submission*” (Scott, 1990).

Continuing in this field of altering realities and communication, the Cuban government exercises monopoly over the media which are accessible in Cuba, and this creates the deeper imposition of *false consciousness* (Scott, 1990; Freedom House, 2023).

Scott writes about understanding the mental submission of a subordinate group as such; “(...) the operation of what have been called “ideological state apparatuses,” such as schools, the church, the media, and even the institutions of parliamentary democracy, which, it is claimed, exercise a near monopoly” (p. 73, l. 29-31) (Scott, 1990). When these institutions in a communist republic is state-owned, they get adapted to help the preservation of the ideology. In relation to Cuba this includes, a variety of other factors; the censorship upon free art and liberty of expression, the informative monopoly of having one newspaper on the entire island<sup>5</sup>, and the indoctrination of the children in school, who have classes in *revolutionary thinking* and often are subjected to politically motivated violence (Amnesty International, 2020; Escobar, 2021).

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.granma.cu>

Indoctrinating political views and censoring opponents generates the mental/psychological perspective of *false consciousness*. Here, the habitants are unvoluntary being mandated political values from the beginning of their lives, using physical institutions along with communicative media, to prevent individual thoughts and the creation of counter-believes to the government's ideology (Scott, 1990).

Thus, through the two examples of material and mental *false consciousness* in Cuban context, I have asserted these two dimensions of Scott's term, and I will incorporate these dimensions of *false consciousness* into my model of analysis to be able to identify, where the individual has been experiencing this concept during their lives in Cuba, and to further amplify the field of *absence* (de Sousa Santos, 2016; Scott, 1990).

### **Resistance** (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004)

After conceptualizing the societal situation, *false consciousness*, which represents the macro history, I will now provide a theoretical and contextual examination of the counternarrative concept *resistance*, representing micro history (Scott, 1990; Hollander & Einwohner, 2004).

As said in this section's introduction, I consider *resistance* as an important factor in understanding the societal situation in Cuba, and I see *resistance* as the countermove coming from the people, after being exposed to *false consciousness* by the dominant power.

My conceptualization of resistance is based on a scientific article, which I find to provide interesting and unembellished view on the concept of *resistance* (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004)

In the article, Hollander and Einwohner claim that certain societal components need to be present, to be able to call a situation an act of *resistance*. Here, they mention *recognition* and *intent* to be an important part of defining resistance (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004).

I understand this as an intentional action which earns recognition (positive or negative), is the definition of *resistance* (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004).

In a Cuban context, this is fitting for the situation outplaying in social mobilizations. This dynamic applies to the 11J, as well. Looking at JAR's Instagram, there are countless of videos of people protesting with e.g., signs or songs, showing their *intent*. Here, the intentional actions are recognized by the audience on Instagram in form of likes or comments, or in the negative way, recognized by the Cuban police, resulting in various violations (JAR, 2024; Hollander &

Einwohner, 2004).

I find it highly important to take into consideration, that if one does not count in the online platforms as *recognition*, the “power” of defining *resistance* is given to the state police in the Cuban context. Elaborating on this; if an action could only be defined as *resistance* by the counter-actor (the Cuban police), the “privilege” of concerning oneself as resisting a power, disappears. In my opinion, this viewpoint lacks in the article (possibly, due to its dating), and so, I expand the term *resistance* to the Cuban context in this way of including online *recognition* (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004).

Consequently, my conceptualization of *resistance* is an intentional action, which is recognized by an audience or authority (physical or not), as defined by (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004).

I will bring *intent* and *recognition* forward into my model of analysis, as the personal narratives are a rare source of information, and so it reaches a high level of credibility in terms of being able to analyze on personal *intent*, which is a unique possibility in working with personal narratives.

To establish *intent* as a crucial part of *resistance* in the Cuban context holds a significant relevance for the further impact, this thesis might have. The people I represent in this thesis, the Cubans who are the counternarrative to the government, have seen many cases of accused *resistance* of a citizen. These charges coming from the police, which has resulted unjust imprisonment or worse.

Therefore, if I can expand the view on *resistance* as containing personal *intent* (and not just accusations of it), it might resonate further out into the world, and illuminate corruption and police brutality happening, in Cuba too (HRW, 2021).

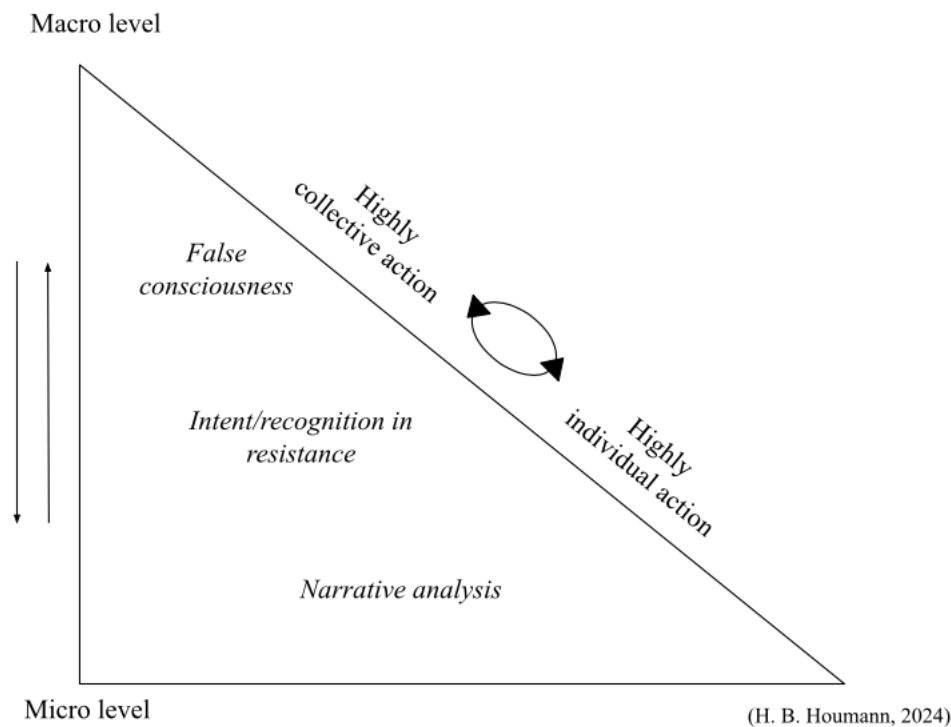
## **Conclusion to the theoretical framework**

In this section of theoretical framework and conceptualization, I have laid the basis for the construction of my model of analysis, as well as included theoretical observations regarding the use of personal narratives. I have too presented the term of *absence* which will be the premise of my discussion after analyzing the semi structured interviews (de Sousa Santos, 2016). In the dimension of the counternarrative from the Cuban people, I have presented *resistance* in the form of *intent* and *recognition*, as a way of resisting *false consciousness* imposed by the state.

I will now present my model of analysis, build upon the theoretical framework, focusing on the three elements of *false consciousness*, *intent/recognition in resistance*, and *narrative analysis* (Scott, 1990; Hollander & Einwohner, 2004; Riessman, 1993)



## Model of analysis



## The construction of the model

In my creation of the model of analysis, I have included the terms of my section of theory to be able to perform an adequate analysis of my interviews, in correspondence to my problem formulation and overall objective of this thesis.

## Macro to micro history

I began by looking at the interviews as examples of macro to micro history, and I have based the overall sequence of the analysis on that spectrum between macro and micro history, or collective actions and individual actions (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, The use of personal narratives in social science and history, 2019).

The macro to micro history spectrum is presented on the Y-axis. This represents that my analysis starts with macro history and *false consciousness*, which is the highest form of collective action, involving the society and social movements, and then the model gradually declines from macro to micro history, from collective to individual actions, throughout the analyses. Doing the narrative block analysis (Step 3), I will move in the opposite direction, following the arrow from micro to macro level, to illustrate the dynamic nature of collective and individual investigations.

The overall theoretical objective is to advocate that the macro to micro history provides the broadest and most nuanced view on societal happenings, and to promote the use of the personal narratives which, as written (See: *the micro- and macro effect*), “contribute to the merging of the two (people and state, micro and macro), and the hegemonic compensation this brings along - to prioritize the history of the people.” (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, The use of personal narratives in social science and history, 2019).

So, from the perspective of this, I have started the model of analysis with a high level of collective action and macro history, by having the first step being analyzing on *false consciousness* in the interviews (Scott, 1990).

### **The circuit of collective- and individual actions**

Opposite the macro/micro history is seen the circuit of collective action and individual action, shortened to: The *social circuit* in the thesis.

This circuit shows the process of resistance from both a collective and individual point of view. It starts out with a collective action, e.g., *false consciousness*, which pushes the individual to form resistance (Scott, 1990). This resistance needs to be defined by *intent* and *recognition* to be accepted, and this is the middle ground of collectivism and individualism in the model of analysis (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004).

Afterwards this process is formed into *personal narratives*, the highly individual action, which reports of the experiences of the individual concerning the collective actions (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, The use of personal narratives in social science and history, 2019).

For the individual actions to increase towards the collective actions once again, is defined by whether the individual wishes to combat the trigger of the *resistance*. Here is where social movements are created and renewed in their objectives; after negotiation of the individual, personal

narratives and thus forming groups of resistance. Then, the circuit is completed, if the ascending from individual- to a new collective action is carried out.

It has been important, hence my objectives for this thesis, to make it a dynamic circuit and not a one-way movement, as a society that goes from high collectivity to high individualism without negotiation of these placements, is a picturization of the Cuban, totalitarian society, where one agrees with the masses or is excluded in extreme individualism and suffers consequences from this (Amnesty International, 2020).

### **Step 1 - False consciousness**

*False consciousness* is a term of national dimension, macro history and collective actions, regarding application of it in this thesis. And so, I will look for quotations to demonstrate different examples of *false consciousness* as a part of the Cuban life. (Scott, 1990).

This will be done by looking for the unfulfilled political promises or strategies alike in the interviews (See: *False consciousness*). This includes the distinction between *mental/material false consciousness*, according to my theoretical section of *false consciousness*.

After *false consciousness*, I will be focusing more concentrated on the individual experience, but parallelly including the collective actions in the social environment through analysis of *intent and recognition* (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004).

### **Step 2 - Intent and recognition**

In relation to the social perspective of macro to micro history, I have decided to have *intent and recognition* as my second step of analysis, since it is closer to an individual experience in the form of *intent*, but still a term that needs collective *recognition* (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004). This step of the analysis provides the crucial judgement of whether the interviewee had *intent* to resist, and as well, how the regime/the people *recognized* this resistance. This step can provide insight to the societal/governmental response to resistance in Cuba, and the individual experiences of the interviewees in terms of political engagement and personal beliefs (Hollander & Einwohner, 2004). This is the collision between micro and macro history, and a manifestation of the importance of merging the two, in personal narrative analysis and social science (Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, The use of personal narratives in social science and history, 2019). It is as well important in terms of

fighting generalization of the interviewees, which might occur due to the context they are put in, but nonetheless it is significant to distinguish the different experiences of their life, in accordance with my objectives of this thesis (*See: Theoretical considerations of personal narratives - Narrative Sociology and Absence*).

Moving on from this middle ground of collective action, I finalize the analysis with the personal narrative block analysis (Riessman, 1993).

### **Step 3 - The narrative analysis**

The third and final step to the model of analysis, is the epicenter of the thesis - the narrative block analyses. Here, I will be selecting three narrative blocks from the interviews (Riessman, 1993). This will be done by assessing the individual narratives, and what the interviewee focuses on during the questions. Because the interviewees have been given the same semi-structured questions, it will be possible to distinguish the answers and find the most prominent narrative blocks, in comparing the answers (Bryman, 2016).

This is the micro history in its full potential and the most individualized step of the analysis.

I am finishing my analysis with this step to promote the main objective of giving a voice to the individuals of Cuba, and for their word to be the last, before the discussion of *absence* (de Sousa Santos, 2016; Maynes, Pierce, & Laslett, The use of personal narratives in social science and history, 2019).

### **Introduction to the interviews**

Starting of my analysis of the interviews centered around the 11<sup>th</sup> of July uprising, I would like to provide the reader with portraits of my interviewees, so that the focus on individualization and personal narratives are illuminated, as well as providing a face on the brave interviewees, who denied anonymity despite consequences, which I highly applaud. These portraits can be found in appendix 2.

Expanding on the structure of the analysis, I have chosen to merge the interviews according to the model of analysis, and its three steps. I have done this, firstly, to promote the social circuit presented on my model (*See: Model of analysis*). To include the individual micro history answers in a collective macro context forms the base of resistance and mobility in a society, as per my assertion, and so, I have chosen to combine the interviews.

Secondly, due to the page limit in writing this thesis, it is the most economical way to proceed without losing content, which I would have to, if I continued with individually divided analyses.

## **Analyses of the Cuban semi structured interviews**

### **Step 1: False consciousness**

Beginning my analysis of the interviews according to my model of analysis, I will start with the section of *false consciousness* as it is described in the model of analysis. Here I will look at the statements from my interviewees, and how they have experienced *false consciousness*, either by living in Cuba or through the narratives of relatives.

My way of defining *false consciousness*, is the process of which the Cubans experience alterations of their reality as a strategy from the hegemonic power - the Cuban government. In a society where the government exercise *false consciousness*, it is the first step in causing a reaction of *resistance* (Step 2 of the analysis), as said in my theoretical framework (See: *False consciousness*).

Summarizing this first step of the analysis for better comprehension, I have analyzed themes of *false consciousness* found in the transcripts of my interviews (Appendices 3, 4, 5 and 6). I have found aspects of *false consciousness* in dimensions of COVID strategies, censored internet, physical parodies of authorities and economical strategies, whereas all these facets of mental or material *false consciousness* have delayed, but motivated the Cuban people in exercising *resistance* against the government.

### **The analysis of step 1**

Starting off with my interview with Kiele, she mentioned an example of *false consciousness* imposed on the Cubans by the Cuban government, in relation to the COVID pandemic. She expresses: “during COVID, the regime, you know, dug up a lot of graves of the communal, I would say cemeteries to bury those that died as a result of COVID, because they did not want to accept properly regulated vaccinations that were being offered to them by outside actors, including the United States.” (Question 2, appendix 3). I categorize this as an illustrative case of *false consciousness*, where the regime denies help from outside the world, and I interpret a deeper dimension of mental *false consciousness* by the act of “sweeping” COVID under the rug, disturbing

already used graves to hide bodies of their failed intent on a COVID course of action.

I found a similar strategy of creating a false reality and disowning responsibility of health and humans, in the context of the aftermath after the 11<sup>th</sup> of July uprisings where Kiele utters: “(...) *so many people that were, like, dead and disappeared on the streets, people's bodies, like, showing up, washing ashore. You know, people saw, you know, horrible, horrific, traumatizing things that silenced us again, in a way, you know.*” (Question 8, appendix 3). Even though I analyze this as mental *false consciousness*, it could be seen as a “materially” imposed *false consciousness*, because the government can be using the physical bodies as a warning, and a way of silencing critical thoughts from forming into resistance and stopping the people from moving further towards the individual actions on my *circuit of collective- and individual actions* (See: *Model of analysis*).

Progressing from the statements of mental and material COVID strategy from Kiele, El Funky also mentions a horrific way of treating demonstrating people, and the lethal consequence it had to some protesters, which I have chosen to highlight in the demonstration of extreme *false consciousness*, which contains both a material and a mental dimension. Funky says: “*Many people started to join. The people left. And President Díaz-Canél gave the order that “they do, what they had to do”. He gave the order to stop the people in any way that was possible. And there are the images. Dead children, people with broken heads. No, that was catastrophic. There was repression of all kinds.*” (Question 6, appendix 4). In having a narrative saying that the Cuban president himself, let his executive powers “do what they had to do”, and ending up with dead children and mutilated citizens is one of the most direct physical/mental *false consciousness* examples, I have encountered in this investigation. Taking peaceful protesters’ lives, due to their expression of opinions, is a radical way of altering reality, and manipulating people to keep living in fear of the consequences of resistance.

Maintaining the analysis in the statements from El Funky, and continuing on the COVID strategy from Kiele above, Funky utters how the strategy of the regime has been to keep tourism going during COVID, which creates a false reality in the form of mental *false consciousness*, when the Cuban state minimizes the seriousness of COVID by keeping the borders open: “*So it was like the political decision of the regime to decide to let tourists in instead of prioritizing the health of the people that people politically started to criticize the regime.*” (Question 2, appendix 4).

By prioritizing the economy which the tourists bring with them, the regime is met with the

counterreaction to *false consciousness*, which is resistance, as Funky describes how the people started to criticize the regime. As it will be mentioned more in depth later in this analysis, I will not go into detail, but merely mention the paradoxical, discursive element I find this COVID strategy having. Looking at the ideology of the Cuban regime, I find it highly paradoxical that they prioritize the international and capitalist sector of the country over the Cubans themselves, coming from a communist state which often proclaims its hatred toward the imperialistic world (See: Third last section of this analysis).

In relation to the incipient uprising due to the regime's COVID strategies, the resistance needed a tool for communication, without censorship, to be able to mobilize. However, this is proven to be very difficult to obtain in Cuba, as I am understanding it through my process of writing the thesis. Kiele mentions this challenge of material *false consciousness* in relation to the restricted internet access, which I too mentioned in my theoretical sections (See: *False consciousness*). She mentions the internet during the 11<sup>th</sup> of July 2021, as being a crucial part of both the success and failure of the mobilizations; “*Yeah, I think that the main thing was social media and the Internet. Honestly, that was the only way at the beginning, like in terms of I know that people are making Twitter spaces at the very beginning, you know, so it was like Twitter spaces, VPNs, um, Facebook Lives, Facebook groups. And that again, you know, are limited. They get targeted regularly. One group is broken down. You know, the regime does its best to be able to shut all these things down.*” (Question 5, appendix 3). From this example, I note a demonstration of how important all the online forums are for mobilizing social movements, and an important statement of how easily the Cuban government can, and does, “turn off” the possibility of connecting by imposing another example of material *false consciousness*. The right to communicate and to educate oneself using modern technology, is something I find as a key concept in supporting *resistance* and the democratic progression of a country, liberation by web, according to my selected theory (See: *State of the Art*).

In the pursue of other statements of *false consciousness* containing traits of the micro-historical process of indoctrination, which I find quite unique of Cuba, I found an example of Funky describing the long-term effect which the lack of information has had on his upbringing, and how it has affected the Cuban mentality as a collective: “*Look, it's really been over 60 years, and Cuba is a very indoctrinated country, where no information enters. No information enters. And people, you know, they indoctrinate you to go to school, and they teach you that the empire, that the United*

*States is the enemy, that they are the Yankees. And since I was a child, I have been taught that the United States is the enemy. You say, "We will be like Che Guevara", they send you to go to school, they tell you that the United States is an empire where it has blocked Cuba, you understand? And you are growing up with that, because you do not have access to the internet or information, (...), before the internet entered Cuba, we were practically blind."* (Question 2, appendix 4). This way of imposing mental/materially *false consciousness* as El Funky mentions here, is a way of supporting the survival of the communist ideology, by stopping new information from entering the island and "enlighten" the people, as well as it is a way of stopping the local communication between like-minded citizens. A daily life without internet complicates international as well as national communication, and has kept Cuba in isolation for decades, as Funky describes. I find it important to illustrate the long-term strategies of the Cuban state, to be able to create a deeper understanding for the reader, in terms of the political situation in Cuba, which most European biases have difficulties comprehending. Furthermore, important to note the deep cultural roots in this statement, in terms of the school system, Che Guevara and the anti-imperialist discourse, which are unique aspects of the Cuban identity and therefore the base of the creation of social movements.

To support this insistence of the importance of internet in relation to the social movements of Cuba I found a statement from Kiele, where she points out a time, where there was a "rupture" in the indoctrination, and the internet brought outside knowledge and new perspectives to the Cubans: *"And there you could be, you could get restricted internet access, obviously, with the regime censoring the websites that they want to censor. But people could still have access to Facebook in certain ways and things like that. And I think over time, that limited access opened certain channels of communication that allowed the Cubans to kind of see what the outside world was and speak with their loved ones and their relatives more. And that in itself also kind of set a certain stage of the local population being excessively frustrated by the circumstances and coming to the realization of the circumstances that they were living under. So, I think all those things kind of culminated."* (Question 2, appendix 3). This shows the need for preservation of the mental as well as material *false consciousness* from the point of view of the Cuban government, as the modernization by internet only can be held back for so long, and according to this interview, the tiniest window of internet access can make a difference in minds which are already individualized and are looking to climb the *collective circuit*, according to my model of analysis, in the search of forming social movements and resistance.



In this context of internet as a tool of resistance, I find it, that the Cuban regime seems to have understood the efficiency of the internet, because in my interview with Henry, he mentions, as he was in Havana on the 11<sup>th</sup> of July 2021, how the regime cut the internet, and with obstructed communication, it had grave consequences for the people of the demonstrations: *And then, well, nothing, the internet was cut, it got worse. Remember that the day also came out on television, giving the order of war (against the demonstration) and well, all that we know is that.* (Question 3, appendix 6). Stopping the possibility of communicating the Cuban happenings to the outside world, is a materially *false consciousness*, which the regime imposed as a new reality to the demonstrations. As Henry further mentions how the regime declared war on its own people, in a way of manipulating the supporters of the regime to go against their own countrymen, is a mental *false consciousness*, which manipulates the people into thinking that resistance to the hegemonic power is reason for “war”, and that secondary opinions cannot be tolerated. This aligns with the previous statement of war-declaration, which I found within the interview of Funky (Appendix 4), and I see these strategies as methods in breaking up the movement from individual resistance to collective resistance, as following my *social circuit*.

Reading the interviews, and looking for further statements to explain the aftermath of this no-communication strategy from the Cuban regime, I found that Oscar mentions complementary to the narrative of Henry, that the regime, following the 11<sup>th</sup> of July uprising, took several measures into use, in minimizing the effect of the uprising, after seeing how effective the internet was, as a tool for the social movements in Cuba: *“(...) the people and activists were left without communication for days, because Cuba was without internet. Also in Cuba, there was no fuel for transportation, and there was a curfew, so after 8 pm no one could leave the house until 7 am. The Cuban regime began a great disinformation campaign through the media.”* (Question 6, appendix 5). To further dictate the life of the Cubans in cutting down their communication, mobility, free time activities and transportation, is entirely creating a false, unnecessary reality in the use of material *false consciousness*, and I find that this supports the discourse of Cuba being a totalitarian state without possibility of individual or collective movement.

Continuing on the connotation of totalitarianism and focusing on *false consciousness* as an oppressive experience lived by the Cubans, I have encountered a consequential and “peculiar” case of material/mental *false consciousness* which Kiele mentions, is in the context of the San Isidro

Movement, and how they went on hunger strike in the house of Luis Manuel Otero, but was abruptly by state police, entering under the premise that they were dressed as COVID doctors: “(...) they also use COVID as an excuse for state repression. In the sense of when San Isidro were doing their hunger strike at Luis Manuel's house, they had these state security agents dressing robes as if they were medical professionals when they're really state security agents go into Luis Manuel's house and drag, beat and drag the members of the San Isidro movement by force out of that house to subsequently arrest and interrogate them by, like, carrying them out, one agent, one hand, the other hand, all fours, like, dragging them out, like, in the pictures and forcibly, violently removing them.” (Question 6, appendix 3). I find this statement crucial for the understanding of the limitless lengths the Cuban state is willing to go to preserve their hegemony. For a regime to disguise themselves in the name of health, to repress their lawfully demonstrating citizens, is a case of imposed alteration of the reality in a physical manner through their “costumes” and taking advantage of a grave societal situation and the credulity of the San Isidro Movement. Thus, once again the totalitarian strategy unfolds itself in the experience of the Cuban activists.

Enhancing this, to me, unseen dimension of exercising *false consciousness* with costumes, I have found it important to add the macro effect on many generations of micro histories. This type of material/mental *false consciousness* has become a part of the Cuban conscience through many years of altering reality, and in this context, Henry mentions that, during the 11J uprising, how the regime used civilians as police officers, and how they were “disguised” during the mobilizations. Henry had to go and change his shirt alongside his companion, to not risk being exposed to the paranoia living among the Cuban people, due to the use of civilian police: *Then we arrived at the house, we changed, I was wearing a checkered shirt, and they confused me with someone from the government, well because usually government sympathizers wear checkered shirts. So, to avoid problems, that they could hit me or something, the people, mistaking me, I had to change the shirt, and Brother Iván also had to change his shirt.* (Question 3, appendix 6). This unfortunately shows the relative “success” of the Cuban regime in terms of *false consciousness* and implementing fear and manipulation of reality into the Cuban everyday life, in the form of mistrust and paranoia among the people, breaking up the forming social groups in their infancy.

Continuing on this consequence of the civil police and the manipulation/mental *false consciousness* directing the Cuban people to fight each other instead of the regime, I looked for a direct connection

to the members of the social movements, and how they have experienced the strategy of breaking up the collective process of the *social circuit*. In this case, Oscar mentions how he as a member of the San Isidro movement, was in house arrest, but without the official police ordering it. It was a mere civilian who was guarding his house: *They had repressors (Cuban civilians on the side of the dictatorship) watching my house 24 hours a day, because they had hundreds of thousands of other Cubans to "watch" after July 11.* (Question 7, appendix 5). Creating mistrust and polarization between the people, ultimately stops the people from focusing on the actions of the regime, and I too connect it to a strategy of promoting the people who publicly shares the ideology of the regime, for then to be able to behold more dominance with foot soldiers, who work for free and based on political alliance.

Looking further into this political strategy of letting the people fight each other, I looked for examples from the daily life of the Cubans. Here, Kiele highlights numerous examples of how mental *false consciousness* in the form of indoctrination has influenced Cuban people, which led to personal infiltration between friends and family, as Oscar described above: “ (...) *personal infiltration, in the sense of, you know, the collectivist mindset of a communist doctrine is something that has become highly ingrained in the radicalized revolutionary Castro communist society, to where family members will snitch on family members, loved ones will snitch on loved ones, because they feel like they're doing it for the greater good of the collective one.*” (Question 6, appendix 3). I see this comment from Kiele, as relating itself to the *collective circuit*, from the model of analysis, in the sense that people being betrayed by loved ones, move closer to acting individually after experiencing the consequences of *false consciousness*, and this catalyzes individual resistance (See: *The circuit of collective- and individual actions + Personal resistance - Oscar*).

Immersing additionally into the root of the Cuban problem, even further than the micro history and personal infiltration, Henry made a comment on the mental/material *false consciousness* of directing the attention away from the regime and community, and striking down on the premise of existence: food and water. Henry mentions: “*Cuba's system is designed in such a way that Cubans have to be living and thinking about what they're going to eat today and tomorrow, and that way they don't have time to think about their problems, the root of their problems. And it's true because even when I lived in Cuba, I was thinking, "Well, what am I going to eat at home? What is my mother going to cook today, tomorrow?" And then, in a way, you forget about other problems, about root problems. That's what that priest said, and it's true. If you keep the people occupied*

*thinking about how they're going to subsist, how they're going to survive, then they won't have the chance to think about other things, and that way, you prevent a revolution or anything like that. They won't have the chance to theorize or anything. That's how it unfortunately works in the country.*" (Question 14, appendix 6). Denying basic needs to the Cuban people is therefore a strategy of material *false consciousness*, which alongside with all the other measures taken in use by the state, creates this extreme environment, where the Cubans are focused on survival and not resistance.

Economy being a highly controllable factor in every society, I expected nothing less from the Cuban regime in terms of *false consciousness* as the economical control of the Cuban people, as it too is being mentioned by Oscar and Henry. Henry describes profoundly the economic strategy imposed upon the Cuban people in his personal narrative of the Cuban societal situation, where he references to the "The Economical Shutdown" as the state called it back in pre-COVID times: *"The government started to come up with online stores, sort of like Amazon, but it was a total disaster to sell these famous combos. Remember? That's the term that was used "Combo". A combo is like a bag with multiple products. It could be toothpaste, oil, soap, you name it. And it was awful to buy, it's terrible to buy and it had to be done using the tools of the government's economic and financial tools of the state. (...) That was a total disaster."* (Question 2, appendix 6). Here, Henry talks about a material *false consciousness*, imposed by the Cuban state in a time of economic crisis in Cuba, where the valuta simply did not have any value, and the regime invented these online stores, to create a (false) reality of modernism and efficiency, when it really was more trouble than help to the Cubans, which must be said to be a recurring theme in the context of state initiatives, as seen from the personal narratives.

Continuing investigating this impactful state apparatus which the economy is, Oscar remarks the broader strategy of the regime in terms of compensating for the economical "freedom" it gave the Cubans, when the regime realized that they needed to change the economic strategy: *"(...) when the regime granted more economic freedom, but at the same time increased harassment and political repression. When the president of the United States of America visited Cuba in 2016, there was an escalation of repression against activists and massive firings of Cuban workers, who were critical of the regime."* (Question 2, appendix 5). Oscar comments on, how the (communist) regime paradoxically focuses on economic freedom but makes an effort in restraining the freedom of

speech, by creating a material (economy) and mental (“clearing the streets” for opponents) *false consciousness*. This facet contains too an international dimension of *false consciousness*, as the Cuban regime, during the visit of former president Barack Obama, tried to silence the critical voices on the island, supposedly to appear more harmonious (Glass, 2019). Further complimentary to Oscar’s statement, El Funky comments on this strategy of appearing as a harmonious country: “(...) *in Cuba, to tell the truth, to tell the reality, you are already doing activism because you are saying what is happening, what surrounds you, the daily life of the Cuban on foot. And the Cuban government doesn't like that you tell the truth. The government like that you say that everything is fine, that you are not hungry, that this is a democratic country and lies. The reality is different, that when people talk about it, they are exposed consequences.*” (Question 1, appendix 4). Here, Funky points out the problematic situation in Cuba with hunger and no democracy, and how the regime wants its people to speak positively about Cuba despite the real situation. Having multiple statements which explains the use of this mental *false consciousness*, is highly important for the later understanding of the *absence* which I will be discussing as this contributes to the ignorance of the international world, as this type of central information about Cuba does not leave the island, when subjected to the censorship of the regime.

Finishing this section of analysis, I wanted to illustrate an enhancement of the crucial comments above, about the *absence* of media coverage in Cuba and general repression. I found, Oscar made a remark about, how he interpreted the work of the media, both national and international: “*The Cuban regime's media have downplayed the July 11 protest. The international media still does not understand the scale and magnitude of this protest. My estimate is that more than 90% of Cubans protested against the regime. In many towns in Cuba there was no repression on July 11, the regime simply cut off the internet and began releasing information that this was the last town left protesting, and that they were going to send tanks and the army to repress.*” (Question 9, appendix 5). Here, Oscar further comments on how the international media never grasped the extend of the 11J uprising, and so a critical blow was dealt to the essence of the uprising by the state-produced misinformation, which spread throughout the island, alongside with the *absence* of international media. When the regime uses media and misinformation to combat resistance, it shows the understanding of modern tools for mobilization, and how the manipulation and mental *false consciousness* plays a big part in the modern Cuban society.

Furthermore, finishing this part of the analysis, I wanted to underline the use of proving/analyzing

the efforts to stop resistance in Cuba coming from the government - If they did not fear the resistance, they would not make such an effort in altering their realities. This leads the analysis onto this very aspect, which is the *intent* to resist, and the effort made in *recognizing* and stopping the Cuban civil resistance.

## Step 2: Intent and recognition of resistance

Having analyzed aspects of *false consciousness* in the statements, I now move further down the *collective circuit*, to analyze on *intent and recognition* of resistance. This can be in the interviewees' own case of personal *intent and recognition* in relation to their choices of resistance, but also their observations on how other Cubans have intended and been recognized in their resistance. I treat *intent and recognition* as an imperative part of "legalizing" reactions to resistance as written in my theoretical section (See: *Resistance*).

Summarizing this section of analysis, I have examined *intent and recognition* in the statements of my interviewees, to better understand the power relation which unfolds itself in Cuba, and to highlight motivations as well as consequences of resistance.

I have found examples of *intent*, which include: The *intent* of the MSI, artistically breaking censorship *intent* from Funky, social media and mobilization *intent* from Kiele, organizational and proactive *intent* from Oscar and everyday political *intent* of resistance from Henry. In all the interviews, the internet and social media were mentioned as a crucial tool to express *intent* and to mobilize collectively.

In the case of *recognition* of this *intent* coming from the Cuban state, my interviewees have expressed various violations of legal rights, harassments, forced exile and imprisonment of political activists. These consequences have proved that the power relationship in Cuba is unjust, and that the *intent* of resistance from the people, has been met with *recognition* from the state, which has been out of proportions, looking at the possibilities of exercising resistance, which the Cubans are left with.

## The analysis of step 2

Looking at the Cuban international community, I wanted to investigate the difference in the *intent* coming from the Cubans living in Cuba, and the Cubans living outside of Cuba. Due to the heavy examples of *false consciousness* analyzed above, it seems highly challenging to perform any type of resistance inside the island.

From Kiele's personal perspective, I have already mentioned her *intent* in her demonstration during the baseball match between Cuba and Venezuela, which following got her *recognition*. *Recognition* in the moment, from the police escorting her off the field, but following *recognition* from the public, making her a known figure in the Cuban community (De La Cruz, 2021). That Kiele was able to demonstrate her resistance in a public sphere without facing unmanageable legal charges, or worse, shows the democratic advancement, which the United States hold in relation to Cuba, which is a counternarrative to the earlier mentioned anti-imperialistic, hateful discourse coming from the Cuban government.

This analysis being based on personal narrative contributes with the harsh realities, which my interviewees are met with, even though they have made it to "freedom" outside Cuba, one must consider the desolate consequences of being in exile. Kiele mentions the consequences of *recognition* in terms of visiting Cuba; "*I can't travel to Cuba, because they won't let me on the plane, first off. There's a lot of activists that once you get to a certain level of visibility, the regime will not allow you to get on a plane as what happened with Omara Ruiz Urquiola<sup>6</sup>, that she left Cuba as a member of Movimiento San Isidro to, for a brief period of time, a couple months, and when she tried to fly back they did not let her, even though she had no intention of being exiled. She still had her mother and her house in Cuba, and they did not let her back on the plane. Funky can't go back, you know.*" (Question 11, appendix 3) (Cuba Center, 2022). Here Kiele mentions her own consequences of individualization and resistance, as well as Omara Ruiz and Funky (Appendix 4), being forced (knowingly or unknowingly) into exile in the USA. This states the *intent* of the persons in question, as they all are known opposers to the Cuban government, as well as the consequences of *intent* in the form of the Cuban government *recognizing* their actions as hostile and denying them residence/entry to Cuba. This highlights the importance of remembering the personal lives behind these statements, and how the resistance pays a high price for their work - Therefore, a

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<sup>6</sup> Cuban professor, who went to USA for cancer treatment, and was denied entry to Cuba afterwards.

person with privileged biases needs to do some reconciliation of expectations to the resistance work, to truly understand the bravery of the activists of Cuba.

Looking into the *intent* of the (back then) resident Cubans, I found a candid statement from Oscar, who unlike Kiele, was born, raised, and lived most his life in Cuba, and so, have felt the direct consequence of *intent* in Cuba. Oscar mentions exile as a *recognition* to his activism as well, whereas he expresses, he was given the ultimatum of a closed prison in Cuba or leaving the island: *“I was under house arrest from April 2021 to November 2021 when the political police gave me the choice between leaving Cuba into exile or going to a closed prison.”* (Question 1, appendix 5). Oscar explains the accumulated *recognition*, he received for his activism from the Cuban state. Firstly, he was put in house arrest for 7 months, and afterwards he was unlawfully forced off his natal land, if he was to avoid imprisonment in Cuba. This shows that the *recognition* of the resistance does not come statically, but varies from activist to activist, how “harshly” they are treated with time.

Thus, seeing these two similar ways of resisting, but different ways of feeling recognition, I investigated the cross-border community of the Cubans, and how *intent* can become an international concept, even though it has a specific, geographical location. In the context of Oscar’s *recognition* of *intent*, Kiele mentions the San Isidro Movement and their happening on 27N (which is mentioned in the analysis above). The members of the movement, including Oscar and Funky (Appendices 4 and 5), arranged a demonstration and were met with persecutions from the state of Cuba. The echo of this *intent* however, surpassed country borders and ignited further the *intent* of resistance within Kiele, making the concept of *intent* and resistance of an international caliber. Kiele states: *“I had gone to a few rallies or rather like demonstrations and vigils that were organized by independent activists prior to July 11th for the Movimiento San Isidro movement. And so that's where I got wind of what was happening with Maykel Osorbo and Luis Manuel, because there were some independent artists that were, I guess, artist activists, right? Artist activists that were making vigils that had organized like vigils and things to bring awareness to what was happening with El 27N, the 27th of November, which was the artists that had a protest in front of the cultural center or whatever in Cuba. And so, and then Luis Manuel and all of them were being persecuted.”* (Question 1, appendix 3). Kiele expresses the *intent* of the San Isidro Movement as a catalyst for her own further engagement in Cuban freedom, making it an internationally collective



form of resistance. I find these statements to be key in the context of internet as a weapon in the social struggles, as well as looking above country borders in the search of empathy and support. In my own investigator positionality, I have never physically met my interviewees, but experiencing online communication with them has ignited my own sense of justice, and so, internationally influencing *intent* might be seen as the most important quality of this theoretical term.

Continuing on the national status of resistance, I found that my own focus on the 11J movement has its roots in the San Isidro Movement, which has been the base of the Cuban resistance the last 6 years, ergo the *intent* of the MSI (Movimiento San Isidro) forms the base of understanding the 11J uprising.

In my interviews, Funky explains the *intent* of the movement as: “(...) *Where we could express from our art, right? Artists, plastics, painters. The disagreement we had with Cuban politics, with the government. And we expressed it like that, in that way, about the art that we were, well, of the artists, in the plan where we were developing.*” (Question 1, appendix 4). Funky describes the *intent* of the MSI, in the terms of a place where art could be exhibited without the censorship the state imposed. The MSI intended to make a counternarrative to the artistic censorship of the Cuban state<sup>7</sup>. The most weighing part of this intent is the pacifist perspective this gives to the MSI (and later 11J) *intent*. Expressing opinions in a peaceful, artistic manner, sets the expectation of *recognition* low, but that not being the reality of Cuba, enhances the urgency of helping the Cuban activist. In this context the *recognition* of this *intent* has been forced exile for both Funky and Oscar.

Further analyzing the personal intents of the social movements, it becomes evident that the status of free expression in Cuba, is highly criticizable. Funky describes his personal *intent* as being based in his music: “*I simply reflected what I was living in my music, in my songs, and that was like I was already doing activism without realizing it*” (Question 1, appendix 4). Here, Funky reflects upon the fact that he was “already doing activism”, while challenging the censorship in Cuba, and using his personal narrative to tell his truth through his music. So, the *intent* of expressing art and opinions, being met with harsh *recognition*, is an reflection of Funky as an individual being an extension of the MSI *intent*, which makes the micro history and macro history inseparable, and heightening the importance of personal narratives in societal investigations.

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<sup>7</sup> MSI stated as a counternarrative to the decree 349 in Cuba (Amnesty International, 2018)

Representing the Cubans in all their variety, I too have my interview with Henry, who have not been politically active as the other interviewees have, and therefore, I find it significant to explore his perspective on resistance. Extending on this narrative of Funky's that one does not need to express highly proactive *intent* to be considered resistance in Cuba, Henry states a similar form of *intent*: *"Simply, my way of doing politics was in everyday life, basically when they told me there was a march to attend, I didn't go. If they said to go to a stronghold, I didn't go. In that way, and also not in the lecture halls that were primarily state-owned in the university, I didn't play along. I mean, if they said; you have to talk about this or that, I wouldn't do it. I used to say "I teach math, not politics". That was my stance, and it did cost me, it did cost me a little bit. I ran into several problems because of this. But this was primarily my stance."* (Question 1, appendix 6). Here, Henry presents his everyday activism, which like Funky is based in personal everyday choices, and not so much proactive choices as Oscar (After Funky joined MSI, he of course became highly proactive). This shows that everyday *intent* is recognized in a bigger scale in a repressive state as Cuba, as both Funky and Henry now are living in the United States due to political reasons.

Gradually moving up the scale of resistance from more low defiance to the high defiance, Oscar's personal *intent* was highly proactive in the form of, that he was organizing mobilizations and intentional resistance in various iterations. This has included secret concerts, anonymous demonstration etc. One example which Oscar gives is, that he has helped break the censorship, which the regime has put upon movies and such: *"From 2015 to 2020, my fellow activist Rudy Cabrera and I organized an "underground" distribution network of a free weekly package of digital information of about 16 gigabytes. The package contained news from TV Marti, video reports from Cubanet, Diario de Cuba, CiberCuba, Estado de Sats, as well as documentaries and films censored by the Cuban regime."* (Question 1, appendix 5). This statement shows Oscar's *intent* of making a countermove to the censorship imposed by the Cuban government. As I have chosen one of Oscar's personal narrative blocks to be "individual resistance", I will develop further on the theme of Oscar's *intent* later in the analysis, as there is a grand amount of personal resistance connected to Oscar's interview (Appendix 5).

Progressing a on the proactive narrative of Oscar, where his *intent* is to break communicative censorship through his resistance, one type of *intent* which the interviewees share, is the use of internet as a part of their resistance. The internet is used to communicate and most importantly

move up the *social circuit* from individual actions to being able to mobilize collective actions.

Internet and social media (or the lack of) are key concepts in understanding the social movements of Cuba, and their way of navigating living in a repressive society, and so I have dived further into the use of social media during the 11J uprising, through the personal narrative of Henry and Oscar. Henry mentions how he used Facebook Live to broadcast the happening on the 11<sup>th</sup> of July: “ (...) *social networks influenced a lot, especially Facebook Live, which is what was used the most, more than Instagram. I did a Live (...)* .” (Question 5, appendix 6). Here, Henry talks about the collective use of Facebook Live, and how he as well used the Live to transmit the mobilizations, and consequently keeping the outside world updated on Cuba’s situation. Likewise, Oscar mentions how the protesters saw other cities protest, and how that knowledge ignited the national protests on the 11<sup>th</sup> of July: “*When the Cubans saw the citizens of the town of San Antonio de los Baños protesting en masse in the streets, they decided to protest too.*” (Question 4, appendix 5). Oscar’s personal narratives highlights the collective advantage which the internet has brought with it to Cuba, and how it is crucial for the assembly of like-minded citizens, as Funky too mentions in *Step 1: False consciousness*. The *intent* here soared further than the micro histories, and influenced people ubicated in other location in Cuba, and so this, as the example of Kiele and the 27N, is an example of the potential which the understanding and transmission of *intent* has in combatting oppressive structures.

Within oppressive structures of a society, one finds the form of resistance that holds more *recognition* than *intent*, which can be seen as a violation of freedom of speech. Consequently, immersing in this premise, Kiele mentions the injustice which opiniated Cubans meet, when protesting; “*Meanwhile, there are people on the island regularly that are protesting, that are denouncing, that are speaking out. But then even then, they censor the Internet. They take down their posts. They blackmail them. They harass their families. They have them lose their employment, or they beat them up, or they do acts of repudiation in front of their house at all hours, throwing feces at their doors, and screaming at them, obscenities, at all hours of the day and night to literally drive people crazy. They don't let them leave their house. They put state security agents outside. They put cameras outside of their house, so that they can watch them and make sure that they don't leave.*” (Question 4, appendix 3). This is an example of the use of *intent* and *recognition* in the field of detecting resistance, and ultimately deciding the legitimacy of the *recognition* of this *intent* on

resistance. As Kiele mentions, the Cubans who are denouncing the government are met with harsh injustice in the form of “punishment” from the government. Such a violation of privacy and life could not be justified at any means, and it illuminates the conditions of resistance, which makes it so difficult to disintegrate the hegemonic structures of Cuba.

Emphasizing on legal structures in Cuba, I too wish to shine a light on the grave case of political prisoners and this strategy of hyper-criminalization of resistance. In this context Funky presents more consequences of living in a society of totalitarian structure, where *intent* is overly *recognized*, and the people live with the fear/reality of the ramifications: *“Well, sadly, still more than 1,500 prisoners, still from the 11th of July. That is to say that it really left a void and a sadness because many families are still going through that pain, right? It was something very big, it was something that remained for history, but really many people feel empty, devastated, you know? Because the one who doesn't have her husband by her side, or the one whose mother doesn't come home (...)”* (Question 8, appendix 4). As written above, many of Cuba’s activists are facing long sentences in inhumane prisons, and so Funky’s perspective relates itself to the reality of the legal system in Cuba, and the significance of illuminating this dimension of the repressive state to ensue the safety and freedom of expression (Freedom House, 2023) (See: *State of the Art - Cuba and the internet - Liberation by web*).

Another dimension of the repressive state and its strategic hyper-*recognition* which the Cuban state exercises frequently, according to my interviewees, is the strategy of house arrests. Truth be told, I had to Google the legitimacy of house arrests, because this deprivation of freedom seemed out of proportions. However, it is a recognized way of punishment instead of prison<sup>8</sup>, the Cuban problem is that there is no legal justice involved in the sentencing of house arrests.

As Funky and Oscar have mentioned in other statements, they were under house arrest during the 11<sup>th</sup> of July riots, due to their prior activism with the MSI (Appendix 4 and 5). Funky mentions, how he was kidnapped in his own house: *“I was already practically kidnapped in my house because I was already doing an activism with the San Isidro movement much earlier. And when the 11th came, it was like the moment we were waiting for.”* (Question 3, appendix 4). This shows the strategy of “pacifying” main characters in the opposition, to break up uprisings, and make it further difficult for the people to move up the *social circuit*, and united in the collective resistance.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://prisonprofessors.com/house-arrest-faqs/>

Oscar further develops on the conditions, which activists are met with in Cuba, when they are recognized for their *intent* to oppose the government: *I started to participate more actively in civil society activities and, until I left Cuba in December 2021, endured repeated unreasonable detentions, constant harassment, threats, surveillance, and since April 2021 blocked cell phone communications and unrelenting home arrest.* (Question 1, appendix 5). In this quotation, Oscar continues on narrating what has been the consequences for him in terms of his activism. The strategy of house arrest expanded to threats and harassment and ultimately cut off communication, which shows the importance of the earlier mentioned censorship-free internet, which the social movements gravely need in Cuba.

The liberation by web, and its catalyzing possibilities for social movements in repressive societies, will be my final point in this investigation of *intent* and *recognition* from Step 2 of my model of analysis. Proceeding to the final, most individualized step of the analysis and the model of analysis, I will now present the personal narrative blocks, which I have found within the statements of my interviews. This, to be able to further investigate the personal narratives of the Cubans and learning about their prioritized micro history to understand the variety of perspectives on Cuban macro history.

### **Step 3: Selected narrative blocks**

In this section, the most individualized part of the analysis, I have found recurrent themes (blocks) for my interviewees, which I will now present. I have encountered these narrative blocks by accessing which themes were repeatedly present in the interviews, and by visual highlighting, I have pointed them out in the appendices 3-6.

In advance, I will reason for the prioritization of not analyzing three personal narratives belonging to Funky, Oscar and Henry. I have chosen not to elaborate on their personal narratives about “Cuban economy/Economic crisis” and “internet development”, due to their repetitive content, which already has been mentioned multiple times in first two steps of the analysis, as well as in the State of the Art. Still, these personal narrative blocks are marked in the appendices for the interpretation of the reader (Appendices 4-6).

My intention in this analysis is to move from micro history to macro history in the presentation of these narrative blocks, as according to my model of analysis, representing the vertical upwards-pointed arrow on the y-axis (See: *Model of analysis*). Thus, I start out with the most personalized blocks/micro historical statements, and move towards the macro history and collective testimonies,

to launch the following discussion from a collectively representative launching point.

At the end of the analysis, I have placed a table to create a summary of the themes found in the personal narrative blocks, which will be transferred to the discussion of *absence*.

### **Family and friends - Kiele**

Starting with the most personal/micro historic block. Kiele mentions personal contexts throughout the interview, including her friends and family frequently. In this context, she gives substantial context in terms of the consequences the Cuban regime imposes on her family; *“In that sense, from my perspective, and my, all of my family has been, both sides of my family had been exiled. And my mother's side of the family, for the most part, has been exiled since 1962. And my father's side has been exiled since 1992.”* (Question 2, appendix 3). Further into the interview, she gives a graver context to the consequences of the Cuban regime, and how it has influenced her micro history:

*“They've tried kidnapping my mother. They have my father on a list for execution by firing squad. They tried killing my grandmother, Venezuela, with drive-bys and Molotov cocktails. My grandfather was on a list for execution by firing squad. So, you know, I don't have that same privilege that a lot of Cubans have, to be able to travel back and forth.* (Question 11, appendix 2).

This gives a groundwork, or motivational background, for the resistance Kiele does today, and a basis for inclination on the *social circuit* in term of collectivizing her own situation, and finding peers in the same situation - subsequently, Kiele started the JAR organization, which is a development of her micro history, but triggered by the macro history surrounding her (See: *Intent and recognition*).

Diving deeper into Kiele's micro history and motivation for starting the JAR organization, Kiele shows in her mention of Maykel Osorbo, how her consideration of him as a friend motivated her to start engaging in the political situation of Cuba; *“(...) you know, we were living those experiences with him. And it became it felt a lot more personal, you know. So when I was watching that, and I felt like, I felt like, I felt like he was my friend, you know, like, even though I hadn't, like, really talked to him, I was like, yo, they're doing that to my friend, like, this is messed up, you know, like, that's how you feel.”* (Question 3, appendix 3). This shows the crucial intersection between personal narratives and historical events - No friendship between Maykel and Kiele, no baseball match demonstration done by Kiele, no enhanced focus on Cuba, no JAR organization and so forth.

### **The personal relation to the social movements of Cuba - El Funky**

Continuing on the concern and sorrow, which Kiele expresses for her countrymen through the micro

history introduced above, El Funky also articulates about the Cuban social movements and the consequences activism has for the Cubans still situated on the island, highly focused the MSI. Firstly, Funky voices the base of MSI: *“The San Isidro movement is nothing more and nothing less than an artistic and social movement, excuse me, of Cuban political cut, created by a group of artists, where the leader and founder of that is Luis Manuel Otero Alcántara”* (Question 1, appendix 4). The leader, Luis Manuel, is the same Luis mentioned above in Kiele’s narrative block, which shows the importance Luis Manuel carries for the social movements of Cuba, as well as the companionship the activists find among kindred spirits. In this context, Funky continues to mention Maykel Osorbo: *“I joined because of Maykel. Because Maykel is the one who introduces me to Luis Manuel. And I’ve known Maykel since I was a child.”* (Question 1, appendix 4). Here, funky links his micro history and personal narrative to two of the most prominent activists still located in Cuba. This shows the layer of empathy and a humanization of an incomprehensible situation, which a prioritization of personal narratives generates.

This deeper connection to one another as humans, also makes it more comprehensible that these activists sacrifice their lives for their cause: *“And as I saw that they put their lives at risk, that left me so much, that after they finished that, I joined the San Isidro movement.”* (Question 1, appendix 4). Funky refers to some of the early mobilizations of the San Isidro Movement, where the *intent* of the activists was met with harsh *recognition* in relation to their earlier mentioned 27N happening, which inspired him to join his companions in their activism, as they likewise inspired Kiele across country borders (Fusco, 2020).

In a similar type of *intent*, which Funky presents in the above analysis, he verbally legalizes the success of the MSI, by “simply” changing the hegemonic narrative of the island: *“Well, I feel that I contributed. Because the movements have been successful. And I think that what San Isidro started was something that people started to follow a lot, because they were young people who were unhappy with the situation in Cuba, with that government, with that government, as I say.”* (Question 4, appendix 4 + *Step 2: Intent and recognition of resistance*). This is a personal narrative, which shows the highly tense situation in the society of Cuba in the macro perspective, since trying for a change is as valid as concurring a change, and so it witnesses of the low defiance being understood as open defiance in terms of *intent* and *recognition*, which is a weighty consequence to respect in working with activists from Cuba.

Further taking up the personal motivation of Funky, despite this *recognition* from the Cuban state, he explains his personal motives and mission for carrying on with his activism: *“And for me, more than being consistent, it's a mission, it's a promise to myself and my friends, because I know many of the people who are in prison after the 11th, (...) So, I feel very sad about that, and I believe the least I can do is to continue supporting freedom, the freedom of all those innocent people.”*

(Question 11, appendix 4). The motivation of Funky presents itself as the earlier mentioned companionship he has with his fellow activists, and in that context, he wants to continue to support freedom in a macro historic sense, based on his micro historic connection to the cause.

Terminating this narrative block from the micro perspective of Funky's relation to the social movement of Cuba, Funky at the end of his interview comments on the magnitude and legacy of the 11J uprising: *“After the events of July 11th, I realized the work we were doing, how fundamental it was for a people to join in. And there it is. (...)”* (Question 13-14, appendix 4). Funky's realization of his own connection to broader societal change, is a validation of micro history as an inseparable part of macro history, in the terms of how humans create history, and not reversed.

### **Personal political believes - Henry**

Expanding on the micro historical context Funky contributes with, I will continue with a personal narrative block from Henry, which I have categorized as personal political believes.

Even though this block's content is similar to Funky's prior block, Henry's block is based in an established historical context, whereas Funky's is in a newer context - Thus, Henry is closer to a macro historical point of view, clarifying the placement of this block.

In Henry's interview, he utters a lot of personal political believes, which link themselves to his surrounding, either in Cuba or in the United States. I see Henry's statements as quite unique in terms of his non-participative political orientation, and as contributing to breaking stereotypes about the political believes of a Cuban civilian - significant for the variety of this thesis.

The first personal narrative, which shows Henry's political stand, is his how Henry sees the political spectrum in a black and white manner, perchance due to his Cuban upbringing: *“To me, I didn't belong to the party nor the union of young communists. Nor was I openly a dissident”* (Question 1, appendix 6). In the world of Henry, one is either communist or opponent to the communist ideology, and this is highly influenced by Henry's Cuban heritage, as I have earlier mentioned the extreme political polarization, which is happening on the island (See: *State of the Art, introduction section*). Henry continues to utter his personal perspective on the Cuban crisis of economy, which



according to Henry was the catalyst for the 11J uprising: *That was a total catastrophe. A complete failure. (...) And, well, I began to notice the products were becoming scarce and the inflation started shooting up. (...) for my region, it was the critical factor that that led to the social outburst of the 11th of July.* (Question 2, appendix 6). Henry basing his reasoning for the 11J in Cuban economy, is an expression of his own political priorities in a macro context. This divides/personalizes itself from e.g., Funky, which bases the 11J uprising in the censor of art and the escalation of the MSI activism (See: *The personal relation social movements of Cuba - El Funky.*).

In the context of how the 11<sup>th</sup> of July further influenced Henry, he too sets his interpretation in his personal micro history and political/societal choices: *“For me, it was something that surprised me, but it didn't really mark me much. It's not that the Cuban people are disorganized and very treacherous. In fact, a long time ago, I personally decided not to be the hero, not to be like San Martín<sup>9</sup>, because communism in Cuba has created the famous 'new man' with a double standard. So, the neighbor next door tells you they're with you, but then stabs you in the back. Because of that manipulation, that deception, that double standard of the Cuban people, I decided not to be like San Martín, and that's why... I mean, it didn't really influence me much. I just did my part from my position as a teacher and educator in Cuba, working with the children.”* (Question 8, appendix 6). This shows Henry's personal stand in how he wished to position himself in the Cuban society in terms of activism, and the social consequences, which he is aware of. Henry speaking about the new man in Cuba, is seems to be the catalyst for his reasoning to stay more neutral in the question of activism and *intent*, and the new man in Cuba is an aspect of the Cuban reality which wouldn't be exhibited, if it wasn't for the focus on micro history and personal narrative statements.

In terms of futuristic hopes and aspirations for Cuba, Henry too has another mindset than the members of the social movements, proving the diversity of the Cubans and the counterproductive stereotypes applied to Cubans: *“And the legacy, well, I'm not sure to what extent the legacy remains in some people, but I believe that most of the Cuban people think it doesn't remain. Just as I explained in the audio alone, they don't believe it has degenerated, the Cuban citizen has degenerated.”* (Question 14, appendix 6). Henry possesses a certain pessimism about the impact of social movements in Cuba, and how he does not believe, that the impact of 11J has been that

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<sup>9</sup> San Martín is an Argentine national hero, who liberated Argentina from the Spanish (Glenn, 2024)

important to the individual citizen. He continues: “*Well, I'm a bit pessimistic about the situation in Cuba, but as the saying goes, 'there's no evil that lasts 100 years or a body that can endure it.'*” (Question 15, appendix 6). Finishing this narrative block of Henry’s, he, here above, elegantly sums up the two respective perspectives and timelines for Cuba, whereas he takes the macro history into account, and says that the regime cannot last forever, but neither can the Cuban “body”. This merging of two perspectives, micro- and macro history, brings the analysis onwards to the next narrative block, which prolongs on the recently mentioned: Hope for Cuba.

### **Hope for Cuba - Kiele**

Investigating further the (no) hope for Cuba, I have found a narrative block in the interview of Kiele, which contains her hope for the Cuban people, and pervasive narration of denouncing the current situation in Cuba, which unfolds in a defying type of hope and pride in being Cuban. This narrative block is arranged near to the prior block of personal believes, which Henry just presented, but due to Kiele’s physical positioning outside Cuba. Thus, I have placed her personal believes further up the micro-macro spectrum according to the model of analysis.

The hope within the Cuban society is mentioned at the beginning of the interview with Kiele in the context of Maykel Osorbo, where she speaks of the renewed energy, which Maykel’s effort in social media brought with it; *So seeing his openness and doing that, where I am, I'm used to, so I'm used to the majority feeling like they have to kind of censor their speech or not say something as clearly seeing him speak so clearly, um, was refreshing. And was, you know, impactful and inspiring. And I think Michael inspired a lot of people with by just the way that he carried himself, you know, because there are a lot of there.*” (Question 3, appendix 3). Here, the hope described comes in the form of Maykel’s way of expressing himself, and the change in censored discourse, which he brought with him. It also is another evident reason for the importance of internet in Cuba. To be able to share information and develop people’s perception of reality and free speech. Anew, a statement supporting the trans-national potential of *intent*, and the importance of internet in the context of social media.

Searching for supplementary statements of hope, I found a more practical hope, which Kiele presents, in a macro historic context, where she mentioned the continuity of Cuban resistance through history; *“It's just like a gasp, a scream of like. Like you're just expressing your pain, you*

*know, and I think that that's happened in our history every like 10 or 15 years, right?"* (Question 4, appendix 3). In a setting of the hardship which led to the 11<sup>th</sup> of July uprisings, Kiele gives a historical nod to how that every 10-15 years, when the Cuban society reaches a certain point of repression, it responds with resistance. This generates a general hope, and a time frame for the arrival of the "next hope" or possibly the next grand manifestation.

In that same context of uprisings, Kiele too expresses her optimism through the action of the 11<sup>th</sup> of July, and how that has impacted Cuban history: *"It absolutely has affected it and impact the history. It is something that cannot be forgotten or denied. I think it was the biggest social uprising to date that we understand. I don't think it's a narrative that the regime can change. I don't think anybody's going to be able to change it, even a thousand years from now when we forget, people forget."*

(Question 14, appendix 3). This is a comment on the positive development on *social circuit*, which came to be in Cuba, after sufficient individualization and then collectivity. How *the people* changed the course of history, which is complicated in an autocratic regime, and the importance of social movements from micro to macro history. Having Henry interpreting the opposite above, only adds to the importance of variety in personal narratives, and nonetheless prioritizing diverse positionings.

This is hope obtained from the 11J is developed in the sense of collectivity which the 11<sup>th</sup> of July brought to the Cuban (and Cuban American) society; *You know, I felt like it gave people a sense of hope that many of us had never experienced before. I think that's what it did. It was like a very big energetic and emotional release, communally. So, very, very high adrenaline, very, very high energy. It felt like, you know, uncharted waters. An unprecedented moment. And it gave us, there was a lot, it gave, it was like a very big air of hope. Like, I felt like a lot of us felt like something's going to change, something's going to change. It's happening now, it's happening now, something's going to change."* (Question 7, appendix 3). This explicit expression of hope is a picture of the communality, which a culture can experience in hardship, and how a majority of people are highly motivated in the fight for Cuba's freedom - they are merely missing the means to reach the goal. The means the Cubans have right now, are rocks from the street in comparison to state military tanks, but that fact evidently does not stop the Cuban people, as Kiele utters: *"And then seeing the robots become humans again and expecting themselves was like, whoa, like, something's changing, you know? But then, you know, state repression is what it is. You have people fighting machine guns and full body armor and tanks and military weapons with rocks and sticks."* (Question 7, appendix 3). This shows an apparent stubbornness in the Cuban spirit, and hope within the Cuban American community, as

they have witnessed their compatriots awaken from their “robotic” behavior and through *intent* and *recognition* present resistance to the Cuban government in physical encounters.

Moving further up the scale of macro history and collectivism, I will now present the narrative block of Henry, which describes the Cuban daily life, and which shows the micro histories in the Cuban society, which we as outside-viewers may notice is a particular component to the universal macro history.

### **Cuban daily life - Henry**

Investigating alternative views on the Cuban daily life, than the statements from the activists, it became evident that Henry’s personal narrative of living in Cuba and avoiding house arrests, unlike Funky and Oscar, has given him a unique focus on the Cuban daily life. I have placed the Cuban daily life in the middle of the macro-micro spectrum, as it comes from the micro history of Henry, but due to its collective involvement of the Cuban citizens, as well as its investigational value for the international world in terms of understanding uncensored Cuban situation.

The first comment which Henry makes during his interview, about the Cuban daily life is the transportation crisis. In this context Henry mentions the effect, which the transportation crisis has had on his personal life, but in a national context, as it affected the entire nation (On Cuba News, 2022). Henry utters: *“What happened with that was that it affected transportation, I felt it myself. I lived in Municito, Playa Santa Fe and worked in Havana with the Piarist fathers, and the university is in Marianao and not very central. So, I was affected and I had to walk several times in the streets, day and night, and I would arrive home late, because there was no transportation. It was a very difficult time, and this was before the pandemic hit. It made everything worse. You could feel the failure of communism in Cuba. At this moment there weren't any basic necessities.”* (Question 2, appendix 6). Given this example, Henry unfolds his personal consequences in having to walk from the outskirts of Havana, as well as commenting on the national crisis of firstly transportation and then the arrival of COVID. Ending this quotation, Henry also comments on the “failure of communism”, which de novo blurs the two respective lines of macro and micro history, linking the personal narrative to the international, ideological, historical course.

Looking further into the Cuban living conditions, apart from the crisis of COVID and transportation, Henry also mentions the lack of food and groceries, which the Cuban daily life consists of: *“All the basic commodities have disappeared. I’m talking about things like chicken, soap, and toothpaste.*

*Things like that.*" (Question 2, appendix 6). Taking this nutritional crisis into account, when looking at the survival of the communist ideology, links itself to Henry's example of *false consciousness*, where his pastor reflected upon iron grip the government has its citizens in, when forcing them to think about survival instead of resisting to the situation in Cuba (See: *Step 1: False consciousness* and question 14, appendix 6). This is highly essential in the discussing of the Cuban daily life/macro history, due to its influence on the creators of societal change, the micro historians. Henry's mother's local observations in Cuba is consistent with the reflections of the pastor above, as Henry describes: "*Recently, from what we saw in the protests that happened in the eastern part of the country, and in the end, my mother told me yesterday on the phone that in Santiago de Cuba, they had gone out to protest because there was a shortage of powdered milk and coffee (...). And the people kind of concentrated, so the phrase "bread and circuses" applies. That's how they've governed Cuba for over 60 years, giving the people bread and circuses and taking away critical thinking, taking away the ability to think*" (Question 14, appendix 6). This gives a collectively more challenged narrative of Cuba, whereas the standard privileged bias, wouldn't be able to imagine a world where one lives from meal to meal, and therefore this personal statement gives the outside world a crucial perspective into the reasoning of the "survival" of the communist state in Cuba.

Another "normal" aspect of the Cuban daily life, which I find highly significant to understand, is the paranoia and mistrust, which haunts the friendships and families of Cuba. As mentioned earlier in Step 1 and Step 2, the personal infiltration takes part in the Cuban society, and Henry comments on, how he had to change his shirt, coming back from the mobilization on the 11<sup>th</sup> of July, to avoid being confused with a civil police officer: "*Then we arrived at the house, we changed, I was wearing a checkered shirt, and they confused me with someone from the government, well because usually government sympathizers wear checkered shirts. So, to avoid problems, that they could hit me or something, the people, mistaking me, I had to change the shirt (...).*" (Question 3, appendix 6). This witnesses of the difficulty of moving from the individualized resistance to the collective resistance in the *social circuit*, in the form that gathering likeminded people, can be a great challenge to the Cubans, due to the risk of your friend or neighbor reporting you to the authorities, and the fear of the following *recognition of intent*.

In the context of fear and reaction, Henry too mentioned, how people grew passive, after seeing the consequences of the 11J uprisings: "*Firstly, repression, and secondly, in "the same town". The people from the town adopted a passive attitude, aside from supporting and denouncing.*" (Question

6, appendix 6). This collective passiveness makes it even harder, to be able to gather support for the social movements, but nonetheless is it an understandable human reaction to the repressive regime, which also needs to be considered.

Investigating the earlier mentioned clash between timelines, Henry also talks about how he was met with a pro-1959 slogan in the context of the 11<sup>th</sup> of July mobilizations: “(...) *what the phrase was, I think it was 'With a revolution like this, I want nothing to do with it.'* And then she shouted, *'Long live the revolution!'* and the effect was like the Commission was far away from us, one of those things (...)” (Question 7, appendix 6). In this example, Henry encounters the “old” ideology in the context of new social change, which shows the importance of taking into account that supporters of the 1959 revolution still exist. This, due to *false consciousness* or other factors, and that the societal change in the Cuban society too needs to be accepted from the bottom of the hegemonic ladder, even though it is the minority, which still fully supports communism in Cuba, according to Kiele (Question 10, appendix 3).

And so, the narrative block of the Cuban daily life is completed, and I will be continuing the personal narrative block analysis, which is the reaction to the Cuban daily life as seen through the micro history of Oscar. I have chosen to place his narrative block leaning more towards macro history, as his resistance is based on reacting to the societal situation of Cuba, but as well his personal significance for the Cuban resistance, which can be put into a macro historic context.

### **Personal resistance - Oscar**

In my search for direct examples of open defiance, Oscar has contributed to many manifestations during his life in Cuba, and so, I will present some of the proactive resistance he has made as a counternarrative to the macro history happening around him. Oscar has been politically active since 1998, and so, he has plenty records of his personal resistance to the Cuban government, which appear highly present in his written interview (Appendix 5).

Beginning with the catalyst for Oscar’s “full-time” resistance, as written above, in *intent* and *recognition* in resistance, Oscar was terminated from his position at INOR due to political “differences”. In this context, he arranged a mobilization: *“I accompanied fellow scientist Ariel Ruiz Urquiola during a hunger and thirst strike in front of the INOR, demanding that Cuba should buy medicine for his sister and other breast cancer patients. I helped with the media distribution campaign.”* (Question 1, appendix 5). For the Cuban people to be forced to demonstrate to optimize

the health sector, is evidence of the poor priorities which the Cuban government has been making, and too, a way of dissolving the idea of the individual responsibility and the collective responsibility, if it comes to the point where two persons are demonstrating on behalf of a nation. This can point back to the passiveness, which Henry described above, and a further challenge for the social mobility in Cuba.

Apart from the health sector, Oscar has mainly unfolded his personal resistance directed at the creative sector, the technological sector, and the democratization of Cuba. An example of the latter is when Oscar constructed a database to help the Cubans in expressing their experiences in their encounters with the personal infiltration of the Cuban police: *“From November 2019 to May 2020, I designed a political opinion survey and organized an underground network in eleven Cuban provinces with funding from Compromiso Democrático that would comment on the surveillance of the Cuban political police. (...) respondents totaled 3,605.”* (Question 1, appendix 5). This is an important example of prioritizing the micro history in the investigation of justice, and in this case in a private investigation of more than +3000 answers. Here, Oscar gathered collective opinions in the search of justice, in a similar way, as I am conducting this project, which witnesses the personal narratives being a selected method in the fight of making peoples voices heard, across continents.

Focusing anew on giving access to expression, Oscar arranged numerous counternarratives to the state's internet monopoly. Oscar has been working with supplying the Cubans with internet, and breaking the censorship, which the state puts upon the social networks in Cuba: *From January 2019 to January 2020, I coordinated the delivery of donations to victims of a tornado that hit Havana on January 27, 2019. I built a database with information of Cuban families who had suffered damages, and received, and distributed medicine and school supplies (...)*“ (Question 1, appendix 5). In this example Oscar has taken it upon himself, to handle crisis management in his country, and coordinated emergency aid for victims of hurricane. This is a macro historical event, which is met by the micro historic character, due to the poor responsibility taken by the Cuban regime. Oscar's independent way of resisting is an example of the struggle between power relations in Cuba, whereas the individual resists the hegemonic power, perhaps based in the damage the regime has done to the resistance of the larger public.

Besides from these above targeted sectors, Oscars main focus has been in the creative industry, where he started his resistance back in '98 (Appendix 5). Besides the manifestations with the MSI,

which have been presented in this assignment, Oscar has arranged anti-governmental concerts to promote the voices of the artists, and use the expression of art as an act of resistance: “(...) *the punk rock group Porno Para Ricardo was founded where my best friend, Ciro Javier Diaz Penedo, composed the songs and played the guitar. The songs of this group directly criticize the Cuban regime. I was helping them secretly to organize and promote concerts, dodging the political police who sought to prevent the concerts.*” (Question 1, appendix 5). This is the explanation of the beginning of Oscar mixing his own creative interests and friendship, his micro history, with the act of resisting the regime in the form of forwarding regime-critical music and arranging collective, censorship-free gatherings.

Continuing on this act of resistance in the form of prioritizing art and expression, I will now present the second narrative block from El Funky, which concentrates around using art as a counternarrative to repression. I have placed Funky’s narrative block after Oscars, due to Oscars predominantly independent way of resisting, in comparison to Funky’s resistance being based in the collective MSI movement, mainly.

### **Art as an expression of repression - El Funky**

Recognizing the MSI as the foundation of the 11J movement, I wanted to investigate their motivations and their use of art resistance, and so, moving further up the micro to macro historical spectrum, I found the personal narrative block from Funky, which represents arts in relation to repression. Funky, as an artist has been involved with several important songs and publications in collaboration with his companions in the MSI (JAR, 2024).

In this narrative block Funky mentions a lot of collective actions, in the formulation of “we did...”, and so I have placed this narrative block closer to the macro history, as Funky’s collective impact makes for a larger macro historical impact, than the more individualized resistance from Oscar.

Concerned with the beginning of the MSI, and Funky’s own activism, Funky mentions the political prisoner Maykel Osorbo, how they met, and why Funky joined the MSI: “*And we were already working on music together.*” (Question 1, appendix 4). Here the two collective groupings of artists, led Funky to join the Movimiento San Isidro.

However, the catalyst for Funky’s “enlightenment” and understanding of art as a counternarrative, began in the early teenage years: “*And there you start to realize, in the ten-odd years, 16, 17 years, that I started to listen to American music and they told me that I could not listen to that music, you*



*understand?*” (Question 2, appendix 4): Here, Funky describes how he started listening to international music, and how that was made forbidden, and so, he started becoming aware of the censorship that was put upon art, nationally and internationally, from the Cuban state. Growing up, Funky himself became to be one of the censored Cuban artists, which culminated when the song “Patria y Vida<sup>10</sup>” won two Latin Grammys, and nonetheless became the anthem of the 11<sup>th</sup> of July 2021: *“Because the majority of the people, that is, of the people, what they were saying was homeland and life. And we had made homeland and life, you know?”* (Question 4, appendix 4). This is an evident full circle, micro history for Funky to be able to contribute with the same artistic counternarrative, which he found within music as a teenager, and it too witnesses of the special tool which art is, in the form of gathering people, and making more positive and creative connotations to resistance, which in the 1959 revolution on the contrary did not use.

A development of the Cuban national resistance and of the collective way of living with art as an expression of repression, is a unique context to understand in the context of working with the current social movements, and I would not have been part of the equation, hadn’t it been for the personal narrative focus.

Finishing the second narrative block from Funky, I am now moving onto the third narrative block of Kiele, which too is a narrative of her own resistance. However, her international, physical placement makes her resistance further collectivized and of broader macro history than the prior narratives of national resistance from Oscar and Funky.

### **Opposition to communism - Kiele**

While analyzing the narrative block of Hope for Cuba, I found a profound opposition to the communist ideology within Kiele’s interview. Opposition to something as destructive as the communist ideology in Cuba is an obvious and throughout discourse of the Cuban interviewees, due to all the presented analyses above, and so I have dedicated this narrative block of Kiele’s to these resisting sentiments.

This opposition is firstly shown in Kiele’s reasoning for her manifestation during the baseball match earlier mentioned: *“(…) the Cuban and Venezuelan communist teams, because that's what they are, they're baseball teams that are owned by these communist parties. And they decided that they were going to come play a little game here in West Palm Beach, you know, the imperialist, you know,*

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<sup>10</sup> From Spanish: “Fatherland and Life”

*enemy that they scapegoat so oftenly, I became very upset.”* (Question 3, appendix 3). This outspoken way of addressing the baseball teams and the anti-imperialistic discourse of the communist ideology, creates a counterreaction to the oppression, the Cubans (and Venezuelans) are living, and challenges the hegemonic relations outside of the communist regimes (Lopez & Yaffe, 2017).

Looking at international influence on Cuba, I found a direct example of Kiele’s way of distinguishing ideologies is her mention of the Cuban actress Ana de Armas, and de Armas’ political involvement: *“So yeah, I had I had also, I had also called them out when Ana de Armas's brother went on a hunger strike to support Movimiento San Isidro. And she obviously is an active tool and accomplice of the regime, as most of her films have been to promote pro-regime narratives that demonize the exile community. And she completely didn't support her brother when he went on hunger strike. And there's recorded audio of her brother being interrogated by state security. And then, you know, chastising him for not being as good of a puppet or as a tool as his sister”* (Question 3, appendix 3). Kiele explicitly mentioning the name of a Hollywood actress and how the Cuban government uses de Armas as a tool for political propaganda, and how de Armas’ personal relationships has been affected, evidently shows Kiele’s political positioning and her activist nature.

Commenting further on Kiele’s look on the downfall of this ideology, post July 11<sup>th</sup>, Kiele says: *“So, post-July 11th, I realized that the percentage of the general Cuban population that stands with principle, with the communist state, is a slim minority. (...) I realized that the majority of the Cuban population, (...) does not align with the communist party. Nonetheless, I realized just how vulnerable, and weak, and uneducated, and lack of access to resources that general population has to get themselves out of that country. Out of that situation and create independently the level of change necessary to remove that yoke of communism. I realized just how vulnerable they were after July 11th. But I also realized the vulnerabilities and the weaknesses of the communist state.”* (Question 10, appendix 3). Her formulations of adjectives, “(...) remove the yoke of communism”, “weaknesses”, etc. is a reoccurring counternarrative to the communist ideology, coming from Kiele, and is a statement of the counter-tools used by the Cubans in mimicking the harsh discourse coming from the Cuban government, in the attempt of balancing the hegemonic power in Cuba.

Returning to the starting point of hope, and here, hope for the downfall of communism, Kiele mentions the hope within the desperation of the communist ideology, and how it needs to “survive”,

but due to modern progress, (luckily) the outdated regime is losing its superiority of the Cuban people, according to Kiele: *“In this desperation to find a new international place to infiltrate their sick ideology. So that it can live beyond the death of the communist state as it is now. Which is quickly approaching because they are not going to be able to stop a future social uprising. And they know that because they know that they do not have solutions for the Cuban people.* (Question 10, appendix 3).

In this quote, Kiele mentions an international context, and how the Cuban regime is searching for another place to “conquer” with their ideology, because the Cubans are progressively becoming more informed about the reality of their lives, and of the imposed *false consciousness*, which the regime uses to secure their grip on the Cuban society. *“The death of the communist state, which is quickly approaching”* is a final comment on the (hope and) opposition found within Kiele’s interview, which I find to be a powerful ending to the many personal narratives above, concerning the misery imposed by the Cuban government onto its people.

I will now finalize this 3<sup>rd</sup> step of the analysis, with the personal narrative block of Oscar, which contains his interpretation on the reactions of the national and international world, concerning the 11<sup>th</sup> of July in Cuba. This is the most inclusive, macro-history, as it based on the international collective in cohesion with the national micro histories gathered on the 11<sup>th</sup> of July.

### **Reactions to the 11th of July from Cubans and the world - Oscar**

Starting out with investigating the reactions of the Cuban nationals on the 11<sup>th</sup> of July, Oscar tells how the emotional state of the mobilizations played out, which gives a more nuanced picture of the 11J uprising: *“The feeling of the majority of the protesters was euphoria, because they believed that this could be the last day of the Cuban totalitarian dictatorship. The main goal of the Cuban people in that parade was to get rid of the Dictatorship”* (Question 4, appendix 6). In this statement Oscar explains the macro historical influence, which made the Cubans highly excited to maybe see the end of the dictatorship on the 11<sup>th</sup> of July. Oscar proceeds about the manifestations: *“The people were in the streets shouting Freedom, down with the dictatorship, “Patria y Vida” - Homeland and Life. Some protesters held up signs.”* (Question 5, appendix 6). Accounting for the *intent* and the procedure of the peaceful protesters is a testimony of the exaggerated *recognition*, which the protesters received from the government as explained in the examples from Kiele and El Funky in Step: 2: *Intent and recognition*. In a national, as well as international context, this too witnesses of the importance of art (music in this case), in the gathering of the collective in a totalitarian state, as the protesters found community in the song *Patria y Vida*, which is featuring El Funky.

Searching for direct comments on the *absence* of the international media, which will soon be discussed, Oscar points out how some protests lasted longer than the outside world knew: *It is important to say that in some towns in Cuba the protests continued for 3 days, from July 11 to 13.* (Question 5, appendix 6). This happened due to the Cuban cut, as Oscar explains in Step 1: *False consciousness*, and so it displays the lack of effort in investigating the complete narrative, from the international media. In this ambience, Oscar continues: *“The international media still does not understand the scale and magnitude of this protest.”* (Question 9, appendix 6). In the phrasing of “still” Oscar implies that the international media has had it chances to investigate and thereby judge the 11<sup>th</sup> of July manifestations, but still, no effort has been taken from his micro historical perspective.

In this context of “no effort”, Oscar too utters his concern for the future help, which Cuba needs: *“(...) we realize that Cuban people are alone, because there were no consequences for the Cuban regime. The European Union kept sending money to the Cuban regime, and never applied economic sanctions against the Cuban regime. There are more than 1000 Cuban political prisoners, and the world did nothing.”* (Question 8, appendix 6). The influential macro historical actors in this statement, as “The European Union” and “the world”, represent the *absence* felt by Oscar as a micro historian, but too by the likeminded Cubans, as this disappointment of the lack of national support is an overall narrative from the social movements of Cuba (JAR, 2024).

This phrase of solitude, once again, brings an emotional aspect of the story, which the collective can emphasize with, and in doing this, see the importance of personal narratives, to avoid the generalization and media flow (See: *Narrative analysis - Theoretical considerations* for further comments on media flow and individual stories).

Terminating this personal narrative block, and progressing to the discussion of *absence*, Oscar adds in his “message to the world”, that drastical matters have to be taken into account in the fight against the regime, and how the international world might not be aware of the paradoxical importance of money in the communist state: *“To fight against totalitarian regimes that behave like mafias, international diplomatic tools are not enough. The only thing that matters to the regime is money and apparently no government, not even the United States, intends to prevent the entry of money into Cuba.”* (Question 15, appendix 6). Here, Oscar sets the macro history into perspective, and repeatedly criticizes the international world’s actions contra the communist state of Cuba, and so contributing to the crucial angles of the complete narrative, which the personal narrative blocks

provide to the macro history, and the promotion of no censorship.

### **Themes from the personal narrative analysis brought forward to the discussion**

In my transition from analysis to discussion, I have prepared a color-coded table to summarize the themes from the personal narrative analysis, which I will be discussing in relation to *absence*. This has been compiled in order to create a better overview and visualize which themes the interviewees mentioned multiple times.

The thematic color-codes are as following:

Orange: Inequality in *intent* and *recognition*.

Green: Status of Cuba, coming from the Cubans.

Purple: Individualism and breaking stereotypes.

Blue: Art and its importance for social change.

Pink: International (negative) influence.

**Table of the interpreted themes of absence through personal narrative analysis**

Kiele	Funky	Oscar	Henry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consequences for family members of opposition.</li> <li>• COVID strategies.</li> <li>• Individual focus - Maykel.</li> <li>• Emotional state of the Cubans.</li> <li>• Majority of Cuba is with the 11J.</li> <li>• Anti-imperialism double morale.</li> <li>• Hollywood influence.</li> <li>• Personal infiltration.</li> <li>• Cuba searching internationally for survival of ideology.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Importance of art in Cuba.</li> <li>• Community in the MSI.</li> <li>• Success of MSI.</li> <li>• Intent/recognition - Prisoners.</li> <li>• Magnitude of the 11J.</li> <li>• Art as resistance</li> <li>• Censorship in Cuba.</li> <li>• Collectiveness in art.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individualism in resistance.</li> <li>• House arrests / intent/recognition.</li> <li>• Anti-stereotype: one-man resistance.</li> <li>• Art as resistance.</li> <li>• The state of the island.</li> <li>• Intent/recognition in peaceful protests.</li> <li>• Critique of international media/The international world.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breaking stereotype: Individualism vs ideology.</li> <li>• Personal infiltration.</li> <li>• Plurality in democracy.</li> <li>• Crises before 11J.</li> <li>• Survival over critical thinking.</li> <li>• Passiveness.</li> <li>• Clash of generations.</li> </ul>

## Discussion of the absence of media coverage in relation to Cuba

In my formation of the discussion, I have formed clusters of repetitive themes, to divide my discussion into the sections of themes which appears to be the most significant for the Cubans. Making a cluster table relates itself to my model of analysis, whereas I wish to contribute to the Cuban collective by gathering the individual themes, and afterwards cluster them, and thereby visualizing the process from individual resistance to collective resistance and promoting community in a common cause - Equity for the people of Cuba.

My discussion of *absence*, will be based on investigating larger media sources for information on the selected themes, and how the media narrative corresponds to the personal narratives. A lack of information or a very distinct narrative could determine media *absence* in the individual themes.

### International (negative) influence

In the context of negative international influence, my Cuban interviewees highlight the Cuban government are searching for new places internationally, where they might succeed in securing the survival of their ideology (Appendix 3).

In this case of political infiltration or trying to convey other nations to collaborate with the Cuban government, I have searched for foreign policies relating to this, news about the PPC<sup>11</sup> going international, infiltration cases through the Washington Post, and looking for international collaboration between social movements with roots in pro-government Cuba. In these cases, I found no relevant information on the spread of Cuban communism.

However, a closer look at Latin American media, particularly Prensa Latina, reveals significant insights (Prensa Latina, 2024).

Prensa Latina is a media portal, founded in Cuba post-revolution, and translated into English, Portuguese, Russian, French, Italian and Arabic (Prensa Latina, 2024).

This media investigation therefore suggests an *absence* of information in general about Cuban foreign collaboration in an international context, as well as *absence* of information from critical sources on the regime.

On the other hand, it would be understandable for outside civilians to question the motives of the

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<sup>11</sup> Most active communist party in Cuba, started by Fidel Castro in 1965:  
<https://www.diariolasamericas.com/america-latina/cuba-el-pcc-y-la-ujc-se-desinflan-remedio-n4245139>

Cuban government, but still not believe the web of political propaganda or infiltration, which the Cuban government exercises through their media, as the international media does not investigate these cases thoroughly.

Nonetheless, I have defended the validity of the statements of my interviewees as personal narratives, which contributes to the macro history. In this case of negative international influence, the statements of Kiele and Oscar contributed to the demonstration of *absence* in the context of international negative influence, and Oscar rightfully criticizes the effort of the international media in his interview (Appendix 5).

In the themes of Hollywood and pop-culture's influence on Cuba, Kiele too mentioned how the Cuban Hollywood actress Ana de Armas has starred in movies, promoting the Cuban reality which the Cuban government wishes to show (Appendix 3). In this case, I too found articles of an upcoming movie about Fidel Castro, where Hollywood actor James Franco will be portraying the late president. This contains criticizability, because Franco does not come from a Cuban origin, and therefore hasn't lived with the Cuban reality Castro created but will portray him in a deeper personal character as the movie is set to be about a love affair.

So, on one hand, Hollywood and its connections to Cuba are somewhat documented, and it could be a way of changing the narrative about dictator in a sensitive manner and take away hegemonic resonance with the Castro name, by portraying the emotional/failed side of Castro.

However, giving a space in Hollywood for a characterization of Fidel Castro, before contributing to the aid of the current Cuban reality, can be seen as a pop culture phenomenon, but not necessarily *absence* of documentation<sup>12</sup>, as much as it is *absence* of illuminating the societal terms in Cuba.

### **Art and its importance for social change**

El Funky and Oscar mentioned the importance of art as a part of the Cuban resistance, and how the MSI has been the trailblazers for the artistic Cuban community. In terms of information about the MSI the international press already has published articles, and the NGO organization Amnesty International has done portraits of the political prisoners of Cuba, including earlier mentioned Luis Manuel and Maykel (Amnesty International, 2020; Amnesty International Aotearoa New Zealand, 2024; Amnesty International, 2023).

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<sup>12</sup> <https://deadline.com/2022/08/james-franco-fidel-castro-alina-of-cuba-movie-1235085397/>



Larger media sources as BBC<sup>13</sup>, France24<sup>14</sup> and El País<sup>15</sup> has published informative articles about the movement, and so no *absence* shall be detected in that context. However, looking at the visibility of the art, it is hard to find newer international sources, which display the art itself, and analytic commentaries of interpretations of the art. This can be due to the aftermath of the San Isidro Movement, and a subsequently “cleaning” of the visibility of Cuban art, done by the Cuban government, because of the newfound significance of art in resistance. The Cuban government has been made aware of the power of art in resistance and might have heighten the censorship even more.

Looking at art literature, I found the book “The art of Cuba”, but became aware of the photographer’s name - Camilo Guevara, the son of Che Guevara (Brownstone & Guevara, 2019). This book did not show any of the many critical art-pieces from Cuba, but (as expected) superficial art-pieces. This shows the *absence* of focus on the politically critical art itself, seen from an international/neutral point of view, and an *absence* in taking responsibility of exhibiting the Cuban critical art in other formats than civil social media accounts (JAR, 2024).

### **Inequality in *intent* and *recognition***

Progressing in the *intent* and *recognition* of the Cuban activism, Kiele, Funky and Oscar commented on the horrors which have met the Cuban people on terms of violence, killings disappearances and a general unjust distribution of means in Cuba. Looking at the 11<sup>th</sup> of July manifestations Amnesty international has published a critical article, which is very similar to the statements of my Cuban interviewees<sup>16</sup>. This article focuses equally on *intent* and *recognition* of the Cuban uprising, and so it highly helpful in breaking the censorship surrounding the 11J movement. Looking beyond the human rights organization as Amnesty and HRW, media sources as CNN<sup>17</sup> and NBC<sup>18</sup> have brought similar stories, in lesser detail, but still with focus on the mass-arrests and the unjust treatment of peaceful demonstrations. So, in terms of the illumination of the overinterpretation of recognition from the Cuban state, the international media as well as organizations, have contributed to the information on these themes.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-55096075>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.france24.com/es/programas/escala-en-paris/20231117-el-encierro-del-movimiento-san-isidro-valió-la-pena-porque-hubo-un-cambio-en-la-conciencia-cívica>

<sup>15</sup> <https://elpais.com/internacional/2022-06-24/la-justicia-de-cuba-condena-a-cinco-y-nueve-anos-de-carcel-a-los-dos-principales-opositores-del-movimiento-san-isidro.html>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/07/five-things-you-should-know-cubas-11-july-protests/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://edition.cnn.com/2022/07/11/americas/cuba-protest-anniversary-intl-latam/index.html>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/cuba-historic-protests-little-change-activists-push-rcna93650>

Addressing the subject of house arrests, which almost every one of my interviewees mentioned as a strategy of the Cuban government, I searched for informative sources on this matter as well. Here, I too found critical and insightful sources from the larger human rights organizations as Amnesty<sup>19</sup>, PEN international<sup>20</sup> and Human Rights Watch<sup>21</sup>.

Nevertheless, I found a gap in the information spree, as I searched more quantitatively for acknowledged data on the artistic, political prisoners of Cuba, such as Maykel Osorbo and Luis Manuel Otero, mentioned by Kiele and Funky (Appendices 3-4).

My investigation showed that even though Cuba has +1000 political prisoners pr May 2024<sup>22</sup>, few are *recognized* as artists and especially writers, which I believe to be crucial for the understanding of the social movements and the extreme *recognition* these prisoners have been met with, from peaceful *intent*. PEN America only recognizes 6 current political, artistic prisoners in Cuba in 2023 (PEN America, 2024). This unusual low number seems to be affected by the *absence* of identification of Cuban prisoners, and limited legal commitment to the Cuban cases. This narrative is damageable for the search of empathy for the Cuban prisoners, as if they were recognized at peaceful artists, it would improve the international narrative of “political prisoners”.

Thus, in this case of identification of the political prisoners and the transmission of their stories internationally, its possible to interpret *absence* from the international media sources.

## Individualism and breaking stereotypes

One of the most throughout themes of the interviews has been the Cubans focus on individuality as a counternarrative to the ideology, they were born into. All of my interviewees mention individuals or contradictions to the communist ideology, as a way of distancing themselves and their *intent*, from the Cuban stereotype (Appendices 3-6).

Kiele mentions the start of her *intent* as being inspired by the individual activists Maykel Osorbo and Luis Manuel Otero (Appendix 3). In the search of articles about individual Cuban activists, there are a substantial amount beginning from the year 2023, years after the MSI and the 11J uprising, which could imply that these movements have contributed to the Cuban individualism.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2020/04/cuba-opposition-leader-sentenced-house-arrest-trial-tainted-irregularities-2/>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.pen-international.org/news/cuba-prominent-figures-urge-end-repression-artists>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/10/19/cuba-peaceful-protesters-systematically-detained-abused>

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2023/country-chapters/cuba>

The articles once again come from the larger media houses as NBC<sup>23</sup> and Amnesty International (Amnesty International, 2023; Amnesty International Aotearoa New Zealand, 2024).

However, looking at the general news from Cuba in the international media as BBC and The Guardian, the discourse seems to be rather superficial and collectively minded.

When searching for current Cuba News in the Guardian, one is met by headlines of the congress, Cuba-USA relations and the anti-imperialist discourse being promoted (The Guardian, 2024). In the context of breaking out of this stereotype of communism and collectivity, it can be highly problematic that the international media still are promoting this outdated narrative, coming from few Cubans (The Guardian, 2024).

So, even though one sees the portraits of the Cuban activists in international media, I believe that the news stories, which avoid the personal narratives and sticks to the Cuban stereotype constitutes a certain oppression of the Cubans, although no explicit oppressive motivation is represented in these stories (The Guardian, 2024). This indicates an *absence* of innovation and modernity from the international media, which could be crucial in stabilizing the hegemonic balance in Cuba.

Continuing on the promotion of the individual activist, Oscar mentioned his individual initiatives in the fight against the Cuban regime, which likewise proves the Cuban desire for individuality, as I mentioned in my methodology (See: Appendix 5 + *A strategic sunbeam in a somber investigation*). In this context of individual resistance and singular activists, there is no larger international media supporting this cause, besides the human rights organizations. It is problematic how little space Cuban personal narratives occupy in international media, given their significant impact on attention and empathy. (See: *Narrative Sociology* and *Absence*).

Alternatively, the promotion of one person might be complicated in a democratic advancement, and the Cuban social movements being a collective force, some people might see it preferable to remain “anonymous”, and therefore avoid interviews due to security reasons.

Nonetheless, as this project is based on the personal narratives, I will still argue that in the popular culture of today, a social movement needs a public face to be identified in accordance with one's values and avoid the earlier mentioned stereotypes, and therefore *absence* can be detected in international news media portraits/individualism of Cuban protagonists.

The personal narrative contributes to the opportunity of educating the readers, and in that way,

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<sup>23</sup> <sup>23</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/latino/cuba-historic-protests-little-change-activists-push-rcna93650>

Henry too contributed to the political diversity in his interviews. He expressed distance to the Cuban policies and focused on plurality in democracy and conservative values. Searching for information about the Cuban political system, no international articles appear apart from the solidarity campaigns, and the discourse is solely based on communism and Cuba's one-party policy<sup>24</sup>. This lack of political information is one of the pillars of censorship, and problematic in the intent of removing stereotypes or again, balancing the hegemony. So, this *absence* of political correspondence and therefore lack of political diversity, is a big challenge for the Cuban democratic process.

### **The status of Cuba, coming from the Cubans**

The overall premise of these interviews has of course been hearing the side of the story from the Cubans, and thereby getting their narrative as a valuable source in the detection of *absence*. Conducting these interviews, all my interviewees have contributed with unheard stories of the Cuban life.

Starting with Kiele, who told how the regime has dug up graves during COVID to hide the failure of their health strategy. There are no articles to be found about this case, apart from the ones from the Cuban independent journalists from 14yMedio<sup>25</sup> (See: State of the Art). As analyzed above, this is a severe case of violation of rights and ethics, coming from the Cuban state, and it is highly objectionable that the international media haven't released such a story, especially because the 14yMedio is translated into English, and so a mere secondhand-source interpretation of the story could have made the story publicly known (See also: *Illustration to show the advantage of using firsthand sources in terms of storytelling*). Therefore, *absence* in the statements of health conditions in Cuba.

However, it is possible to find data on the Cuban COVID situation, but with highly doubtable numbers released by the regime<sup>26</sup>. Hence, why the emotional and non-quantitative stories are important in the context of breaking censorship and disowning manipulated statistics. Funky mentions the grave censorship as part of the daily life of the Cubans, and Kiele mentions the emotional state of the Cubans, and thus is something which gathers empathy and a sense of the

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<sup>24</sup> Google search: "Cuba + political parties + ideologies"

<sup>25</sup> <https://translatingcuba.com/cuba-in-manzanillo-those-who-died-from-covid-19-were-buried-in-mass-graves-up-to-200-in-a-single-day/>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/cuba/>

reality which they are living, but nobody is publishing these narratives (Appendices 3 and 4). Therefore, there too is an *absence* in psychological and emotional narratives.

In the context of the earlier mentioned lack of political information Kiele, Oscar and Funky too mention, how the magnitude of the 11<sup>th</sup> of July has been downplayed and how the majority of the Cubans stand against the regime (Appendices 3, 4, and 5).

Taking the situation into account, it would be impossible to find statistics on the political preferences of the Cuban people, due to the unjust disposing of *intent* and *recognition*, which comes with serious consequences for the participating Cubans.

Searching in the international media, most media sources bring stories about the 11J uprising holding informational sources. However, looking more into the material, some of the articles of the Cuban resistance is written by American politicians<sup>27</sup>.

This indicates the use of the situation in Cuba as a way of promoting own policies, which isn't questionable, but could be deviant from the real issue, which is the urgent aid Cuba needs. In this case of possible political spin, it could be seen as *absence* from the media, in focusing on the political macro history and not the micro historians being repressed.

Progressing on the lack of humane approaches in Cuba, Henry mentioned the passiveness, and survival over critical thinking, which he sees in the Cuban daily life (Appendix 6). It is difficult to find these narratives believable from others than Cubans themselves, and considering the censorship upon the internet and communication, it is understandable that these highly critical statements are hard to encounter, and *absence* in this context is difficult to determine, if a journalist or alike wasn't to find a unique source of information, as I have.

However, there has been made a few investigations on the Cuban daily life, which has been able to criticize the state of the society. These investigations are although all of professional, academic origin, and not from the international media. In this case, the popular culture once again dictates the attention of the public eye, and a news article could make the Cuban situation way more accessible to the larger public than academic articles, and thereby breaking the silence and listening to the neglected voices amidst the noise<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> <https://gimenez.house.gov/2024/3/rep-carlos-gimenez-issues-statement-on-massive-anti-regime-protests-in-cuba>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.norc.ox.ac.uk/research/projects/2016-cuban-public-opinion.html>

## Conclusion

Through my thesis investigation, I have aimed to firstly answer my problem formulation, which is: *Why do personal narratives contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the political situation in Cuban society? And how can the prioritization of personal narratives in the context of the 11<sup>th</sup> of July uprising showcase the absence of international media in Cuba?*

Thus, beginning with the first part of the problem formulation, I have found personal narratives to contribute with unheard stories from the Cuban society through the investigation with my model of analysis.

Through my first step of analysis, I have detected the Cubans experiences of imposed false consciousness, through their statements from the semi structured interviews. Here, I found that the false consciousness in Cuba is a governmental strategy of keeping the hegemonic power and avoiding resistance. The examples of *false consciousness* from my Cuban interviewees include material and mental dimensions, with the same goal of maintaining dominance. The personal narratives exhibited *false consciousness* in the form of: Covid strategies, the 11<sup>th</sup> of July atrocities committed against the activists, the huge role which the internet plays in Cuba, and how the regime has the monopoly of communication, and its consequences.

There was also proved to be situations of infiltration of personal, physical (costumes), or legal kind, where friends, family or civil police generates a dangerous paranoia among the people, and the civil police especially have a manipulative role in the preservation of the communist regime, alongside the government itself, declaring war on its own people and persecuting the opposition.

The Cuban economy strategy is too influenced by *false consciousness* in the form of different economic measures, which in the end, make the Cubans fight for their survival and complicates critical thinking. All of these dimensions of the Cuban society have been revealed thanks to the interviewees' unique statements and experiences.

Further into my analysis, I my step 2 of *intent* and *recognition*, I found numerous examples of hyper-recognition, which I have named the dominant act of imposing unjust punishment to people, who intent to oppose the hegemonic power - a counternarrative to *false consciousness*. The examples of *intent* and *recognition* have brought into the light, the many personal consequences which activism has in Cuba, as house arrest, losing jobs, and ultimately being given the ultimatum of a closed prison or exile in another country.

It seems evident, that no matter the scale of resistance, whether its low or open defiance, that the oppressive state of Cuba keeps exercising an extreme form of recognition of intent to resistance. From everyday low defiance in the education sector, to artistic counternarratives, to arranging big mobilizations supporting a variety of courses, every one of my Cuban interviewees have been destined with exile, proving the totalitarian nature of the Cuban government. From the MSI to the 11J to non-political choices, the personal narratives have opened a problematic narrative about the lack of rights and freedom in Cuba.

Through my investigation of the resistance terms, I too found a great potential in identifying intent and recognition. As my initial idea was, that these terms could help prove police violations, it has shown to be of a governmental, legal scale in Cuba. Nonetheless, I also found great potential in prioritizing *intent*, as I detected an international dimension of the term, which can be helpful in gathering the Cuban (supporting) collective society, outside of the island, as an important counternarrative to the hyper-recognition and exile.

After forming a base of the Cuban society through dominance and resistance, I sought to go further into the micro history, and look at the personal narratives of my interviewees, and which narrative blocks they prioritized in their interviews. This third step of analysis finishes the full circle from macro history and the societal statements, to diving into the personal interpretations of the situation in Cuba. The found narrative blocks are exposed in “Table of the interpreted themes of absence through personal narrative analysis”. These prioritized themes from the Cubans, forms the base of my discussion, as I have derived five themes to discuss in the context of detecting *absence* of international media, as of my second part of the problem formulation.

Within my five themes, the conclusion is that *absence* exists in international media when it comes to Cuba, without doubt, but at the same time, I became aware of the part of the media, which do write about Cuba in a critical way, which are the human rights organizations. Through them, I have found well-informed articles and un-censored news from Cuba. The problem with these media is the low exposure, they have. It has come to my attention that the bigger media houses, who does write about Cuba, preserves the anti-imperialist discourse from Cuba, and in general hold a low initiative in publishing profound stories, which will take more than a second-hand source interpretation. In my discussion, I detected *absence* in the context of Cuban foreign policy, censorship on exhibiting art in the context of resistance, in identifying political prisoners and their *intent*, in Cuban

domestic policy, in health condition in Cuba, in prioritizing psychological interpretations, in using Cuba in political spin and lastly absence from the public eye in the publishing of the actual profound investigations about Cuba.

Thus, concluding on this thesis and its contribution to the field, I see it as an important piece in the great puzzle of helping not only Cuba, but countries in need of attention due to their political situation. Conducting interviews with the people present in the underprivileged zones, and by that, mixing journalism and academic research, is a key component to attract attention to situations experiencing absence from the outside world. The personal narrative analysis, and its powerful quality of merging the macro history with the micro history, and thus supplying with an entire history, and not merely focusing on one of the historic timelines, is an observation I find very important to investigate further in academia.

For the future of this kind of research and this problem formulation, I hope to have illuminated the situation in Cuba, and to have helped in engaging more academics and professionals in the fight for Cuban freedom. When all the guns are blazing, and the people are left in desperation, the most powerful weapon has always been putting pen to paper, and not least, to do it in fellowship.

PATRIA Y VIDA



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