

**Los Olvidados:
A Theoretical Analysis on Criminal
Behaviour and Gang Formation among
Street Children based on Luis
Buñuel's Movie**

Thesis by ANNEMARIE VOORTMAN

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Wageningen

Wageningen University and Research Centre

Abstract

This thesis uses the movie *Los Olvidados* (1950) by Buñuel as a case study to explain why street children commit crime and form gangs and how a combination of theories over various disciplines is more adequate to capture reality than only a single one. It is argued that in *Los Olvidados* Buñuel wants to show that society is responsible for both producing and solving its 'problem' with street children. The problem that society has with street children is that they commit crimes, but this thesis explains that street children do not commit crimes because they are inherently bad. By using examples from scenes in the movie it is explained how street children lack certain social bonds that should prevent them from committing crimes and how certain strains that they experience in their lives on the street, are more likely to be resolved with crime. It is argued how society then aggravates its own problem by labelling the street children negatively. Like crime, gang formation is also analyzed by using examples from *Los Olvidados*. It is argued that a gang is a substitution for a variety of needs that society does not fulfil for street children. By complementing criminological theories with sociological and anthropological insights to explain the reality that is depicted in *Los Olvidados*, this thesis argues that a combination of theories over various disciplines is more adequate to explain reality than a single theory. Sociological and anthropological theories can provide insight into the meaning of crime for society and individuals, instead of just explaining the causes.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	2	
Acknowledgements	3	
1. Introduction	5	
1.1. Using a movie as a case study	6	
1.2. Using <i>Los Olvidados</i>	7	
1.3. Methods and techniques	8	
2. Synopsis of the plot	10	
3. Background of the movie	13	
4. Criminal behaviour on the streets	14	
4. 1. Control or Social Bond Theory	14	
4.2. General Strain Theory	16	
4.2.1. Characteristics of strains that are likely to be resolved in crime	16	
4.2.1.1. The strain is seen as unjust	17	
4.2.1.2. The strain is considered to be very important	17	
4.2.1.3. The strain is associated with low social control	17	
4.2.1.4. The strain creates some pressure or incentive to engage in criminal coping	18	
4.2.2. Types of strains that are more highly related to crime	18	
4.2.2.1. The failure to achieve core goals that are not determined by conventional socialization and that are easily achieved through criminal activities.	18	
4.2.2.2. Parental rejection	19	
4.2.2.3. Very strict, erratic, excessive given the violation and/or harsh supervision/discipline	20	
4.2.2.4. Child neglect and abuse	20	
4.2.2.5. Homelessness, and particularly youth homelessness	21	
4.2.2.6. Criminal victimization	21	
4.3. The Labelling Approach	22	
4.3.1. Stigmatizing Pedro	23	
4.3.2. Consequences of negative labelling	24	
4.3.3. Stigmatizing by authoritative actors	25	
4.3.4. Reverting negative labelling	27	
4.4. An anthropological perspective on crime	29	
5. Gang Forming	31	
5.1. Defining the Gang	32	
5.2. Competing with school and family	32	
5.3. Street Socialization	34	
5.4. Gangs as 'bad education'	35	
5.5. Gangs as economic enterprises	36	
5.6. An anthropological perspective on gang forming	37	
6. Reflection	39	
7. -Conclusion	42	
8. References	44	

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1. Introduction

When Spanish moviemaker Luis Buñuel premiered his movie *Los Olvidados* (meaning *The Forgotten*, while the worldwide English title is *The Young and the Damned*) on a Thursday in 1950 in Cine México in Mexico City, not even his friends liked the movie (de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1992). Indeed, some of his friends told him: "You deserve Article 33 [which expels 'undesirable foreigners' from the country], you dirty Spaniard coming to insult Mexico," (de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1992: p 61). Ironically, as it later turned out, this 'dirty Spaniard' had just made one of the top-rated Mexican movies of the 20th Century and only the second ever movie to be put on the UNESCO World Heritage List (Fuentes, 2004).

But what had upset Buñuel's friends so much? The raw depiction of the miserable lives of street children in Mexico City? In Buñuel's movie there is not one character that can be characterized as morally 'good' by convention: a mother denies her son food and sleeps with his friend; an old blind man assaults a young girl and a homeless youngster kills one of his friends. All of the characters that try to behave morally 'right' end up being killed or left alone.

Did Buñuel exaggerate when he showed us the tragic fate of children living in the streets of Mexico City or was it the confrontation with cruel reality that was so upsetting for the Mexican audience? In the interviews conducted with Buñuel in later years, there was no sign of any need to upset the spectator. Buñuel had just based his movie on reality; his own observations of Mexico City slums and on the files of the Juvenile Court in Mexico City (de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1992).

The shocked audiences in Cine México probably had no clue about the situation of street children in their city. Nowadays there is an extensive literature on street children and Street Children Studies has become a part of social sciences. In this thesis my goal is to use *Los Olvidados* as a case study to explore how contemporary theory on criminal behaviour and gang forming support what Luis Buñuel tried to tell us about the lives of street children.

A second objective is to make an overview and an integration of criminological and anthropological theories about criminal behaviour and gang forming on the basis of *Los Olvidados*. By knitting together these theories to explain reality in *Los Olvidados*, I attempt to prove that a combination of theories, from different social science disciplines, is more suitable to grasp reality. Using only a single theory usually results in a limited understanding of reality and even using various theories from a single discipline can have its limitations. By using various theories from criminology and complementing some of them with anthropological insights, I hope to have produces a more complete understanding of reality than a single theory or a single discipline could provide. I do not aim to obtain a complete understanding of reality, because the only people who would ever fully understand that would be the street children themselves.

1.1. Using a movie as a case study

In 1946 Jean Epstein discovered that cinema, like any scientific venture, is an experimental device which did no more than invent a plausible image of the universe (Epstein, 1946). Some might argue that fiction movies are not scientifically trustworthy because the image exposed to us is set in scene, i.e. has *mise en scène*. However, the truth is that there are no images that lack setting-of-scenes or *mise en scène* (Piault, 2007), so fiction movies can be used to reflect reality, just as well as documentaries. Within some fiction film directors, a deep ethnological reality is recognized (Piault, 2000, chap 1 to 6), like Vittorio De Seta's *Banditi a Orgosolo* (see Carta, 2013). So, an ethnographic fiction movie could be used as a case study just as well as a text. Indeed, film selects facts and captures them from a particular angle, no more or less than any other text (Piault, 2007).

How can a fiction film be used in anthropology? Pasolini described cinema as a language which expresses reality with reality, which means that cinema mimics reality with images that have a 'real' appearance, which is also the case for anthropology (Piault, 2007). Both assume the transportation of human realities, from their places of exercise to places of audience or expectation (Piault, 2007). When the spectator is aware of the *mise en scène* and of the purpose behind the filming, he is free to interpret the presented images and their intentional presentation (Piault, 2007).

What Buñuel presents with *Los Olvidados* is the human reality of street children in Mexico City to the audience. The message at the beginning of the movie, ~~which that~~ tells the spectator that all the events are based on real cases, underlines this. The enraged reactions from the Mexican audience, underline this as well, because they would not have judged it as an inaccurate depiction of Mexican reality, if they had not had ~~ve~~ recognized it as an intent to depict Mexican reality.

On top of that, cinema enables postponed, repetitive and sometimes contradictory analyses of the lived world and of the fleeting instantaneity of acts and relations (Piault, 2007). Film leads from simple observations, to a sensitive proximity and is able to propose a dialogue, which corresponds to the aim of contemporary anthropology: finding conditions for an exchange and the means to elaborate and pursue a conversation which facilitates the understanding and recognition of differences and shared commitments (Piault, 2007).

There is also a practical contribution of fiction film to the anthropological field. In the case of extreme situations, where the actors and/or filmmakers are at risk, a fictional treatment is not only more effective, but also a necessary response to, the conditions of the project (Piault, 2007). When the person is at stake, the image can only be fictional, a system of projection and exorcism, because it then reveals the dramatic potential and thus the gravity of the social forces at play and the risk of an explosion into interpersonal violence (Piault, 2007).

Los Olvidados was able to penetrate much deeper into the violent reality of street children than a documentary movie could have done. Not only did *Los Olvidados* enable us to get a deeper understanding of violence, because we were 'present' during all the events leading to the crime, during

the crime and the aftermath, but we were also able to peer into the reality of a dysfunctional family. These confrontations within a family would probably not have been shown to us so clearly in a documentary movie, as it was in this fiction movie.

Thus *Los Olvidados* is a fiction movie capable of reflecting a deep ethnographic reality. But can we recognize a fiction movie as such? I have already put forward some examples to suggest this. But, inspired by Silvio Carta's research on Vittorio De Seta's movie *Banditi a Orgosolo* in which he tries to explore to what extent the movie is ethnographic, I will further analyze why *Los Olvidados* is one as well.

1.2. Using *Los Olvidados*

The goal of an ethnography is to produce a 'storied reality', which is a representation of a group of humans that is factual, engaging, entertaining and informative. Buñuel states at the beginning of the movie that it is based on real life events. This statement is supported by the knowledge I have about how Buñuel wrote the script. He gave us an insight into the lives of the street children of Mexico City; something that we otherwise would not have had. Thus, we can say that Buñuel produces a factual, engaging, entertaining and informative portrait of the street children in Mexico City. The only difference between the story of an ethnographer and this, is the audio-visual qualities.

Buñuel also used methods that are similar to ethnographic methods to produce a script. The methods of an ethnographer consist of participant observation, ethnographic and formal interviews and surveys and questionnaires (Madden, 2010). The manner in which Buñuel gathered his data on which he based the script of *Los Olvidados*, can be considered ethnographic. In his interview with de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, Buñuel explains how he went to the poor neighbourhoods of Mexico City and would just walk around, make friends, talk with people, observe types and visit people's homes (de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1992). Three years before that, he already got to know all of those neighbourhoods while being unemployed (Aranda, 1975). A lot of places that he had visited were used in the movie, like Nonoalco, the Romita Plaza and the slums in Tacubaya (de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1992). Likewise, the boys that figured in the scene at the correctional institute, i.e. farm school, were actually attending it (de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1992).

He also read the files of a great number of cases that were provided to him by the juvenile court and he used articles that he found in the press (de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1992). Therefore, before he started writing the script, he was gathering data through participant observation and files.

But, ethnography is not only the description, it is also the answering of questions and building of theories (Madden, 2010). In the first words that the narrator speaks in the movie, Buñuel tries to formulate the cause of the situation of street children. He seems to define malnourishment, lack of hygiene and lack of schooling as the direct causes of delinquency among street children (Buñuel, 1950: 00:01:40 - 00:02:00). It is like a theoretical conclusion to his ethnographic findings (it should be noted here that because Buñuel had a Marxist type of political view, it is likely that he viewed these

direct causes as means of the upper class to suppress the lower classes. His 'theoretical conclusion' would therefore probably be consistent with the Marxist ideology). Like most research reports, Buñuel has a suggestion for further research. He suggests that the progressive forces of society will 'solve' the problem of children living on the streets.

1.3. Methods and techniques

The idea for the subject of this thesis came from a personal interest in exploring the combination of audiovisual communication with development. I have studied both audiovisual communication and development studies and I wanted to explore a way in which audiovisual communication could serve in a research in development studies, in order to learn more about combining my two greatest interests, in the future.

I considered *Los Olvidados* to be a suitable movie to use in a research on development for various reasons: *Los Olvidados* has been widely acclaimed as being a good depiction of the lives of street children; the script is based on information from real cases from the juvenile court and participant observation in the slums of Mexico City (de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1992) and Buñuel was a filmmaker who always interwove his ideas with his movies, which means that the movie would articulate a message towards its spectators. Like an article or a book on street children would try to transmit a message about the motives, agency or any other aspect of the lives of street children, Buñuel tried to do the same with his movie.

So, to explore the possibilities of a combination between audiovisual communication and development studies, I decided to research what *Los Olvidados* could 'tell' me about the lives of street children as if it were ethnographic data. My research aim became to 'decipher' the message of the movie and to research with which theoretical knowledge on street children it corresponded. In 'decoding' the movie, I used the most important storyline and the key scenes to guide me.

The most important storyline is Pedro's struggle to choose between a life oriented towards criminality or non-criminality. The majority of the scenes in which Pedro appears show how he is constantly driven from one choice to another. Like the movie is centred around Pedro's choice between criminal or non-criminal behaviour, I also centred my investigation around this topic. I investigated what motivated the street children in *Los Olvidados* to offend and how this corresponded with existing literature about criminality.

In the majority of the scenes in which the street children commit crimes in *Los Olvidados* they operate in a group, or a gang. One of the first scenes of the movie is even centred around the formation of the gang. Because of its importance in the movie I decided to include gang formation in the research as well.

Already early on in the research I discovered that the ideas on street children the Buñuel transmits in his movie, cannot be captured by a single theory. Using multiple theories was not only a choice that I made to be able to explain the movie better, but also because I have always believed that a combination of theories works better than the use of a single one. Also, criminology has not been the only discipline that has attempted to explain why people offend: different disciplines have tried to give an explanation. Therefore, I decided to complement my original research aim with another one: proving that a combination of theories would be more apt to explain reality than a single theory.

The causes of crime have been analysed by disciplines like sociology, criminology, psychology and biology. In this thesis I have only limited myself to using the former two disciplines and not the latter two. I did not use biological theories on crime because, judging from the movie and the interviews with Buñuel about the movie, biological factors did not play any role in the movie's story. Buñuel did try to put some surrealist effects in the movie, but the only effects that made the final version were the dream sequence and the presence of poultry in most of the scenes. The surrealist movement often used the ideas of Freud about the subconscious in their movies (Nochimson, 2010). But, because there is only one prominent psychological element in the movie (the dream sequence), Buñuel includes psychoanalytical elements in his movie, but is foremost a moviemaker that looks at the bigger structures in society and my knowledge of children's psychology is very limited I have decided not to include these elements in my research.

I have also included an anthropological approach to my analysis, because the criminological theories explained what the causes of crime were, but not the meaning for society, the perpetrators and its victims. It is important to also consider the meaning of crime for various actors, because it helps in understanding the reactions and emotions on crime.

So, to summarize the process of defining the aim of my research: I first watched the movie *Los Olvidados* of Buñuel and in addition to that I read literature on the movie and its production, to get a better understanding of its argument and to demarcate the aim of my research. I gathered the literature about the movie through reading interviews with Buñuel on the creation of the movie, reading analyses on certain aspects of the movie and reading movie reviews on the internet to understand what the spectators thought of the movie and how they interpreted it.

I searched for the literature on criminology and sociology by using the databases available to me via the library of Wageningen University and Research Centre. I selected the literature that seemed to correspond with the arguments of Buñuel's film based on the abstracts [s of the literature selected](#). The [final](#) ~~ultimate~~ selection was made by reading the arguments thoroughly. In the subsequent writing process I then integrated the relevant theories in order to correspond with my interpretation of Buñuel's argument for street children.

2. Synopsis of the plot

The movie opens with a narrator informing the spectator that the movie is based on true facts. It continues by saying how in almost every capital city, poorly-fed children deprived of health facilities and an education are doomed to crime. Society tries to find a cure, but its success is very limited. The progressive forces of society might resolve this problem in the future.

The movie then continues with a shot of the street children playing in their square, and of El Jaibo, walking in the city after he has escaped juvenile prison. El Jaibo is a charismatic adolescent, who has never known his parents. He has probably lived his whole life on the streets and it is obvious that he feels in control there. El Jaibo easily takes the lead in a group and considers himself to be a 'macho'.

After El Jaibo had escaped juvenile prison, he went back to his neighbourhood. There he starts a street gang with the other street children. Their first criminal project consists of robbing a blind man, Don Carmelo, while he is playing music. The blind man notices he is getting robbed, so he hits one of the street children, Pelón, when he tries to escape. The gang decides to take revenge on him and attack him and dump his instruments at a wasteland near a construction site.

Afterwards, Pedro, a member of the gang, goes back home. There, his mother is angry and refuses to give him anything to eat, as long as he is hanging out on the streets. Pedro returns to the street, where he meets Ojitos, an immigrant child who is left behind at the market by his father. He also meets Julián, who has to get his drunken father out of a bar.

Pedro brings Ojitos to the farm of Cacarizo, a friend, where they both spent the night, just like El Jaibo. The next day, Pedro brings El Jaibo to the construction site where Julián works. El Jaibo is convinced that Julián betrayed him, so he had to go to jail. He wraps a scarf around his arm, like he has a sling, and secretly holds a rock inside. When Julián and El Jaibo go to the construction site to talk, Julián denies everything. El Jaibo says he will have to pay for that and Julián gets angry because he says he cannot fight with him due to his hurt arm. Then El Jaibo takes the rock out of the sling and hits him. El Jaibo thinks he has hit him until he lost conscience, but a fellow street child later tells him that they have found Julián's body. He threatens Pedro not to say anything by telling him that he is an accessory to murder because they divided the money they took from Julián.

Meanwhile, Ojitos is picked up by the blind man, to live with him and help him. They go to the farm of Cacarizo's grandfather and the blind man heals Cacarizo's mother with a dove. Meche, Cacarizo's sister, and Ojitos become friends in the meantime.

The gang commits another crime when they attack and rob a crippled man. The subsequent night, Pedro sneaks into bed while his mother is already asleep and has a dream about her, Julián and El Jaibo. Julián lies under the bed, covered in blood. He asks his mother why she does not love him and she tells him that she wants to be with him, but that she is so tired of washing the floors all day. Pedro says he will look for a job and then asks her why she did not give him meat the other night. His

mother turns around and offers him a piece of raw meat, but before she can give it to him, El Jaibo comes out from under the bed and snatches it.

The next day, Pedro finds a job as an apprentice at a blacksmith. El Jaibo is still at Cacarizo's farm and assaults Meche. Cacarizo suspects that El Jaibo killed Julián and promises not to report anything, before El Jaibo gets kicked out by Cacarizo's grandfather. El Jaibo then decides to hide in a wasteland for a few days.

Pedro returns to his house and tells his mother he has found a job at a blacksmith's. She still does not return his affection. When Pedro is back at the blacksmith's workshop, El Jaibo visits him as because he starts to get nervous because the police is questioning everybody about Julián's death. They promise to talk in Pedro's house that night. Before El Jaibo leaves, he steals a knife from the worksho

El Jaibo arrives at Pedro's home, before Pedro has returned. He starts talking with Pedro's mother and gets interrupted by the police who are looking for Pedro because they think he stole the knife. Pedro sees the police entering his house when he is returning home. Because he thinks they want to ask questions about Julián, he flees his neighbourhood and starts sleeping in wastelands and working on the streets again. While he is working at a fair, he sees Ojitos. Through Ojitos, Pedro finds out that they did not arrest El Jaibo and Pedro decides to return to home.

El Jaibo remains with Pedro's mother and seduces her. This results in them sleeping together. When Pedro returns to his home, his mother is still angry with him. They start fighting and in the end she brings him to the police station. At the juvenile court, the judge tells Pedro's mother that they cannot prove he has stolen the knife but they want to send him to a farm school, because she cannot provide Pedro the education he needs. After a conversation with the judge, she decides to visit him in his cell and she finally believes he is innocent.

At the farm school, Pedro is brought to the principal who tells him that he will be taught to read and write and taught a profession. He adds that Pedro is not in jail there. Pedro is then brought to the poultry farm, to work there. While he is at work, he eats some eggs that are meant to be sold. Another student threatens to tell the principal, and Pedro starts to fight with him. All the children run away and hide behind a fence, so Pedro takes out his rage on the chickens and kills them.

The principal and Pedro take a walk and the principal tries to talk with him. He explains that there is no reason why Pedro is so angry, because he is not in jail. To win his trust he gives Pedro 50 pesos to buy cigarettes for the principal. Delighted, Pedro leaves the farm school to go to the tobacco sho

In the streets, Pedro runs into El Jaibo. El Jaibo steals the 50 pesos bill and runs away. Pedro follows him because he wants to go back to the farm school. When he catches up with him, Pedro and El Jaibo start fighting again. At the end of the fight, Pedro tells everybody that El Jaibo killed Julián. El Jaibo runs away again. The blind man goes to the police and tells them where to find El Jaibo.

Pedro goes to Ojitos, because he knows that El Jaibo sleeps somewhere where he lives. Meche also arrives at the house to bring milk for Don Carmelo. He starts touching her inappropriately. Pedro distracts and attacks him. Pedro, Ojitos and Meche run away from the blind man's house.

When Pedro goes to Cacarizo's farm to sleep, he finds El Jaibo there. El Jaibo attacks him and kills him in the barn. Meche and her grandfather find his body and decide not to inform the cops. The cops, in the meantime, are at El Jaibo's sleeping place in the wasteland. When El Jaibo sees them, he runs away and gets killed by the cops. In his agony, he hears his mother talking to him.

Meche and her grandfather take Pedro's body on a donkey to leave him on a dump. While they do this, they run into Pedro's mother who has been looking for him the whole time. The movie ends with Pedro's body being thrown into a garbage dump.

3. Background of the movie

Luis Buñuel is seen as the father of cinematic surrealism. He was born in 1900 in Calanda, Aragón (in Spain) and already became a legendary movie director with his surrealist debut movie *Un Chien Andalou* (1929). After the Spanish Civil war, Buñuel moved to the US and subsequently to Mexico in the 1940s. There, he was ~~three years~~ without a job for three years, so he had time to explore Mexico City.

"During the three years I was without work (1947-49) I was able to explore Mexico City from one end to the other; and I was very struck by the wretchedness in which many of its inhabitants lived. I decided to base Los Olvidados on the life of abandoned children; and in researching the film I patiently consulted the archives of a reformatory. My story is entirely based on real cases. I tried to expose the wretched condition of the poor in real terms, because I loathe films that make the poor romantic and sweet." Luis Buñuel in Nuevo Cine (cited in Aranda, 1975: 137).

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After some years, he started working with producer Óscar Dancigers, who actually proposed the idea of making *Los Olvidados*:

"I was initially going to make another film. [...] I proposed the film to Dancigers, who was in a good mood because The Great Madcap had done well at the box office. "It's not bad," Dancigers told me, "but it's a minor melodrama. Instead, let's make something more serious; a story about poor children in Mexico." Luis Buñuel in Objects of Desire: Conversations with Luis Buñuel (de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1992: 53).

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Buñuel states in the interview that he started to look for characters and stories in Mexico City's poor neighbourhoods. He consulted particular cases with a psychiatrist at the Juvenile Court and read the files of a great number of cases. Buñuel also used articles in the press, like one about the discovery of the body of a twelve-year-old boy at a garbage dum

During the making of the movie, Buñuel had already some problems with the reaction of Mexicans. Buñuel: "Yes, there were objections, both during and after the filming. I had some problems with the people on staff" (de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1992: 59). Upon its release the movie was considered an "insult to Mexican sensibilities" (Acevedo-Muñoz, 2003: 57) and it only stayed in cinemas for six days (Fuentes, 2004) due to reaction from the press, the government, and upper and middle class audiences.

Despite the reactions in Mexico, the movie was shown at the movie festival of Cannes (de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1992). There, Buñuel won the award of Best Director, and for the international press it became the 'resurrection' of Buñuel as a director (de la Colina and Pérez Turrent, 1992). After that, the movie was released again in Mexico and had more success (de la Colina and

Pérez Turrent, 1992). Nowadays, *Los Olvidados* is widely considered as one of Buñuel's best movies and it was placed, after Fritz Lang's *Metropolis*, on the UNESCO World Heritage List (Fuentes, 2004).

4. Criminal behaviour on the streets

"The big, modern cities, New York, Paris, London, hide behind their magnificent buildings places of misery, that harbour malnourished children. Without hygiene, without schooling: seedbed of future delinquents. Society tries to correct this evil, but the success of its efforts is very limited. Only in the near future the rights of the children and adolescents will be respected, so that they will be useful for society."

Mexico City, the big modern city, is no exception to this universal rule. Because of that this movie, based on real life events, is not optimistic and it leaves the solution to this problem to the progressive forces of society."
(*Los Olvidados* directed by Luis Buñuel, 1950: 00:01:40 - 00:02:20)

In these opening credits of the movie, a narrator pronounces the above words. By using the word 'seedbed' Buñuel indicates that criminal behaviour is not inherent in the personality of the street children, but something that grows because of its circumstances. To indicate those circumstances, criminologist theories provide us with an explanation of why people commit crime.

In the following chapter I have gathered several criminal theories on the causes of criminal behaviour and I have related them to *Los Olvidados*. With the knitting together of these theories I have tried to provide a theoretical substantiation for the arguments Buñuel has put forward about the causes of crime. These criminological theories are complemented by anthropological theories, because the criminological theories clarify the causes of criminal behaviour, but do not explain the meaning of crime in a society.

4. 1. Control or Social Bond Theory

PEDRO'S MOTHER:

How can I love him if I do not even know who his father is?

(*Los Olvidados* directed by Luis Buñuel, 1950: 00:53:00)

The bad relationship that Pedro has with his mother features prominently in *Los Olvidados*. It is not only Pedro who has a bad relationship with his mother; the other gang members tell each other that their mothers hate them. Because they lack a good relationship with their mother, and in the case of Pedro, also lack a father, they miss certain social bonds. According to the Control or Social Bond theory (from here on I will refer to this theory as Social Bond Theory), these social bonds would be exactly what is missing in their lives to prevent them from offending.

The core idea of the Social Bond Theory is that people are inherently willing to offend because offending offers short term gains, (e.g., immediate money) and the central aim of individuals with criminal dispositions is to satisfy needs in the quickest and simplest way possible (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). This desire is prevented by the social bond, which can be compared to the individual's conscience (Wood and Alleyne, 2010).

It is possible that there is a breakdown in social bonds during a person's childhood, which gives a child the feeling that he is free to act on his natural inclinations, without any negative emotional repercussions (Wood and Alleyne, 2010). An example of that would be the bad relationships that the street children have with their parents.

Internalizing the norms of society is mediated by attachment to others, because properly socialized children are concerned with the reaction of people they care for (Hirschi, 1969). By following the rules of its loved ones in the form of self-control, the child shows that it wants to preserve those relations (Wood and Alleyne, 2010). By refraining from immediate satisfaction of his desire, to achieve long-term goals the child will show commitment to a positive future (Wood and Alleyne, 2010).

One night, Pedro has a dream in which he asks his mother why she never kisses him. She responds by showing her hands and saying that she is so tired of washing the floor the whole day. Pedro then promises her that he will behave and will look for a job. The next day he finds a job as an apprentice at a blacksmith's and leaves the gang behind.

Throughout the movie, Pedro is looking for the love of his mother and through the dream he finally realises that he might find it when he will conform to her norms, thus when he will earn a living in a decent way and will not be involved with the gang anymore.

The theory of Social Bond is not fully able to explain why some people tend towards deviant behaviour, because Pedro's relationship with his mother has not changed because of the dream. So, Pedro does not conform to her norms because he had a better relationship with her after the dream. It was his own choice to behave criminally, notwithstanding the relationship with his mother. Pedro has a bad relationship with his mother, but it cannot be said that he thinks he can act on his natural inclinations.

El Jaibo on the other hand, has no bonds that prevent him from offending and he seems to think he can just act on his own 'natural inclinations'. By natural inclinations, the Social Bond Theory wants to state that a person is always disposed to offend. I think this is a very pessimistic and unrealistic perception of mankind. El Jaibo is not the best example to show that somebody without social bonds is naturally inclined to offend, but there is a myriad of examples of people who do not offend, despite lacking social bonds.

Therefore we can better use the Social Bond theory to explain the options that a person has. If a person has a relationship that will prevent him from satisfying his needs in the quickest and simplest

way possible, he will not be safeguarded from criminal behaviour, but he will have the option to choose between quickly satisfying his needs or satisfying his needs in a non-criminal way.

So the Social Bond theory explains that when a child does not have proper social bonds, he would be disposed to offend; but this would be a choice, not a natural inclination. To explain what influences the choice between conventional and criminal behaviour, I use the General Strain theory to ~~will~~ complement the Social Bond theory.

4.2. General Strain Theory

JUDGE

Sometimes we would have to punish you because of what you do to your children. You do not give them love, nor affection, so they will look for it wherever they can.

(*Los Olvidados* directed by Luis Buñuel, 1950: 00:53:00)

The General Strain Theory is a theory that explains why people choose to offend. According to the General Strain Theory, strains or stressors increase the likelihood of experiencing negative emotions, which then create pressure to undertake corrective action, of which crime is a possible response (Agnew and Raskin, 1992). The conditions that make it most likely that a strain will lead to crime is when the individual lacks the skills and resources to cope with the strain in a legitimate way, when there is not a lot of conventional social support, when there is low social control, when individuals blame their strain on others and when they are exposed to crime (Agnew, 2001).

There are certain factors that determine which strains are more likely to result in crime; the ability and the perceived costs of coping with them in a noncriminal manner versus a criminal manner and the disposition of a person for coping in a noncriminal or a criminal way, which is affected by individual characteristics (Agnew, 2001).

~~Not all strains result in criminal activities, but there are four characteristics of a strain that determine if a strain is likely to be resolved in crime (). In the following paragraphs I will explain these four characteristics. The subsequent paragraph will present the strains that have these characteristics, and thus are likely to be resolved in crime, and how these strains are present in the living environment of the children in *Los Olvidados*.~~

4.2.1. Characteristics of strains that are likely to be resolved in crime

Not all strains result in criminal activities, but there are four characteristics of a strain that determine if a strain is likely to be resolved in crime (Agnew, 2001). In the following paragraphs I will explain these four characteristics. The subsequent paragraph will present the strains that have these characteristics, and thus are likely to be resolved in crime, and how these strains are present in the living environment of the children in *Los Olvidados*.

4.2.1.1. The strain is seen as unjust

When a person fails to achieve a goal that is positively-valued, it is very likely that this person will experience emotions like anger (Agnew, 1992). The emotion of anger promotes crime because it disrupts the cognitive processes that obstruct the ability to choose between coping in a criminal versus a noncriminal manner. Besides, anger reduces the perceived and actual costs of crime and the disposition to commit a crime (Agnew, 2001). For example, after committing a crime, they are less likely to feel guilty because they feel like their crime is justified (Agnew, 2001).

An example of this is the scene in which Pedro steals a peso from Ojitos. When Pedro cannot sleep at home because his mother is angry with him, he has to find a place to sleep on the streets. Homelessness, in particular youth homelessness, is considered to be very unjust (Davis, 1999; Hagan and McCarthy, 1997), but I will elaborate this further in paragraph 4.2.2.5. On a square he meets Ojitos. They are both hungry and Pedro asks if Ojitos has a peso so they can buy something to eat. When Ojitos shows him the peso, Pedro grabs it out of his hands and runs away. He never apologizes.

4.2.1.2. The strain is considered to be very important

When a person believes that the strain is of high magnitude, it influences the ability of coping in a noncriminal way, the perception of the costs of noncriminal versus criminal coping and the extent to which a person is disposed to engage in a criminal way (Agnew, 2001). So, when a person believes the strain is very important, it is more likely that he will try to cope with it in a criminal way (Agnew, 2001).

The scene in which El Jaibo kills Pedro is an example of a crime committed because the strain was seen as important. When Pedro betrayed El Jaibo in front of people from the neighbourhood, Pedro showed that he was not loyal to El Jaibo anymore and put him in risk to be put in prison for the murder on Julián. Loyalty is very important between 'partners in crime' because somebody who is not loyal can put his partner at great risk. El Jaibo's strain was thus to secure that any partner he would have in the future would know that loyalty was essential and to secure that he would not go into prison for the murder on Julián.

4.2.1.3. The strain is associated with low social control

The situation in which a person experiences low social control are situations of “erratic parental discipline (low direct control), parental rejection (low attachment), work in the secondary labour market (low commitment), or homelessness (low direct control, attachment, and commitment)” (Agnew, 2001: 335). Low social control evokes a feeling of low costs of crime and might reduce the ability to cope in a noncriminal way (Agnew, 2001).

When the gang in *Los Olvidados* tries to rob Don Carmelo, the blind man, he hurts Pelón's leg. A fellow gang member tells him to let his mother take care of the wound. Pelón says that his mother will kill him if he goes home. His companion responds by saying that his mother is a beast too. Almost all of the children in *Los Olvidados* lack any parental control: Ojitos is abandoned by his father; Julián's father is a drunk, El Jaibo is an orphan and Pedro also has a troubled relationship with his mother, which will be further elaborated in 4.2.2.2.

4.2.1.4. The strain creates some pressure or incentive to engage in criminal coping

There are some forms of strain that influence the availability and the attractiveness of noncriminal and criminal coping options and thus can make a criminal coping strategy appear more attractive or effective (Agnew, 2001). Examples of those strains are child abuse and the bullying of peers (Agnew, 2001), but also a lot of young males seem to feel that they are under pressure to respond with violence when they feel disrespectfully treated by someone (Anderson, 1999).

An example of this is the murder on Julián by El Jaibo. When El Jaibo comes out of prison he is convinced that it was Julián who betrayed him to the police. El Jaibo has the feeling he has to revenge himself and makes plans to beat Julián up. He uses Pedro by letting him tell Julián that he wants to talk to him. When they go somewhere to talk El Jaibo asks Julián if he gave him away. Even though he denies it, El Jaibo explains to him that he will have to pay for that. El Jaibo has his arm in a handkerchief so it seems like he has hurt it, when he is actually holding a rock inside. When Julián turns around, he hits him with the rock and later with a stick, causing Julián to die of his injuries.

El Jaibo felt pressured to respond with violence to being disrespected, maybe even more than his peers because he functions like the leader of the gang and his peers believe he is very courageous and masculine. This kind of pressure came from an environment in which the norms were not conventional and more positive about criminal coping strategies and thus made the choice for a criminal coping strategy more appealing. But, sometimes criminal coping strategies turn out differently than they were intended: in the tragic case of Julián, he was murdered instead of only beaten u

4.2.2. Types of strains that are more highly related to crime

There are strains that coincide with all or most of the factors mentioned before and thus are more highly related to crime (Agnew, 2001). To underpin how Pedro's and El Jaibo's circumstances are a seedbed for criminality, I will present the strains that are more highly related to crime and how these strains occur in their lives. There are a few more strains that are more highly related to crime (see

Agnew, 2001), but they do not fit into Pedro's or El Jaibo's life and are thus not worth mentioning here.

4.2.2.1. The failure to achieve core goals that are not determined by conventional socialization and that are easily achieved through criminal activities.

Examples of these goals are: money (in particular a lot of money in a short period of time), thrills/excitement, a masculine status and high levels of autonomy. In the scene in which the gang is formed, and even in the scene before that, when we are introduced to the members of the gang, Buñuel has put all of these goals together. Buñuel shows how these unconventional goals are the basis of the formation of a gang.

The prospect of making money by working together is what provoked starting the gang. ~~W-~~ ~~like we~~ see this when El Jaibo asks if anybody has a cigarette for him. The motive for the children to form a gang is because El Jaibo tells them that they will have enough money if they will do what he says. Because El Jaibo is seen as a tough and macho guy, it is easy for him to pick up the role as a leader. A masculine status is also an important goal. After El Jaibo has escaped from prison, but before he has returned to his friends, his friends play bullfighting in the street. Cacarizo gives out cigarettes to his friends, and a small child and Julián refuse. It is accepted that the small child does not smoke, but Julián is called 'mariquita', which is slang for 'faggot'. The fact that Julián is not smoking is directly labelled as not being masculine. When he then also says that he has to work, they make fun of him and tell him that only donkeys work. The street socialization has indicated criminal activities as a more appropriate way to earn money.

Also a lot of words are uttered that refer to machismo like 'being tough,' 'macho' and 'being brave'. When El Jaibo tells his friends how he escaped from prison they are all very impressed by El Jaibo's bravery. El Jaibo represents a masculinity and bravery for the children, or excitement, by his macho behaviour and his spectacular stories.

El Jaibo seems to show that he appreciates a level of autonomy in his life when he tells how life in prison was. He says the food was good, he had the best bed and it was not that bad but the street is always better. Even though he was taken care of in prison, he preferred to live on the streets where he could choose when he wanted to eat and sleep.

So, in the first scene, Buñuel introduces us to the personage of El Jaibo, to show how the coming together of all these unconventional goals initiated the formation of a gang. El Jaibo is the personification of the norms of these street children.

4.2.2.2. Parental rejection

This factor is likely to cause much strain because it might seriously threaten many of the child's goals, values, activities, needs, and/or identities (Agnew, 2001). Agnew (2001) identifies rejection as not

expressing love or affection, showing little interest, providing little support and displaying hostility towards the child. The child perceives rejection as unjust and it is associated with low social control. A rejected child is more likely to be exposed to deviant/aggressive behaviour by their parents and to associate with delinquent peers (Agnew, 2001).

Pedro's mother is rejecting her child, because she does not know how to handle him. She expresses no love nor affection towards him and Pedro repeatedly says to her that she does not love him. At the end of the movie, Pedro's mother shows that she cares about him, because she is anxiously looking for him, but Pedro never finds out. According to Pedro, his mother never shows interest in him, does not support him at all and displays hostility. Pedro has an epiphany during his dream and then desperately asks his mother why she does not love him.

4.2.2.3. Very strict, erratic, excessive given the violation and/or harsh supervision/discipline

If the person who sanctions behaves aggressively, this will reinforce aggressive behaviour from its victims (Agnew, 2001). The principal of the farm school, a correctional institute where Pedro ends up after he has been accused of stealing a knife at the blacksmith where he works, shows us that a more understanding way of supervision can enforce a noncriminal coping strategy, instead of a criminal or aggressive one.

When Pedro kills the chickens, the only punishment the principal gives him is locking him up until he calms down. Afterwards he tries to talk with Pedro to understand him, instead of sanctioning him strictly. When the principal gives him the 50 pesos to buy cigarettes for him, he tries to discipline Pedro in a positive way, by showing him his trust. In return, Pedro reacts positive and tries his best not to violate the principal's trust. But, this is not enough to help Pedro, because he is too powerless to manage the responsibility over his own life. Like Bazin states in his analysis of *Los Olvidados*: "It is all very well to build model farms where justice, work and fraternity reign, but so long as the same society of injustice and pain remains outside, the evil - namely the objective cruelty of the world - remains" (Bazin, 1984: 108).

4.2.2.4. Child neglect and abuse

This is an extreme form of parental rejection and harsh parental discipline and is related to crime because of all the above reasons (Agnew, 2001). El Jaibo can be classified as a neglected child, because he has never experienced what it's like to have parents. His mother died young and he has never known his father. ~~Because, He~~ states ~~this is because that~~ nobody has ever looked after him like his mother did in a dream he once had, he most likely did not have anybody to replace them.

The difference between El Jaibo and Pedro in terms of violence and criminal behaviour is clarified by the difference in their family life. El Jaibo is more violent and more eager to resort to

crime to achieve his goals, because he has suffered more extreme forms of all the factors of strain, because he is a neglected child, whereas Pedro is only a rejected one.

This difference causes some feelings of jealousy in El Jaibo. He tells Pedro's mother that it must be so good to have a mother and that he envies Pedro. In the end of the scene it is suggested that El Jaibo and Pedro's mother sleep together, which causes tension in the relationship Pedro has with both of them. With this Oedipus-like love scene, Buñuel shows how El Jaibo lacks love in his life and is looking for it, without knowing what he really needs.

4.2.2.5. Homelessness, and particularly youth homelessness

Homelessness is experienced as being unfair, especially by young people, because they are homeless due to parental abuse and neglect (Davis, 1999; Hagan and McCarthy, 1997). Also, homelessness is very high in magnitude, because it represents a major challenge to a lot of goals, needs, values, activities and identities and increases the likeliness that many other types of strains will be experienced, like victimization by others (Baron and Hartnagel, 1997; Davis, 1999; Hagan and McCarthy, 1997). Thereby, homelessness is associated with low social control and on top of that the social education of crime (Baron and Hartnagel, 1997; Davis 1999; Hagan and McCarthy, [1997](#)) and the problems it produces are associated with crime (Baron and Hartnagel, 1997; Hagan and McCarthy, 1997).

Pedro and El Jaibo are both homeless. El Jaibo is permanently homeless but Pedro is able to sleep at home, if he returns when his mother is already asleep. Their homelessness represents a major challenge to a lot of goals, needs, values, activities and identities. For example, because of their constant struggle for survival and the experienced poverty, it is almost impossible for them to go to school. They are being stigmatized by their filthy appearance and being characterized by others as being homeless. Because of the absence of family and school, they adopt the values of the street and thus have more difficulties adapting to the conventional norms of society.

On the street they are not only educated in the values of the street, they also receive education in crime. The scene in which the gang decides to rob the blind man, shows how El Jaibo teaches the others how to commit a robbery. If family and school fail to educate young people, the street will educate them.

4.2.2.6. Criminal victimization

Being the victim of a crime provokes the feeling that the strain is unjust and it is high in magnitude (Agnew, 2001). Criminal victimization is likely to occur where young, unsupervised males gather (Jensen and Brownfield, 1986; Lauritsen, Sampson and Laub, 1991; Meier and Miethe, 1993). Often, its function is social learning of crime and in delinquent peer groups and gangs it involves exposure to a criminal model (Lauritsen, et al, 1991).

Homeless children can become very vulnerable to being victimized, because they experience low social control. The scene in which a paedophile appears shows how vulnerable a child on the street becomes. In the scene a man is asking Pedro to go with him, possibly to perform sexual favours. If the policeman had not gotten in between, Pedro would have probably gone with him, because he needed the money to survive. Later, when he works at the fair, he is being exploited by his boss, which is easy because a homeless child needs the money to survive and will take every job he can, but does not have any formal rights that protect him.

When the police shoots El Jaibo, the blind man watches this and shouts: *One less! I hope they'll kill every one of them before they were born!* He seems to think that children who offend are born criminal. The General Strain Theory underpins a different argument: the street children are not offending because they are inherently 'bad', but because certain strains in their lives have such characteristics that make it more likely that they will cope in a criminal, than in a non-criminal way. The application of the General Strain Theory in the movie *Los Olvidados* shows that those strains are abundantly present in the lives of those children, which causes them to choose criminal behaviour more often than non-criminal behaviour, to cope with their strains.

4.3. The Labelling Approach

The Social Bond Theory and the General Strain Theory ~~have~~ elaborated how an individual tends to show criminal behaviour due to certain factors in ~~his/her~~ life. These theories show how factors coming from society can produce deviant behaviour. Another factor that can be added is the factor of negative labelling. The labelling approach complements the theories of deviant behaviour (Patemoster and Iovanni, 1989; Sampson and Laub, 1997) because it shows how negative labelling due to formal sanctioning can motivate a person to show deviant behaviour (Bernburg, et al, 2006). So, the Social Bond Theory and the General Strain Theory explain why an individual chooses to offend in the first place and the labelling approach shows how subsequent formal sanctioning does not resolve anything, but contributes to an individual's movement into deviant behaviour.

Negative labelling can also be a contributing factor to both the Social Bond Theory and the General Strain Theory. Negative labelling that comes from people with whom the individual has a social bond, can worsen the social bond and thus enforce criminal behaviour. An example of this is when Pedro's mother accuses Pedro of having stolen the knife, which worsens their relationship and causes Pedro to have an even more recalcitrant attitude. A stigma is able to give a person the feeling that he experiences an unjust strain and obstructs the achievement of core goals that are set by conventional socialization.

In the following part, I will argue how Pedro was labelled negatively when he was sent to the farm school. Because the judge stigmatized Pedro, he unknowingly reduced his life chances because

of the discrimination he exercises (Goffman, 2009). He was unaware that if stigmatizing is done by authoritative actors, this can have a longstanding influence on how people perceive themselves, respond to opportunities, make claims and exercise agency (Moncrieffe, 2006). In the next paragraph I will elaborate the ways in which the stigma has caused Pedro to fail to use the opportunities of the farm school and the way the stigma has influenced the way he exercised agency.

4.3.1. Stigmatizing Pedro

Pedro has found a job as an apprentice at a blacksmith. El Jaibo visits him while he is working to talk about what they have to say to the police about the murder on Julián and then steals a knife. The blacksmith thinks Pedro has stolen it and informs the police. When Pedro sees the police at his house, he flees the neighbourhood because he thinks they want to talk with him about Julián. He goes into the city, sleeps at wastelands and works at a fair. When he finds out that the police are not looking for him for the murder on Julián, he decides to go back home. While he is washing himself at home, his mother comes in and they start arguing. She accuses him of stealing the knife. He denies it and almost hits her with a chair, when she asks him; Would you be capable of doing that? He puts the chair back and tells her to bring him where she wants.

At the juvenile court, the judge tells Pedro's mother that they could not prove that he stole the knife, but because she cannot provide him the education he needs, they will send him to the farm school. Pedro's mother gives him the authorization and the judge asks if she wants to see her son now. She answers him; No, what for? The judge tells her that sometimes they should punish the parents for what they do to their children, and that when they are deprived from affection, children tend to look for it wherever they can. She tells the judge that she does not know how to love him, because she does not even know who his father is: "I was just a young girl and I could not defend myself."

(*Los Olvidados* directed by Luis Buñuel, 1950: 00:31:00 - 00:54:00)

The fact that Pedro is accused of robbery seems to stick to his reputation and seems an excuse to send him to the farm school. When the principal of the farm school reads Pedro's record out loud he does not only say that Pedro cannot read nor write, but also that they accused him of robbery. It is odd that that statement is on his record, while they could not prove that Pedro had stolen the knife. Also, Pedro is kept in custody at the police station before he goes to the farm school. When his mother visits him, he wants to run after her when she leaves, but Pedro is taken by the police officers and forced back into his cell. Pedro is kept in custody even though he is innocent.

It seems that the official authorities of Mexico City have labelled street children as 'criminal' and that if they have no evidence to prove an offense, they still feel that they have the right to 'correct' that child. This is not unusual, because many people in the judiciary, the police, the media, business,

and society at large in Latin America believe that street children are a group of remediless delinquents who represent a moral threat to a civilised society (Gigengack, 1994).

Even though the judge does not say it out loud, the only reason he has for sending Pedro to the farm school is because it will take him off the street. If you compare Pedro's situation before the farm school and in the farm school, not living on the street is the only change. Before the farm school, Pedro had regular work in a socially acceptable job, and he was taught a craft. He was not regularly living at home and he probably slept in the streets. When Pedro arrives at the farm school, they tell him that he will be taught to read and a craft. They basically offer the same opportunities as Pedro already had before, when he was working at the blacksmith: he will be educated to be a labourer.

Buñuel shows with this scene how street children are seen by society and the judicial system: the street is being seen as a danger to children, because a child has 'unlimited freedom' on the streets, and this freedom may cause a child to turn to riotous and immoral behaviour, because its childhood innocence is not properly conducted at home and in school (Boyden, 1997). Social workers might even consider children that have had contact with the street for a longer time as irretrievable and 'lost' and only see correctional, penal measures and forced internment as a remedy for these children (Bordonaro, 2012). They think that if a child is left to its own, it can only turn bad.

You can say that Buñuel shows us that street children are being stigmatized, even by people who want the best for them, like the judge and the principal of the farm school. This happens because people inevitably make assumptions about other people and because they always categorise them according to their own socially acquired preferences and perceptions (Moncrieffe, 2006). We are not aware of these assumptions until an active question arises as to whether or not our assumptions will be fulfilled (Goffman, 2009), but if we label at distance, we avoid situations that can potentially challenge our assumptions (Moncrieffe, 2006). Bernburg, Krohn and Rivera (2006) researched the extent to which negative labels have an influence on deviant behaviour and the participation in gangs.

4.3.2. Consequences of negative labelling

The labelling approach complements the theories of deviant behaviour (Patemoster and Iovanni, 1989; Sampson and Laub, 1997). This theory shows the relationship between the labelling of a person through formal sanctioning, and its movement into deviant behaviour (Bernburg, et al, 2006). When a person, and especially an adolescent, is formally sanctioned, an act of deviance is publicly announced and defined as immoral (Bernburg, et al, 2006). When the information about the formal sanction spreads throughout the community (Wilkins, 1964: ~~p 45-104~~), the others in the community will be likely to define the adolescent as a criminal deviant (Bernburg, et al, 2006). This means that stereotypical images of criminals in the mainstream culture become prominent in that person's life (Becker, 1963; Goffman, 2009; Lemert, 1967).

Deviant groups can provide social shelter from people that react negatively toward the deviant status (Bernburg, et al, 2006). These groups can be a source of social support in which deviant activities are accepted (Bernburg, et al, 2006). The result is that a labelled person tends to be more likely to become involved in social groups that consist of social deviants and unconventional others (Bernburg, et al, 2006). The deviant group provides opportunities, collective rationalizations and definitions that encourage and facilitate deviant behaviour (Becker, 1963). An example of a group like that in Pedro's life is the gang that El Jaibo has formed. In the next chapter I will provide more arguments on why the street children decided to work together in a gang.

What happened in the office of the judge was the stigmatizing of Pedro. The judge saw a child who was present at the blacksmith's workplace around the time a knife was stolen; he categorized him as 'street child' and immediately assumed that this child needed 'correction', even though he could find no direct evidence that it was Pedro who stole the knife.

Stigma can produce a difference between virtual and actual social identity (Goffman, 2009) and that is exactly what happened here. The judge has mistaken Pedro for a child 'of' the street, his virtual social identity, instead of a working homeless youngster, his actual social identity (for taxonomy of living situations of street children; see chapter 3 of Gigengack 2006). It should not be forgotten though, that the judge had good intentions. But because he helps Pedro in such a way that Pedro feels that he is being stigmatized, he unthinkingly reduces his life chances because of the discrimination he exercises (Goffman, 2009).

4.3.3. Stigmatizing by authoritative actors

If stigmatizing is done by authoritative actors, this can have a longstanding influence on how people perceive themselves, respond to opportunities, make claims and exercise agency (Moncrieffe, 2006). What happens to Pedro at the farm school is a good example of what can happen when stigmatizing is done by authoritative actors.

Pedro was institutionalized because the situation where he came from did not match with the ideas that society had about childhood. Childhood is the most intensively governed part of life and therefore there are innumerable projects that purport to safeguard childhood from physical, sexual or moral danger so it can develop 'normally' (Rose, 1989). But at the same time, as child welfare intervention is aimed at preserving the innocence of the child, it is also aimed to correct children that do not fit into the normal notions of childhood, that are determined by the local morality (Platt, 1969, Boyden, 1997). By stating that Pedro was in need of correction, he also received a negative label and was thus stigmatized.

So, Pedro was sent to the farm school because, according to the authorities, Pedro was in trouble and in need of better education, and this label reinforced those observations. What happened was that Pedro ate some of the eggs in the basket, which caused a fellow farm school student to correct

him by telling him that those eggs should be saved for later. Pedro got angry and started fighting with the boy. The boys then all ran away and hid behind a fence while Pedro, with no other focus point for his rage than the chickens, started killing the chickens.

The scene with the eggs and the following punishment is an example of how the institution labelled Pedro's behaviour as not being appropriate and in need of correction. Behaviour that would be normal for Pedro in the life he had on the streets ('stealing' the eggs, fighting, aggression) was identified by the institution as behaviour that did not correspond with the normal notions of childhood. Children were not supposed to steal, fight with each other or kill animals. But why would this behaviour not be agency as well? Is it not that Pedro is showing agency by providing himself food?

First of all, it should be considered that it is not very unlikely that a street child, who has always been hungry and was never sure when his next meal would be, who, finding himself in the proximity of food, would eat food whenever he can. This might also explain why Pedro throws the egg at us, the spectators. We watch Pedro while he eats the eggs and we might judge him that he does so and fear that he will get himself into trouble at the farm school. We, as spectators, might have the feeling that Pedro should not be behaving so recalcitrant, because he will ruin his opportunities to better his life. The egg that is then thrown at us, is an egg that we really deserve because we judge Pedro that he might ruin the opportunity to have a 'decent' life, while the way he reproduces our prejudices is a product of prejudging him in the first place.

Second of all, stigmatized people who feel unable to contradict their stigma, sometimes exclude themselves (Moncrieffe, 2006), which explains why Pedro behaves so hostile at the farm school and starts eating the eggs. Pedro feels like he is being punished for something he did not do and feels stigmatized by the judge, so it is no wonder that Pedro has no intentions of using the opportunities that the farm school gives him. There is a lot of evidence that alienation, forced exclusion, poverty and the techniques for survival on the streets increase the opportunities for 'antisocial' behaviour (Moncrieffe, 2006).

In turn, 'antisocial' behaviour is seen as a justification for the categories and labels that are put on people (Moncrieffe, 2006). Pedro's aggressive attitude at the police station and later the farm school, was caused by the fact that he was accused of something he did not do, because he was stigmatized as a street child. His aggressive behaviour towards the chicken, only reaffirmed for the principal and the other children that Pedro was a problematic child. So, labelling processes in which people are stigmatized, can and often produce the conditions and living experiences inspiring that kind of behaviour (Moncrieffe, 2006), just like what happened in the case of Pedro.

Pedro is thus exercising agency at the farm school, but because the authorities do not understand that labelling him as a street child influences the way he exercises agency, nor that exercising agency according to someone who has been living on the streets entails different behaviour than what they think, his behaviour is seen as 'bad' and he is being punished. However, there is a danger in emphasizing the agency of street children, because one can erroneously forget that street

children are victims of larger political and economic machinations that severely impact their lives (Kovats-Bernat, 2006), so this should also be held into account.

Also, labels that stigmatise can give stigmatized people a perverse feeling of empowerment that then reinforces categorization and labelling (Moncrieffe, 2006). People can respond to labels by exercising power in fields where they feel they are allowed to dominate (Moncrieffe, 2006). When Pedro is told by his fellow school mates that he should not eat the eggs already, he responds to them by using physical violence, which makes the situation worse. While living as a street child, Pedro has had many experiences with physical violence, like the attacks on the blind man and the man without legs, and the violent death of Julián. For him this felt like a field where he was allowed to dominate, because it would not stigmatise him any further.

When all the children then runaway to hide behind the fence, and leave Pedro locked up in the garden where he starts to kill the chickens, it is obvious that Pedro is desperate to exercise power on the field where he does not yet feel powerless. The image of all the children watching Pedro killing the chickens from behind the fence shows how society can judge and stigmatise from a distance, without knowing that they have caused the reinforcement of the labels they personally put on people.

4.3.4. Reverting negative labelling

How can somebody revert this vicious cycle of putting labels and reaffirming labels, in which even people who seek to empower overlook and underestimate the obvious ways in which power relationships can reinforce inequalities and injustice (Moncrieffe, 2006)? It would have to start with being self critical systematically and rigorously (Swartz, 1997), like Bourdieu's reflexivity (Moncrieffe, 2006). We could start asking ourselves questions like: Do we know how social relations on the ground contribute to differing poverty experiences (Moncrieffe, 2006)? How does the way that we arrange people in a socially constructed way influence how we frame issues and conceptualise categories of people (Moncrieffe, 2006)?

The judge could ask himself how he categorised Pedro, when he saw his young, illiterate, single mother and Pedro's dirty appearance and if he would have acted differently if Pedro would have come from a middle-class family. Luckily the principal of the farm school probably asked himself those questions and knew that if he would treat Pedro equally, by listening and trying to understand him, instead of only punishing him, and by showing Pedro that he trusted him, Pedro would come out of the vicious cycle of stigmatization.

What the principal of the farm school does is show Pedro that he does not believe in the stigma that is given to him by the judge and society. The principal shows Pedro that they think he is trustworthy and not a criminal, so that Pedro will feel motivated to include himself into the program and thus use the opportunities that are given to him.

But, like the end of the movie shows us, the trust of the principal is not enough. The principal of the school makes it clear how we should act towards street children, or other stigmatized people, to not reinforce social relationships. What happens after El Jaibo steals Pedro's money shows that the faith of one person does not offset the lack of faith that the stigmatized person has in society. Because Pedro has experienced years of feeling stigmatized as a street child it is not odd that he does not believe that people will trust him when he tells the truth. This might be the reason that Pedro, after his money had been stolen by El Jaibo, did not go back to the farm school without the money to explain everything to the principal, but went after El Jaibo at all costs. Pedro knew that as a street child he had this stigma of being a delinquent or untrustworthy, so if he would return without the money, the principal might have believed him, but others would assume that he had spent the money on something for himself.

So, Buñuel is telling the spectator that intervention and trying to re-educate or make a child conform does not work if it comes from stigmatising the child, instead of appealing to his needs. Pedro might have been more enthusiastic about the farm school if they would have sent him there, telling him what kind of opportunities it would give him, instead of giving him the feeling that he is a criminal who is in need of re-education. The principal in Buñuel's movie shows that you can make a child trustworthy for society if society starts trusting the child, but in the meantime also shows that trust is not enough if you do not consider the context in which a child lives; for example, the circumstances, friends of the gang, rules of the street, and the feeling of never being trusted by society, and that this context influences his behaviour.

Policies tend to belittle the impact of wider social, economic, political and cultural conditions in the shaping of social phenomena and because of that they think individual and remedial solutions are the solution for social problems (Boyden, 1997). Like Buñuel, Tomás Pérez Turrent and José de la Colina conclude in 'Objects of Desire: conversations with Luis Buñuel':

"Buñuel: I think they were wrong. The director of a school for delinquent children or the mentally retarded can be a good man and give a boy an opportunity, [...]. But a character like that does not stop the boy from turning into a delinquent. [...]"

Colina: That is to say: the "oasis of kindness" is not enough. When they leave the institution, the kids find the same hard reality as always.

Turrent: And the problem will not be solved by a good teacher, but rather by changing the social environment"

(de la Colina and Pérez Turrent 1992: 60).

I have used the Labelling Approach to explain how negative labelling also reinforces criminal behaviour, especially when this is done by authoritative actors. It influences how people perceive

themselves, respond to opportunities, make claims and exercise agency (Moncrieffe, 2006). Pedro was institutionalized because his living situation did not match with the ideas society had about childhood. So that is why Pedro was being stigmatized. Correction through negative labelling failed in Pedro's case because of the way he exercised agency and was negatively labelled, and that they had no understanding of his prior living conditions. Also, stigmatized people who feel unable to contradict their stigma, sometimes exclude themselves (Moncrieffe, 2006) which results in the labelling processes in which people are stigmatized producing the conditions and living experiences reproducing the same kind of behaviour (Moncrieffe, 2006). On top of that, labels can give stigmatized people a perverse feeling of empowerment, in fields where they feel like they are allowed to dominate, that reinforces categories and labels (Moncrieffe, 2006).

So, Buñuel is telling the spectator that intervention and trying to re-educate or conform a child does not work if it comes from stigmatising the child, instead of appealing to his needs. By being self critical in a systematic and rigorous way, this process can be reversed (Swartz, 1997). The principal of the movie shows that it is not enough if there is one person who tries to reverse the process of label-putting, because of the impact of wider social, economic, political and cultural conditions in the shaping of social phenomena.

4.4. An anthropological perspective on crime

Buñuel's narrator holds the 'progressive forces of modernity' responsible for solving the problem of street children, which opens the discussion about who is then responsible for producing the problem in the first place. The theories mentioned above explain which factors contribute to the criminal behaviour of Pedro and the gang, but they fail to analyse their behaviour from a more anthropological perspective.

Instead of labelling Pedro and the gang's behaviour as criminal they can also be labelled as self-providing behaviour in needs that society fails to provide. After all, seen from an anthropological point of view, the label of crime is not a universal label, but put at random in relation to social configurations expressed in law (Nader, 2003). What is seen as criminal by law makers, can be seen as a fight for subsistence by offenders.

The same can be said about the responsibility for crime: should it be the responsibility of defective persons and families or the responsibility of the morbid social conditions (Nader, 2003)? So should Pedro and El Jaibo be punished for their behaviour, or should society be punished for producing the circumstances in which this behaviour is likely to occur?

Like the above mentioned shows, anthropology can contribute to criminology in getting a better understanding of crime. Criminology tries to understand why people turn to crime, whereas anthropology tries to investigate the meaning. Anthropology can provide a broader understanding for how "crime" is, has been, or might be defined, prevented, and controlled, but also its meaning for offenders, victims, cultural groups, and society (Brisman, 2011). Anthropology can help to reveal

pervasive processes of domination, it reminds us that what constitutes 'crime' is culturally and temporally specific and it can help with providing paradigms for better living, so it is also aspiring about crime (Brisman, 2011).

With the Social Bond Theory I have shown that there are factors that are missing in Pedro and El Jaibo's life which cause them to consider that they have the option to offend. I complemented the Social Bond Theory with the General Strain Theory, which explained why they sometimes choose criminal behaviour. They choose to offend when the type of strain that they are dealing with has certain characteristics. Those types of strain are abundantly present in Pedro and El Jaibo's life, as we can see by a wide array of scenes in *Los Olvidados*. The labelling approach complemented these theories by showing that the stigmatizing that society exercises on individuals that do not confine to conventional behaviour, reinforces deviant behaviour and thus causes intervention to fail.

So, what Buñuel has shown in all of the different aspects of the characters in *Los Olvidados* is that it is not the 'deviant personality' of the children that have caused them to behave criminally. In contrast, certain factors in their lives have caused these children to show a certain kind of behaviour that conventional society would label as 'criminal'. Ironically, this kind of behaviour is caused by the environment in which these children were born, so caused by factors that are beyond their control. Because society both produces street children and considers them to be a problem, Buñuel marks society as being responsible for solving it. Like the narrator states in the first minutes of the movie; *"this movie, based on real life events, is not optimistic and it leaves the solution to this problem to the progressive forces of society."*

The theories about criminality explain why Pedro, El Jaibo, and the other children choose to offend instead of satisfying their needs in a more conventional manner, but they do not explain why they choose to do that together, instead of working alone. The following paragraphs explain why the street children chose to work together in a gang.

5. Gang Forming

El Jaibo is a young delinquent who has just escaped from juvenile prison. He returns to the site where his old friends are, who are also children living on the street. The children are curious about life in prison and ask him all kinds of questions about how life behind bars was. El Jaibo tells them it was not that bad, that he showed everybody in there that he was a macho-man so they respected him, but for him, the street is better. After he has told all his stories, he asks his friends if they have any cigarettes for them. They all tell him they do not have any because they are broke. El Jaibo says that it is obvious that he has been away, but that they will see that he has learned a lot in prison, and if they obey him, nobody will be broke again. Enthusiastically they say they will obey him and as one group, they follow him into the mean street of Mexico City.

When the street children of *Los Olvidados* see a blind man playing music, they decide to rob him. Pelón stands behind him while Pedro and El Jaibo are watching. With El Jaibo's signal, Pelón gets the blade of a razor out of his pocket to cut the belt of the blind man's bag, but the blind man notices it before he can steal it. Before Pelón can run away, the blind man hits him with his stick, which has a nail attached to the end. Pelón returns wounded to the other gang members. One of them tells him to go to his mother so she can take care of the wound, but he tells them that she will kill him if he goes home. The other responds by saying that his mother is a beast too and that is why he left. El Jaibo gathers all the children again and with three children they start following the blind man. At a wasteland, when the city seems far away, they attack him and destroy his instruments. The blind man is left behind with his destroyed instrument and a black hen staring at him.

(*Los Olvidados* directed by Luis Buñuel, 1950: 00:04:00 - 00:11:00).

Buñuel has shown us extensively how there are a lot of factors in Pedro and El Jaibo's life that have caused the strains leading to a life of crime. But the antecedent theories are not sufficient to explain why Pedro, El Jaibo and the other street children did not operate on their own, but in a gang.

In social sciences there is a lot of literature on gang forming and the scenes in Buñuel's movie show that there is not one single theory that is able to fully grasp why people decide to operate in gangs. They all explain different dimensions of the gang experience that are not easily separated in practice (Horowitz, 1999). So, I will not try to explain the gang forming in *Los Olvidados* by one theory, but I will show how interweaving factors in the lives of those street children have caused the formation of the gang.

5.1. Defining the Gang

Before I will even begin theorizing I will first establish the definition of a gang and thus underpin why the group of street children in *Los Olvidados* is a gang. According to Wood and Alleyne (2010) there is no consensus about the definition of a gang in American literature, but European scholars have a demarcated definition. In the European definition there are four components that define a gang: durability, street orientation, youthfulness and identity via illegal activity (Wood and Alleyne, 2010). With these components a gang is defined as following: "a street gang (or troublesome youth group corresponding to a street gang elsewhere) is any durable, street-oriented youth group whose identity includes involvement in illegal activity" (Weerman et al, 2009: 20).

As we have seen in the scene in which the gang is formed, it is formed because El Jaibo proposed to work together under his leadership to gain money. In the subsequent scene we see that their procedure of gaining money, involves criminal activity. So, the identity of the group includes involvement in illegal activity. The group is street-oriented because all of the children mostly live on the streets and also identify themselves as being 'of the street'. Because the group made a commitment to El Jaibo when the gang was formed, it is probable that the group will commit for a longer time to each other. Thus, the group that is formed around El Jaibo can be classified as a street gang.

5.2. Competing with school and family

During his research with gang youth in Los Angeles Vigil noted that the street gang had arisen as a competitor for other institutions, like family and schools, in guiding and directing youth from the neighbourhood in self-identification (Vigil, 1988). The gang norms, functions and roles help shape what a child thinks about himself and others (Vigil, 1988), which could be complementary to a child's education if he does not receive these norms at home.

When family life is ruptured, this generally leads to regular and prolonged exposure to street activities (Vigil, 1988). This in turn affects the sense of self-identification of street children, because the gang also provides models for how to act and look and thus temporarily or sporadically provides an identity (Vigil, 1988). This is also supported by empirical evidence: "youth from single parent families, families with one parent and other adults and youth with no parents are more likely to become gang members than are youth from two parent (even stepparent) households" (Hill, Karl., et al 1999).

In *Los Olvidados*, Pedro and El Jaibo both come from ruptured families. Neither one of the boys has a father figure in their lives. El Jaibo tells Pedro's mother that he has never known his father and Pedro's mother later tells the judge that she does not know how to love him if she does not even know who his father is. She also tells El Jaibo that her husband died 5 years ago, but it is likely that she only tells him this to disguise that she has become pregnant out of wedlock. If she is telling him the truth, Pedro is likely to have also lived half of his life without a father. Both boys grow up without

a clear father figure to guide and direct them in their search for identity during adolescence, and neither of them had an older brother to replace the father figure.

The mother's role is also problematic. El Jaibo's mother died when he was a child and he was too young to remember her. He did have some dreams about a virgin-like woman who smiled at him, but that appearance could also be memories from virgin statues that he had seen elsewhere. He tells Pedro's mom that nobody has ever looked at him like his 'mother' did in the dream, which indicates that El Jaibo did not have anybody who replaced the mother figure in his life.

Pedro's relationship with his mother is very problematic throughout the whole movie. At the beginning of the movie she tells him that she had told him not to come back as long as he hung out with *esos vagos* (those tramps), where she refers to his friends from the gang. She refuses to give him any food even though he is very hungry. It is likely that her resentment for Pedro comes from being raped and left pregnant by his dad, when she was only fourteen. But, she also says repeatedly to Pedro that she is so tired of washing floors the whole day, to earn money to buy food. Because Pedro does not provide enough money to the family while she works all day, she denies him food. Denying him love comes probably from the way Pedro was conceived, causing her to be burdened with the responsibility of a child and having financial troubles at such a young age.

Later Pedro has a dream in which he has an insight that his mother might return his affection if he starts working somewhere. But when the cops come a little while later, she does not seem to show any affection at all towards her son. Their relationship becomes even more problematic when El Jaibo makes love to Pedro's mother and he refers to that in a fight.

When Pedro dies at the end, and Meche and her grandfather carry his body on a donkey, Pedro's mother is seen, wandering around and looking for her son. Through this, the spectator sees that she does care for Pedro, but she was just unable to handle him. When she brings Pedro to the judge, she clearly shows that she wants to handle the responsibility of Pedro over to somebody else, because she is unable to correct his deviant behaviour. Later, when she realizes he did not do everything she accuses him of, she notices she has been too harsh on him, and tries to show him her love.

Aside from having a ruptured family life, Pedro and El Jaibo do not go to school. El Jaibo probably has nobody who would pay his tuition and also Pedro's mother has barely enough money to pay for food, let alone school. So they both do not have any institutions that guide and direct them in the process of self-identification during their adolescence. The only thing, close to an institution, is their gang: because school, family, sports and so on have failed to provide direction, the gang members reflect street socialization and an enculturation experience (Vigil, 1988).

Like the judge said to Pedro's mother: "deprived from affection, they look for it wherever they can." Pedro does not receive affection at home and El Jaibo does not have a home to go to. Because they also do not go to school, they have the opportunity to hang out in the streets during the day. Pedro and El Jaibo are very likely to be exposed and to expose themselves to the street life, because of their

ruptured family life and the lack of institutions that guide them. The street and the gang are the only places that provide guidance in self-identification.

Thrasher, in his theory of Social Disorganization, also indicated the breakdown of social institutions like school and the family as a cause of criminal behaviour, but he places it in opposition to the thrill and excitement that unconventional institutions offer to children (Thrasher, 1927). According to him, economic destabilization contributed to social disorganization which leads to the breakdown of conventional social institutions, like school or the family, which "failed to hold the boy's interest, neglects him or actually forces him onto the street" (Thrasher, 1927: 340).

I think the thrill and excitement of the street definitely contributes to its appeal for poor children, but I think it is only a contributing factor. In the end, if a child had the option, he would never choose excitement and thrill over a safe and healthy family environment and the opportunities a school offers, because if it were the opposite way, more middle class children would opt for a life in a gang. Also, Pedro shows a preference for life at home, because he constantly tries to win the affection of his mother back. He might be attracted to the thrill of the street, but in the end he prefers his mother's nest.

5.3. Street Socialization

Pedro and El Jaibo differ in the measure in which they are involved in the gang. The degree to which a person is involved can give a measure of the severity and deep-rootedness of the effects of racial and cultural discrimination and poverty on an individual, or the degree in which a family and school authorities have failed to influence and guide (Vigil, 1988). Pedro has no problem leaving the gang behind when he has found a job, because the most important thing for him is to gain the affection of his mother. In contrast, El Jaibo does not have any other institution to return to. Here the factor of street socialization is important; because El Jaibo does not have any institutions to return to, he has been exposed to the street his whole life, which has caused him to be socialized in the street environment. The failing of institutional guidance in young people's lives seems to be inherently connected to street socialization.

El Jaibo was institutionalized at one moment in his life when he was in jail, but he escaped because he was already more socialized in the street environment. As he states to his friends in the gang: jail was not bad, but the street is better. El Jaibo has probably lived his whole life on the street and thus is completely socialized into the culture of the street: the street is the only place where he has received norms and guidance. It is the most important and most familiar environment for him and he is also successful in that setting. The correctional institution came too late for him and failed to socialize him to conventional norms.

Because the boys all differ in age, they can be seen as a representation of how children become more socialized when they become older. Pedro is still a child and will become an adolescent

in a few years, whereas El Jaibo is already an adolescent. Street socialization begins in early childhood (Vigil, 2003). When a child reaches adolescence and an age/gender identity erupts, street socialization reaches a high point (Vigil, 2003). Therefore, El Jaibo is depicted in *Los Olvidados* at the high point of his street socialization process.

During adolescence, the group-oriented activities that children undertake as preteens evolve into that of a street gang, mostly in a continuous process (Vigil, 2003). The streets then become 'the arena for what is learned and expected by others to gain recognition and approval' (Vigil, 2003: 230). In *Los Olvidados* the behaviour that is associated with the gang and with gaining recognition and approval is smoking, criminal and violent behaviour and undertaking criminal activities to gain a living instead of working.

This is already evident in the first scene of *Los Olvidados* in which the gang appears. When Cacarizo offers everybody a cigarette and Julian says he does not smoke and has to go to work, they make fun of him. Pedro tells him that only donkeys work. Within the gang, working is not seen as an appropriate way to behave, but smoking and drinking is encouraged. Together they undertake criminal activities to earn a living, instead of doing so by working.

5.4. Gangs as 'bad education'

Because of the direction the street provides, gang members report to have a strong reliance on street role models, particularly street veterans or real or fictive brothers (Vigil, 1988). Throughout the movie the members of the gang tend to call each other 'hermano' or 'mano'. While this could also indicate that they are friends, it also indicates the type of relationship they have; family-like. The members of the gang see each other as friends upon which they can rely, friends who look out after each other. For example, when Pelón got his leg hurt by the blind man's stick or when Cacarizo provides a sleeping place at his farm for El Jaibo and Pedro. The boys from the gang all differ in age and because of this differentiation the boys can learn from one another.

The teaching in criminal behaviour is the essence of the theory of Differential Association. According to this theory, people learn criminal behaviour and the most important part of the learning comes from within important personal groups (Sutherland and Cressey, 1960). In addition, the influence that a person has towards criminal behaviour is influenced by the attitudes of the members of their personal group (Wood and Alleyne, 2010). So, people will commit crimes if they are exposed to more attitudes that favour law violation than attitudes that favour respecting the law (Wood and Alleyne, 2010).

This theory seems to underscore the idea that prisons only produce more criminals. When El Jaibo comes back from prison, he tells the street children that he has learned a lot. He has learned more criminal behaviour in prison and in turn, teaches this behaviour now to his younger peers of the street. A child like Pedro is easy to influence, because he is still young, he lacks a role model because he has

no father ~~and~~ ~~so~~ ~~he~~ is prone to adopting a role model from the street. In addition to that, he spends most of his time on the streets, like El Jaibo.

El Jaibo is older than the other children, is admired by the other children because of his macho behaviour and is a friend of the children which makes him a suitable role model. This is confirmed when they respond to him by saying that he is a real tough guy and that they will do everything he wants. El Jaibo subsequently takes up the role of the leader, initiates criminal operations, decides who does what and after the criminal venture has been successful, divides the money.

Cloward and Ohlin (1960) have a complementary theory that offers a different perspective on the same issue (Wood and Alleyne, 2010). According Cloward and Ohlin an opportunity to commit an offense is limited in availability, so across different class structures people have different opportunities to access this 'criminal school' (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960). Because lower class children have more opportunity to learn to offend than middle class children, they are also more likely to offend (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960).

5.5. Gangs as economic enterprises

EL JAIBO:

You will see, I have learned a lot in prison. And if you will do as I say, nobody will lack a penny.
(*Los Olvidados* directed by Luis Buñuel, 1950: 00:05:00)

When El Jaibo proposes to form a gang he does so by promising the other children that if they obey him, they will have enough money. This displays the formation of a gang in a totally different perspective. The gang is not merely an alternative to the education that they do not receive in conventional institutions, but also an alternative livelihood strategy. The gang takes the form of an economic organization and through the illegal economy it generates money for its members (Sánchez-Jankowski, 2003).

A gang is thus an alternative business venture, for those who do not have access to the conventional, legal economy. This is underscored by their first cooperation, in which they try to rob the blind man. Violence is also a part of their activities, but it is more ~~so~~ a side effect of the criminal activities. The attack on the blind man, for example, is a revenge action, because he hurt Pelón when they tried to rob him. A wide array of studies confirms that the primary motivation for young people to join a gang is money and the social 'respect' that money can buy (Sullivan, 1989).

If the gang was looked upon as an enterprise, then El Jaibo would be the boss: he decides what activities need to be undertaken, he divides the tasks and he also distributes the reward. When the boys attack the crippled man, it is El Jaibo who steals the wallet, while the other boys lift the man and hold his arms. The gang work together as a team and the most important tasks are left to El Jaibo. After the assault, El Jaibo is the one who decides how the money should be divided, and thus divides the

'wages'. In this sense, the gang can provide the boys ~~the feeling~~ with the feeling of being in an institution close to a working environment. In prison El Jaibo ~~he~~ also acquired, according to his own narrative, a dominant position, but there he probably had to compete constantly over his powers by the prison wardens. The street is where El Jaibo understands all the norms and rules and distributes them.

Buñuel shows the spectator how the formation of a gang is not something that is done out of violence, but that it shows the resilience of poor people and the agency to show their circumstances. Individuals in the lower class know that if they want to improve their position in life, they must be creative and enterprising (Sánchez-Jankowski, 2003). The choice of a group of poor people working together, for illegal business activities, instead of those legal, can be explained by the Strain Theory and Social Bond theory.

But a gang is more than a business enterprise, it is also an alternative to other failing institutions, like school and family. The gang helps to shape what a child thinks about himself, what norms he has, which function he has in that institution when his family or school fails to direct him in his search for identity. The degree to which a person is involved in a gang shows how big and deep-rooted the effect of poverty and racial and cultural discrimination is on a person and the degree in which conventional institutions have failed.

All these factors have to be against a background of street socialization. If the institutional structures have failed to provide a child norms and he receives those norms on the street, street socialization is at work and is likely to drive a child towards participating in a gang.

Street socialization can also educate a child in criminal behaviour, because the most important part of learning is being taught within important personal groups. As a result, a child is educated to perform in a gang. Also, the attitudes of members of their personal group influences how a child thinks about criminality and thus criminal children can stimulate other children to offend.

So, if a child is already exposed to the street and street socialized, and if conventional institutions fail to provide him in what he needs, the gang steps in to replace conventional society.

5.6. An anthropological perspective on gang formation~~ing~~

All these theories explain why people decide to form or to join a gang, but not what it thus contributes to a child's life once they join a gang. Like I mentioned before, the street and gang can provide a child norms, when conventional institutions fail. Street socialization involves a process where individuals shape various frames and scripts so they can make sense of their social environment (Lauger, 2014).

Being part of a gang, a street phenomenon, and identifying themselves as being 'of the street' provides a child a sense of belonging. It gives meaning to the fact that ~~ithe~~ is without a real home, because it means that ~~ithe~~ now belongs to the street. The street children in *Los Olvidados* refer to themselves as 'being of the street' or refer to the street as if it were like a home for them.

Street culture also provides direction in identifying others and the self. Within the street culture, labels and identities that people use and apply on the street, all bear meaning and become part of a person's cultural tool kit on the street (Lauger, 2014). An example of a label that is applied in *Los Olvidados* is that of masculinity. Through discourse we see how the gang has a very specific idea about masculinity. Especially when the children call each other 'fags' it indicates how a real man should not behave. There are also positive references to how a man should be. El Jaibo is an example of what these children, including himself, think that a man should really be like, because he is identified by them as being a 'real macho' man. According to these street children a real man is not afraid, is always disposed to fight, smokes and drinks.

There are also certain ideas on the street on how to behave towards each other. The street culture has a code of respect, which shows when Julián tells El Jaibo he cannot fight with him because he has hurt his arm. On the other side, it is seen as disrespectful when somebody betrays another person to the police. These signs of disrespect give the disrespected person permission to avenge themselves. Therefore, signs of disrespect give permission to use violence.

Again, the above theory shows how anthropology complements criminology in understanding the lives of street children. It is not enough to understand why people join gangs, but also what it means to them, in order to be able to help them in an accurate way.

6. Reflection

Having read the whole thesis, one might wonder why I have not included any Marxist theories in my analysis. Like other surrealists, Buñuel was inspired by the Marxist movement (Nochimson, 2010) and therefore it would have been logical and it would have made the argument of this thesis stronger, if I had included the Marxist ideology. Frankly, I have overlooked this aspect completely and by the time I realized the thesis needed to be complemented with Marxist theories, it was too late to write another chapter. The reason that I had overlooked this was because I mainly focused on what the message of the movie was. Also, in de la Colina and Pérez Turrent (1992) I had read that Buñuel's communist friends were 'disgusted by the film' (p.60) because they felt that it had a bourgeois ideology, with a '...bourgeois teacher and a bourgeois state that are very humane because they reform children' (p.60). Turrent then asks Buñuel if he thinks that his friends had misunderstood the movie and he responds that he thought they were wrong because "The director of a school for delinquent children or the mentally retarded can be a good man and give a boy an opportunity, ..." (p.60). This made me think that he thought that his communist friends did not have the same idea about street children as he had and that is why I did not realize that Buñuel made his movie also partly from a communist point of view. Throughout the research I focused mostly on the criminological factors because crime featured so prominently in the movie's narrative structure. Because of this, criminological theories are very dominant in my argument, while sociological theories are not so prominent.

It is acknowledged that the overview of the criminological theories in this thesis is a limited one, because I have not studied criminology. I did however choose to use criminological theories in my analysis of *Los Olvidados* because I found that the element of crime was the most important feature of the movie for a number of reasons. First of all, I found the scenes in which crimes are committed the most shocking and impressive scenes of the movie and I think that especially these scenes made that the public reacted so enraged at the first screening of the movie and appreciated it so much later. Because of this, I think that there was no way to get around the violence and crime in *Los Olvidados*, I could have not ignored the element of crime in the movie. So, that is why I focused on trying to understand why street children choose to commit such crimes, which are questions that probably have emerged at the majority of the spectators of the movie.

Second of all, like the quote on page 13 of this thesis describes (it quotes the narrator at the beginning of the movie), Buñuel opens the movie by giving the spectator the message that the movie is about children who, because of their circumstances, are a seedbed for future delinquency and that society tries to resolve this 'problem' but that the solution are left to the progressive forces of modernity. If street children would not have offended, society would not have had a 'problem' with them. So, crime is the reason that society has a problem with them and that is the reason why Buñuel made a movie about them: to show the public what causes this 'problem' and to show them that society tries to find a cure but is not able to. I thus wanted to 'complement' Buñuel's message at the beginning

of the movie, by analyzing what this seedbed for future delinquency contained. So, for me, the element of crime was so important in *Los Olvidados* that I chose to use criminological theories, even though they have not been a part of my studies. Therefore, I must acknowledge that I have lacked the knowledge to relate them to the wider criminological context.

A weak point of my argument is that I have based almost all of it on my own interpretation of the movie. I have used some insights that were provided to me by my teachers, but the majority has come from my own interpretation. I have used all kinds of reviews on the movie, to inspire me, but I have never been led by them. This means that I cannot substantiate my interpretation with arguments of the interpretation of renowned movie critics. I did, however, substantiate a great part of my interpretation with information from interviews with Luis Buñuel.

An important aspect and distinctive feature of the movie is that it is not hopeful. In my analysis I have overlooked that aspect. I could have analysed if the movie fitted into a narrative of hope, in spite of its pessimistic character.

When Pedro's mother shows that she cannot handle Pedro and turns him over to the judge, there is an element of patriarchal help. The mother, the woman, cannot handle her male son and has to hand it over to another male. Also, when Meche is assaulted by El Jaibo, her brother does nothing to help her, just like nobody helped Pedro's mother when she was raped. Meanwhile, when Pedro is almost picked up from the streets by a paedophile the police step in to rescue him. Throughout the movie the women seem to be destined to be in an even lower position than the men. They seem to be always on guard for the men in their surroundings and seem to have no strength to come out of their misery. This gender aspect of *Los Olvidados* has been overlooked during my research, but deserves a deeper investigation.

Because *Los Olvidados* is a movie with many layers, there is a myriad of other analyses that could be carried out. First of all, the element of disturbing the spectatorship could have been investigated. There are several elements in *Los Olvidados* that fit into the idea of disturbing spectatorship, like the scene in which the children are playing bullfighting; the scene in which Pedro is in jail and wants to run after his mother; and the famous scene in which Pedro throws the egg at the spectator. Another analysis could be carried out on the symbolism in *Los Olvidados*. Hens and doves can be found in every important scene in the movie. The dream sequence and the scene in which El Jaibo dies also carry some symbolism, with the dog running over the image of his body.

What could have complemented my research is an overview of the factors that produced this 'problem' of street children in Mexico City in the 1950s. As previously mentioned in this thesis, Buñuel saw that this 'problem' was produced by society. An overview of the societal factors that caused the people in the slums of Mexico City to experience the strains or lack of social bonds, could contribute to a deeper understanding on how society has produced these problems. Due to time constraints, I have not been able to further investigate these factors. An useful theoretical framework

could come from the book “Wasted Lives” of Zygmunt Bauman which provides an overview of how 'human waste' is an inevitable outcome of modernization.

Another suggestion for further research is a retrospective review on how Mexican society has coped with street children throughout the years. Because the movie was made in 1950 and is about a contemporary problem, there is a possibility for retrospective research on the situation of street children. We are now able to investigate what solution ‘the progressive forces of society’ has found.

7. Conclusion

In his movie, Buñuel mostly looks at the big structures in society that influence the individual, instead of how the individual influences society. He considers that society is both responsible for producing and solving its 'problem' with street children. Chapter 4 argues that children do not offend because they are inherently bad, but because they lack certain Social Bonds which should prevent them from considering criminal behaviour as an option. In addition to that, there are certain strains in their lives that, because of their characteristics, are more likely to result in crime. If society then labels their behaviour as criminal, instead of recognizing that these children try to compensate for needs that are not fulfilled by society, this only aggravates the situation. A stigma only reinforces the behaviour of its own label. By putting a negative label on behaviour that is only produced by its own shortcomings, society **re**-produces its own problem.

The formation of gangs is another example of how street children try to find their own compensation for needs that society does not fulfil. Like we have seen in chapter 5, a gang can be a substitution for school and family if these institutions fail to guide a child in his search for identity, especially during adolescence. In the streets they learn how to behave themselves, how to gain approval by others and it also influences their attitude towards criminality. Because a street child receives its 'education' on the streets, it is very likely that it will also be educated in criminal behaviour which makes it more likely that he will actually offend. These skills help a street child to function in the economic activities of a gang. A gang can function as an economic enterprise and generate money through the illegal economy, when its members find it difficult to access the conventional economy.

Once a child is part of a gang, it can provide him with norms and tools to make sense of its social environment and of his own identity. By being part of a gang a child finds a sense of belonging and a feeling of being at home.

The integration of theories in my thesis has proved that a combination of theories over various disciplines is more adequate to understand the reality of street children, than just a single theory or theories from a single discipline. The fact that various theories complemented each other, indicated that on their own they were all incomplete to grasp the reality of street children, but by being knitted together, they provided a multidimensional reflection of the lives of street children. Criminological theories complemented each other in providing an explanation about what motivates a street child to offend. Anthropological insights and the Labelling Theory showed the perspective of society, by explaining that what constitutes crime is defined by society and that this negative label only reinforces the same negative behaviour.

With regard to the formation of gangs, the integration of theories was relevant because a gang is a response to a wide array of needs of street children. Like I have elaborated before, a gang offers educational opportunities, guidance in the search for self-identity, it fits into the process of street socialization and it can function like an alternative economic enterprise. Criminology explains why a

street child decides to form or to join a gang and anthropology expounds what gang membership can signify for a street child. The combination of these theories provide an insight into the outside appeal of a gang, as well as the inside appeal.

I hope to have been able to improve the theoretical knowledge on street children by writing this thesis, so we might be a step closer in fulfilling Buñuel's wish that *in the near future a day will come when children's and adolescents' rights finally are respected*.

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