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Serial Narratives, Networks, and the Police.

This paper aims to answer the sociological question, to what extent does the character D'Angelo Barksdale represent Oliver Twist's character in the criminal series, The Wire? In particular, this project concentrates on two scenes from the wire. The first scene that is focused on is when in season one entitled, D’Angelo Barksdale splits some game. The other scene that we focus on is from season one episode five where D’Angelo and Donnette visit some fancy restaurant. The point of focus on these scenes is to identify the similarities between the two characters, D’Angelo and Oliver Twist from Dicken’s work.

In the scene from season one entitled, D'Angelo Barksdale, Splits Some Game, we notice some good in D'Angelo who is associated with a gang. At the beginning of the scene, D'Angelo and some members of his gang are waiting for a supply of drugs which appears to be late contrary to how they planned earlier. A guy who appears to be a drug addict then approaches them whom D'Angelo tells to come later since the supplies were yet to arrive. The guy then proceeds to ask some members of the gang if they had some of the drugs with them. D'Angelo's gang members verbally harass the guy before chasing him away. It is after this act that we see the good man in D'Angelo even though he was involved in gang life. D'Angelo lectures the gang members and talks them into treating the drug addicts with respect since they are no different from them who are drug dealers.

Similar to D'Angelo's act in the episode, Oliver Twist demonstrates an act of goodness in his encounter with the pickpocketers. Like D'Angelo, Oliver joined a gang only that he did not lead the gang. Oliver joined Fagin's gang and when they were allowed to go out together, he saw one of the gang members, Charley pickpocketing an old man Mr. Brownlow. On seeing this, Oliver panicked and began to run. Mr. Brownlow saw him run and immediately suspected that it was because of guilt. Later after apprehending Oliver and taking him to a magistrate court, Mr. Brownlow notices his mistake and all charges are dropped. Mr. Brownlow then takes Oliver home with him with the aim of providing him with food and shelter which he lacked.

This instance aligns with Rodensky's (2003) argument where she argued that Oliver Twist attempts to solve social questions in society. Rodensky (2003) states the importance of Oliver Twists' character in society and examines the criminal states of mind and acts. Oliver was not a violent person whatsoever but society dragged him to violent activities with characters such as Fagin. The instance involving him and Mr. Brownlow is just an indication that he was involved in gang activities but he was not meant for such an environment.

From the above two instances, the similarity between D’Angelo and Oliver is obvious that they were gang members who had a kind heart. From a sociological perspective, D’Angelo and Oliver have a kind heart towards humanity. D'Angelo expresses his disappointment with the way the members of his gang handle their customers who are drug addicts. Similarly, Oliver attempts to flee when he notices that members of Fagin's gang were pickpockets as he did not want to associate with such kind of acts that involved hurting others. Therefore, it is evident that both D’Angelo and Oliver are individuals who value humanity and are concerned about the wellbeing of others.

Also, from season one episode five of The Wire in the restaurant scene we can sample out some attributes of D'Angelo that are similar to Oliver's. During his conversation with Donnette, D'Angelo expresses his discomfort at the restaurant. Although Donnette appears to be enjoying her time at the restaurant, D'Angelo states that they are "acting like they belong" at the restaurant. This is after there has been an instance where the waiter interrupts their privacy without even excusing himself. D'Angelo is quick to notice through his expressions when the waiter wipes the table and says, "for the crumbs". D'Angelo sarcastically replies "yeah right" although his facial expressions state otherwise. Although D'Angelo does not openly speak out to the waiter, through his conversation with Donnette, it is evident that D'Angelo is not a fan of the restaurant.

The Wire is about class, according to Berlatsky (2012) in his article posted in The Atlantic, and how a class is inextricably connected to all facets of our society and ourselves. Fancy restaurants are associated with a white individual such that when a white couple visits, it strikes the eye of many particularly the waiters. Thus, it is for this reason that the waiter showed signs of classism by how he handled D'Angelo and Donnette even though the latter did not notice and even told D'Angelo that no one care they are African American.

Similarly, in Oliver Twist, Oliver demonstrates a kind- and good-hearted character even when he is subjected to serious mistreatment. Thus, just like in D'Angelo's instance where he expresses his feelings whenever he feels oppressed, Oliver shows that he also has limits. Noah Claypole, a charity boy who also worked for Mr. Sowerberry has in many instances been cruel and abusive to Oliver. At one point, Noah tries to provoke Oliver by abusing his mother, “Work us, how’s your mother.” Additionally, Noah becomes enraged when Oliver receives an unfortunate appointment to a job as a hired mourner for children's funeral services. He lashes out at Oliver with a vengeance. Oliver, who has been starving and mistreated, fights back to protect his life. Even though Oliver is a calm person in nature, he had to fight back when Noah lashed at him and even abusing his deceased mother.

The similarity between Oliver and D'Angelo arises in that they both express their feelings when they feel uncomfortable. D'Angelo would have simply ignored the situation at the restaurant since after all Donnette was having a good time. He chose to speak out to Donnette so that if she knows that he was uncomfortable at the place. Similarly, Oliver would have ignored Noah's abusive words. Instead, he chose to stand up for himself against someone mean to me even though he was later locked up in a room by Mr. Sowerberry with no food. From a sociological perspective, these two characters are similar in that they act when they have to even though they are both known to be calm.

Both D'Angelo and Oliver are characters that are part of gang life although they are conscious of the well-being of others. In the scenes where D'Angelo talks to his gang members, Bodie, Poot, and his gang, he tells them that "we can keep on killing each other, doing each other like dogs." These are words from a gang member who wanted members of his crew to behave in a certain manner that was humane. Similarly, Oliver was never comfortable working for people such as Fagin although he did it for food and shelter. From various instances, we notice that Oliver was motivated by the need to help others who are in need. Oliver and D'Angelo are an example of people who have been placed in gang life by the society even though they are not meant for it.

Wheeler (1983) adds that Oliver was a symbol of good people who were victims of the evil of society. Generally, the various sources and clips analyzed to demonstrate the similarities between D’Angelo and Oliver. Due to their involvement in gang activities, they were both subjected to instances of mistreatment. D'Angelo's main instance of mistreatment is evident in the restaurant scene while Oliver's case is in a majority of the narrative. Both of them voiced out their issues and Oliver in particular acted by leaving the orphanage where he first experienced mistreatment.

In conclusion, we can assert that D'Angelo represents the character Oliver Twist in The Wire to a great extent. Being victims of mistreatment, involved in gang life, and both of them demonstrating an act of kindness, the two characters appear to play almost the same role. The only big difference is that D'Angelo was involved in one line of criminal activities while Oliver performed several tasks as directed by his seniors such as Fagin.

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