

A STUDY OF CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT: SOCIAL IMPACT IN DANNY SANTIAGO'S NOVEL ENTITLED FAMOUS ALL OVER TOWN

Submitted by:

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ABSTRACT

Social Impact is a key to the harsh life of Mexico-Americans society in novel *Famous All Over Town* by Danny Santiago. The purpose of the research is to discuss characters development through harsh life of Mexican-American society in Los Angeles. The writer used intrinsic theories such as character and setting in conducting this research. The writer also used Bibb Latané's dynamic social impact theory in this research. The result of this research is to prove that social influences greatly affect the development of character behavior. Chato is actually a good kid because environmental factors turn out to be mischievous. The situation in a society may be extremely influential to the psychological development.

Keywords: Social impact, violent culture, character development, harsh life.

1. INTRODUCTION

Economic factor has become a global issue for a long time and probably it will be a never ending issue. Through economic factors, the society can classify people into three groups, namely upper, middle, and lower class. Because of these classifications, some problems will appear such as discrimination and deviation of character development.

It can also be seen in the Los Angeles suburban area. There is a society where the majority of Mexican-American descents and their economic status are classified as low class. The gathering of the low class society will lead to criminal problem. This issue is causing violent culture in the society. It can affect the psychological development of society.

As a constantly growing creature, human will always change. It depends on the place and time. These changes can occur due to environmental factors of society where he lives. The development is also not merely physical but also psychological. The environmental factor of the society influences the mindset and behavior of people.

The writer chooses the novel *Famous All Over Town* by Danny Santiago as his final project because this literary work illustrates the daily life of the Mexican-American society in Los Angeles. However, it also raises the issue of economic status that affects the psychological development of the people in Los Angeles suburban area.

The writer is interested in finding out how the societies construct the psychology of the character Chato. The writer also tries to figure out what aspect that affects Chato. When still in Grade 2 of Junior High School, Chato is a brilliant kid who is turned into a bad boy, being close to violence, cigarette, drugs, and alcohol. All the problems in this novel are the result of poverty, and the poverty makes a harsh life.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Character

Characters can be divided into two kinds, flat and round character. According to Kennedy, “a flat character has only one outstanding trait of feature, or at most a few distinguish marks” (1991: 48). In addition, Robert adds, “Unlike round character, flat character is not complex, but is simple and so dimensional. They may have no more than

single dominating idea” (2007: 158). Character without any doubt is important to develop a story.

The created characters are given their own personality and identity to differentiate them from one another throughout a story. The author holds the power to create and give them personalities as complex as the author wants to support the plot.

2.2 Setting

Setting can be defined as the imaginary world the author created for the story to take place. It is not rare that the author uses real life places as the setting so that the story becomes more realistic. Meyer defines setting as: “the context in which the action occurs. The major elements of setting are the time, place, and social environment that frame the character” (1990: 107). Amigoni states “Novels engaging dramatic conflict ... is recognizable social setting, where everyday materials of manners, morals, customs, and beliefs seem to be like life itself” (2000: 29). In addition, according to Perrine, setting is “The context in time and place in which the action of a story occurs” (1988:1415). Based on the three definitions from Meyer, Amigoni, and Perrine, setting can be divided into setting of place, setting of time, and social setting.

2.3 Dynamic Social Impact

Dynamic social impact theory explains the interaction of people in a certain area that can create cultural elements in consistent structure. It differing the dynamic iterative process of reciprocal and repetition process of influence. In the process, people influences each other in space and produces social structure. Latane states “closeness may increase the salience, the intensity, or the power of social influence by making a source of influence more immediate

(1996:17). In this theory states, there are 3 basic principles which increase the probability of giving influence, they are strength, immediacy, and numbers of the sources of influence.

3. METHODOLOGY

In this research, the writer uses library research. According to Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, library research is

Since the majority of students can find their source materials in libraries, a knowledge of the most important libraries, and familiarity with their catalogues as well as other reference books, is undoubtedly, in many ways, an important equipment of almost every study in literature (1963: 58).

Library research is the way to gather references through books such as journal, paper, essay, from the internet media such as website, blog, and e-book. It is intended to find the data and related references relevant to the final project that will be discussed by the writer.

To analyze the novel *Famous All Over Town*, the writer uses two methods: The Intrinsic aspect and extrinsic approach. The intrinsic aspect in this novel is used to determine the elements that construct a novel and focuses on character and setting. To analyze the extrinsic elements in this novel, the writer uses psychosocial approach. Howe states “psychosocial approaches are only concerned with people's inner, emotional life: the external world is also an important area of analysis and concern” (2002: 171). The psychosocial approach used in this final project is to find out how the society in violent culture affects the character development of Chato.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Character

Chato is classified as round character because he is the protagonist of the story, and he is often involved in a conflict. Chato is a 14 year old Mexican-American kid who lives at Shamrock in Los Angeles suburban area. “Jump and landed in the square of my fourteen

birthday, which was the last I spent on Shamrock Street” (Santiago, 1984: 8). Chato’s first appearance in this story is illustrated as a bad boy. When he is very sick because of stomachache disease called Peritonitis, Chato wants to be absent from the school but he is hesitated his teacher does not believe on him “I was too sick for school but with my reputation who believed me?” (Santiago, 1984: 18). Chato always gets bad grades in every course and has bad cooperation with the teacher. “In Social Studies, Life Science, and Spanish Language my grades was pure C and D, and I had a gang of U for Unsatisfactory in Cooperation, Personal Hygiene and Habbit of Thrift” (Santiago, 1984: 32).

Father is one of the major characters in this novel and he is classified as a round character because the character of Father contain complex idea that constructs the storyline. On his first appearance, he is described as a strong, straight, and possessive good father with strict moral and bad temper. He has brown skin, big body, heavy hand and steady jaws.

This man was my father, I proudly thought, his big round head with hat on top, his curly brown hair well-barbered with little tips of gray, his big square face with jaws like a rock crusher, arms thicker than my legs and what a pair of fist! No wonder he was King of the Aztecs’ club (Santiago, 1984: 38).

His bad temper is first figured out when his daughter Lena yells a dirty word in English, without doubt he slaps her hard. He does not like his daughter turning amoral by talking dirty words. “In our house it was the pants that ruled so when Lena said Shit right out loud in English, my father hit her. In the right way of course. He never closed his fist on any girl or woman” (Santiago, 1984: 10).

Lena is Chato’s older sister and a major character in this novel. She is classified as a round character because her character is unic, and have she have interesting personality. Lena is 17 year old. “Face facts. Lena was going to be 18” (Santiago, 1984: 101). Lena is being dropped out from high school because she hits a teacher who slaps Chato. She ends working at X-cell. “Because there’s no worse crime than hitting a teacher, unless maybe it’s hitting a

principal or possibly a custodian. So Lena quit school and went to work” (Santiago, 1984: 42) She figures out as a skinny girl with brilliant brain, independent spirit, big ego, bad temper and rebellious soul inside her. “Her smart remarks failed to please my father....My sister was a skinny as me except here and there, but what a temper” (Santiago, 1984: 10).

Pelon is one of Chato’s very best friends and can be classified as a round character because he contribute to develop the story by his witfull idea and speaking skill. He is portrayed as a sharp tongue actor and a troublemaker, one of the smartest members of the Jester of Shamrock. Pelon is an orphan kid, and it is never mentioned clearly how his parents died in this novel. He is the master for making troubles which makes Chato’s father hate him very much. “But Pelon was a genius for trouble...Of all my friends Pelon was my father’s least favorite. Three years back when the guy was orphaned” (Santiago, 1984: 12). However, in the middle of the story, bad luck came to him. When he flees from police officer at North Los Angeles, he is shot to death. That bad news comes to Lena from the police officer. “The other boy died this morning”, he said. It was quiet in there till Lena started screaming” (Santiago, 1984: 175).

4.2 Setting

Setting of time shows the reader the time when the story in the novel happens. When the story starts, it shows the situation on a Saturday afternoon in September, right at Chato’s 14th birthday when Father asks him to kill the chicken to prove he is a man. “It took place on a hot Saturday in September” (Santiago, 1984: 8). The story is over at the end of March when the bulldozer starts to raze Shamrock. The whole story approximately takes time about 6 months starting from September and ending at the end of March.

The bulldozers came for us the end of March. They started out across the street and down the block. The first day they ripped out Chuchu’s house and Don Tiburcio’s that

was Espie's father. They tore out his lemon tree that generously used to feed the street (Santiago, 1984: 276).

Setting of place takes place in several parts of Los Angeles such as Shamrock, Audubon Junior High School and Granma's house at Titalan, Mexico. The road where he lives is called Shamrock. Shamrock is a suburban place in Los Angeles where the people are mostly Mexican descends from low class. In Chato's point of view, Shamrock is the best street in Los Angeles. "We were the best street in all L.A. with cozy little homes on both side solid. Maybe they weren't too new or too fresh-painted but they were warm and lively, and when the trains passed by, how those little house used to shake, rattle and roll" (Santiago, 1984: 8). Another setting of place in this story takes place in Audubon Junior High School. Audubon Junior School is the place for both Shamrock and Sierra people. The school is portrayed as a low class suburb school that has high wall around, old and faint colored wall.

4.3 Social Impact in Danny Santiago's Novel

The Triggers of Violent Culture in Shamrock

The first trigger of violent culture in Shamrock society is low educations. Because of the low education they have, violent culture appears as a result. It influences the psychological of a person in Shamrock. "Always fighting or snoring, they forgot the Best Things In Life. They wasted twenty-three hours and forty minutes of every day. Possibly no education was the answer unless it was old age" (Santiago, 1984:126). Shamrock people waste almost all their time in a day, only 15 minutes left to do something useful like studying and having a good time with family. However, low education and violent culture are like two sides of the coin, they are inseparabl. Most of low educated people end up working in construction. Labor people are muscle minded men. They love to get drunk all night long to forget all their problems. Under the influences of alcohol, they become reckless and often

involved in a fight. Fight is an act of violence, and when it happens every time, the society will consider it as a common act.

The second trigger of violent culture in Shamrock is poverty. Poverty happens as a result of lack of education. They cannot have proper life because they do not have good jobs. “In all my life I had never been in really high class home like that one...The walls were rich creamy avocado color and not one crack or patch in all that plaster ... “All my life I’ve lived with second-hand,” (Santiago, 1984: 127). Through poverty, people will do anything to get money. The only choice they have is working in construction while most of them committing crimes like stealing, robbing, and selling drugs to get easy money.

The Forms of Violent Culture in Shamrock

The forms of violent culture in Shamrock are not far from actual low life society in real world where there are endless gang brawls, thefts, drug uses, and street fights. The first form of violent culture on Shamrock is the endless war between Shamrock gang and Sierra gang “They gonna Pearl Harbor us. I just barely got away” ... Motor racing, horn blasting, backfire, or was it guns? The Peewees dived for cover. Ladies snatched babies off of porches, screamed and ran inside. It was shot, now definitely” (Santiago, 1984:59). The battle between Shamrock and Sierra has been happening for 10 years. When the most of their “veteranos” end up in jail or dead, the war between them continues even today and it is considered as something right among them.

The Effects of Social Influence to Chato’s Character Development

The connection between Chato and Los Jester de Shamrock is very close. Los Jester de Shamrock is a gang formed in Shamrock and it has many members. It fulfills the requirement of number in Dynamic Social Impact theory by Bibb Latane, which will increase

the intensity in giving influences to someone. They are the one who has the responsibility for Chato's rebellious and tough behavior.

Pelon is Chato's best friend, and their relationship is very close. Among Los Jester de Shamrock, Pelon is the closest member to him. Chato even considers him like his own brother. "Three years back when the guy was orphaned, my father took him into our house and slept him on the couch with me like twins." (Santiago, 1984: 12). The closeness between them fulfills the requirement of immediacy in Dynamic Social Impact theory by Bibb Latane in which it will increase the intensity of giving influence. Pelon is the one who is responsible for Chato's bad behavior such as theft and drugs uses

The Forms of Chato's Positive Changes

The positive transformation of Chato's behavior is formed after all the bad source of influence has gone one by one, starting from the death of Pelon, living separately from his father, and the dissolution of Los Jester de Shamrock. The main source of positive change is when Shamrock has been destructed. The positive wave forms new personality of Chato. He starts his bright future and a career.

So back to Juvy. In my spare time I decorated it... That whole life was over so I began a new one in my sister's tiny house. It started out to be quite some barrels of snakes. In case you're curious, you could possibly read all about it someday. When and if I even get around to writing it down, that is (Santiago, 1984: 285).

At the end of story, Chato decides to start his writing career at youth prison "Juvy". He writes a story about his past experience in Shamrock.

5. CONCLUSION

After analyzing the novel *Famous All Over Town* by Danny Santiago, the writer can explain the major trigger of violence culture that influence the Chato character development are lack of education and poverty. Through poverty and lack of education, Shamrock society

produce violent culture such as endless war between Shamrock and Sierra gang, bloody street fight, drug usage, and stealing habit. The main character Chato that actually is a good boy turns into bad boy because he is affected by the people related to the violent culture. It leads him into violence act and criminal world. At the end of the story, the betterment of character Chato happens because the source of bad influence has gone starting with the dead of Pelon, the dissolution of Los Jaster de Shamrock, and there is no Shamrock anymore.

From the facts above, this prove that Shamrock society is the key of the storyline to construct the psychological development of character Chato. In this story Chato becomes the victim of bad social influence.

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