

Social Environment and Crime in Dickens' *Oliver Twist and Great Expectations*

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ABSTRACT

This study reads Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations* as crime novels by applying Sutherland's theory of "differential association" which postulates that criminal behavior is learned rather than inherited, and it is learned through interaction with other people within intimate personal groups in which one learns techniques and acquires motives for committing crimes. In *Oliver Twist*, Oliver is portrayed as a victim of the corrupted social environment as well as Monks' conspiracy with Fagin to drag him down to the underworld.; he is raised as an orphan in a workhouse and subjected to mistreatment. Thus, he unknowingly indulges in Fagin's gang and learns the crime of pickpocketing, as all the members of the gang come from a poor background and are taught how to commit crimes within the gang, their intimate social group. Nancy's poverty also compels her to join the gang, which ultimately leads to her death, as criminality is not innate in her personality. Criminality in Oliver's character is not innate either, so he ends up leading a decent life in a healthier environment. Like Fagin, Compeyson in *Great Expectations* favors the violation of law and has others indulge in the criminal world, thereby exploiting Magwitch and Orlick who turn into criminals. By presenting criminal characters with various motives and from harsh backgrounds, Dickens' fiction suggests that crime behavior has nothing to do with heredity. Rather, criminal characters are implicated in crimes as a result of the corrupted social environment forced on them, along with gangs and corrupt people they have to encounter.

1. Introduction

The nineteenth century, the Victorian Age, was a period of prosperity and expansion in the English history. With different innovations and changes that affected people's lives and structures of society, the advent of the Industrial Revolution paved the way to move from agriculture to industry, which affected not only the upper class, but also the middle and poor classes. Some people became richer and enjoyed extra privileges, while others suffered from cruel conditions. As a result, deprivation, dehumanization and criminality became representative of the Victorian society. Crimes were not only restricted to violent actions committed against law; social crimes drew the public attention and were parts of criminal behavior. The nineteenth century was plagued with crimes, and many writers such Charles Kingsley, Henry Mayhew and Charles Dickens included crime plots in their works. Dickens, as a social reformer and a social critic, presented the changes of the socio-economic system as well as the political and traditional values and highlighted the effects on the Victorian people. Dickens was a victim of such a corrupt society and felt compelled to bring awareness to the need for social change. He depicted reality in his writings and commented on the defects of society, giving readers the opportunity to explore problems and find solutions. Dickens's progression in his career from *Oliver Twist* (1837-39) to his last completed novel *Our Mutual Friend* (1865) was during the Victorian period, and he managed to expose the consequences of such a corrupt environment on people's relationships and the bad influences on society.

This study investigates two of Dickens's novels, namely *Oliver Twist* (1837-39) and *Great Expectations* (1860-61), trying to answer the controversial questions raised by criminologists, writers and psychologists whether society or criminal personality is the main

cause of crime. *Oliver Twist* is a social criticism novel in which Dickens criticizes the hypocrisy of society and the legislative system through the story of the orphan child, Oliver. By presenting the misery of the Victorian society in this novel, Dickens succeeds in highlighting the role of the environment in creating criminals. In *Great Expectations*, Dickens depicts a world in which individuals are victims of society and are implicated in moral and social crimes like murder, robbery and child abuse. Dickens shows that individuals who are supposed to adhere to the high values of society commit crimes against others, portraying corruption among upper classes and depicting how the poor have become victims of their society. Dickens's concern has been to present these serious problems in society in an attempt to highlight the main causes of crimes and to find solutions. Various studies have been conducted to determine the primary roots of crimes. Different theories and explanations exist; however, this study focuses on the relationship between society and crime. The study of criminology is primarily concerned with determining the cause(s) of crime; as a result, several schools have been established based on the causes of crimes. "Differential Association" is a theory introduced by Edwin Sutherland, presenting nine principles and arguing that people become criminals as a result of their interactions with criminal patterns.

2. Literature Review

Crime is a social phenomenon that has occurred among people of different religions, races, ages, civilizations and traits since the dawn of time. The term "criminology" was introduced by Raffaele Garofalo in 1885 and later by Paul Topinard in 1887 (Friedrichs et al., 2017). Criminologists carry out research, formulate theories and analyze data to figure out what causes criminal activity and how to avoid it in a reasonable and efficient way rather than be concerned with solving the crime (Roufa, 2020).

The objectives of criminology have resulted in the formation of numerous viewpoints that examine various aspects of deviant behavior and help to effectively address the subject of crime. Classical, biological, psychological and sociological theories are the most common types of criminological theories; each one takes a different approach to explain the causes of crime. That is why from a legal, social or psychological perspective, the definition of crime may differ. Sutherland, an American sociologist and criminologist, suggests that "learning in some form played an important role in an individual's engagement in delinquent or criminal conduct" (Friedrichs et al., 2017, p. 34).

Sutherland (1949) has tried to prove that the connection with criminals rather than non-criminals leads to the formation of habitual criminal behaviors. His objective has been to define "the factors which, being common to the crimes of the rich and the poor, are most significant for a general theory of criminal behavior" (p. 10). Sutherland has introduced the principles of "differential association" which is a crime-development theory that attempts to explain criminal behavior in terms of the individual's personal experiences. So, the theory of "differential association" has been proposed "as a general theory of crime that should explain engagement in crimes of all kinds, by different classes of people" (Friedrichs et al., 2017, p. 37). Because crime is viewed as a taught behavior, the idea can also be applied to the rich. Sutherland has attempted to demonstrate that the length of time and frequency of contact with criminals are significant factors in explaining criminal behavior. Sutherland's theory of "differential association" has been "influential in shifting explanations of crime, from biogenetic and psychiatric explanations to sociological explanations" (p. 42). According to Sutherland, "bad housing, mental deficiency, alcoholic parents, bad associates, poverty, broken homes, or some combination of these or other factors might, in any given case, cause delinquency" (Gaylord, 1988, p. 115).

Crimes pervaded the nineteenth century and many writers have employed crime plots in their writings. Dickens, in many of his writings has portrayed various crimes like robbery, murder, child abuse, prostitution and domestic violence. As a social reformer and a social critic, he has managed to show the world of crime and its causes and consequences during the early Victorian era and to depict criminals from different backgrounds. Dickens, unlike Dostoevsky who has developed his characters according to the idea that the character and fate are the same thing, believes that one is the product of one's environment (Squires, 1938, p. 184). Enomoto (2013) has demonstrated that Dickens "asserts his assumption of the strong bond which subsides between crime and social environment" (p. 48). Furthermore, Van Horn (1973) in the study of *Little Dorrit*, *Great Expectations* and *Our Mutual Friend* has concluded that evil is the result of society. He has also explained that society has an influence on individuals more than humans and institutions.

Dickens, as a social reformer, tackles the underworld of the Victorian era in most of his novels. In *Oliver Twist*, which was published monthly as a serial in *Bentley's Miscellany* between 1837 and 1839, Dickens tries to "debunk crime and the Criminal" (Squires, 1938, p. 182). In this novel, he has attempted to draw the public attention to the plight of people during the Industrial Revolution and to show the shortcomings of the Poor Law of 1834, demonstrating that defects in the social system have led to poverty which has led to crime. He suggests that crimes committed by people such as Fagin, Sikes and Monks are attributed to poverty. In addition, he shows how the authorities separate married people, how children are neglected and how starvation prevails all around. Dickens shows that the power of the surrounding is more dominant than the power of individuals. By assuming that materialistic values are more important than feelings, "people gradually result in the crime of dehumanization.

This may take a variety of forms, including ignoring the feelings of others, manipulating them for personal advantage, and physically abusing them" (Van Horn, 1973, p. 2).

In *Great Expectations*, which was published as a weekly serial in *All the Year Round* from 1860 to 1861 and then was published in three volumes, Dickens suggests that crime is not only generated because of personal motives, but also as a result of social ills. Besides, crime is not restricted to a specific class, which proves that society is the cause behind most of the crimes. Commenting on *Great Expectations*, Van Ghent (1953) points out that there are "two kinds of crime from Dickens' two chief themes, the crime of parent against child, and the calculated social crime" (p. 165). Dickens has made this novel as a commentary on his time, social structure, crimes, prisons and women.

By investigating two of Dickens' novels, *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations*, one could find that crime is a main theme whether it is social or moral. This study considers these two novels to be crime novels, for they portray the real world of crime and examine criminal characters from different classes. Besides, the study employs Sutherland's theory of "differential association" to expose society's influence on characters who have committed crimes and to investigate the causes behind their crimes.

3. Methodology

Dickens has always tried in his writings to criticize the corruption that has pervaded the Victorian period; this is very evident in his two novels *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations*, as both novels are full of images of various crimes. Therefore, this study reads these two novels from a social perspective, applying the theory of "differential association" by the sociologist and the influential criminologist Sutherland. The theory of "differential association" through its principles postulates that criminal behavior is learned rather than inherited. It is learned through interaction with other people within intimate personal groups in which one learns techniques and acquires motives for committing crimes and delinquencies. In addition, the theory suggests that one becomes a criminal when one's association with definitions favorable to the violation of law exceeds one's association with definitions unfavorable to the violation of the law. The present study applies these principles to Dickens' selected novels, thereby providing a reading of Dickens' novels as crime novels.

4. Results and Discussion

From the very beginning of *Oliver Twist*, Dickens announces that Oliver represents a victim of society and the legal system. In addition, Oliver is portrayed as a victim of the parish surgeon and nurse who cause him to be "badged and ticketed ... a parish child –the orphan of a workhouse–the humble half-starved drudge – to be cuffed and buffeted through the world – despised by all, and pitied by none" (Dickens, 1994, p. 3). From this point onwards, Oliver is marked as "the victim of a systematic course of treachery and deception – he was brought up by hand" (p. 3). So, Dickens criticizes the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 which has involved separating families and married couples who have wanted to try to enter workhouses where labour, food and clothes are available in scanty quantities. Dickens's description of the workhouse, Mr Bumble and Mrs Mann serves to show the defects of the legislative system and illustrates how the charitable institutions treat the poor as savage criminals whereas in reality it is the opposite; the officials themselves are the true criminals for they violate the laws to serve their interests. What is considered as a crime against human principles and law is shown when Mrs Mann steals the poor children's food and clothes. Moreover, the workhouse, which is supposed to be a shelter, turns to be the first place that forces people into the world of crime. The panoramic description of inhumanity against poor children is reflected in letting them starve, be covered with filth and be exposed to disease; "Oliver Twist and his companions suffered the tortures of slow starvation for three months; at last they got so voracious and wild with hunger" (p. 10). Mr Bumble, the beadle, presumes that lower classes are by nature criminal and filthy, and he predicts that Oliver is a "savage" and outrageous, because he dares asking for "more" (p. 9). Oliver is seen as a promising criminal by others for asking for more food.

Oliver's horrible journey starts with Mr Sowerberry, the undertaker, to whom he is apprenticed. Out of jealousy, the other apprentice Noah Claypole insults Oliver's mother, which makes Oliver attack him. As a result, he is kept "into the dust-cellar, and there locked him up" (p. 39). Oliver's anger is excused, but what they do to him is not justified; beating and detention are his penalty. A boy like Oliver, born in such an environment destroying his soul and body, does not have a chance to escape; "The boy is constantly imperiled by the adverse circumstances of his birth and early development" (Squires, 1938, p. 148). These small incidents in the novel pave the way for greater incidents that prove how environment plays a major role in creating criminal behavior. Through Oliver, Dickens tries to point out that a human being is a social element; therefore, he engages the environmental elements in analyzing the criminal progress. Oliver runs out heading for London where he meets the Artful Dodger by chance. Dickens gives an adequate illustration of the stranger physical description to allude to his intrinsic qualities which reflect his villainy. The Dodger notices that Oliver is hungry and tired and needs a place to settle in, so he takes the opportunity to drag him down to the underworld of London. The Dodger offers him a lodging and traps him to the lodge of Fagin. Fagin manages to trap the homeless and outcast poor children to be members of the gang, and he provides them with food, drink and shelter.

Edwin Sutherland proposed the theory of "differential association" to explain the concept of crime. The theory comprises nine principles, mainly suggesting that crime is learned through interactions with those who view crime as acceptable and who teach individuals the techniques for committing crimes. According to the first principle of criminology, "criminal behavior is learned. Negatively, this means that criminal behavior is not inherited" (Sutherland et al., 1992, p. 88). Oliver and other members of the gang are not criminals by nature; rather, they learn the techniques of criminality by Fagin who makes use of the harsh backgrounds they come from. The principles of criminology also postulate that "criminal behavior is learned in interaction with other persons in a process of communication" and "the principle part of the learning of criminal behavior occurs within intimate personal groups" (p. 89). Moreover, the learning of criminal behavior includes "techniques of committing the crime, which are sometimes very complicated, sometimes simple" as well as "the specific direction of motives, drives, rationalizations, and attitudes" (p. 89). Gangs exemplify an intimate personal group in which members can learn certain behavior through interacting and communicating with each other. Oliver, Nancy and the other members of Fagin's gang are taught the techniques for committing the crimes of robbery and pickpocketing in their interactions within the gang.

Squires (1938) states in his article "Charles Dickens as a Criminologist" that "for Dickens, the environment, potent as it is, and as he admits it to be, must play second fiddle to 'original nature'" (p. 185). The portrayal of criminals in *Oliver Twist* indicates that there are severe conditions of life which force people to be criminals such as poverty. Oliver is a clear example of Fagin's exploitation; Fagin tells Oliver: "you would like to be able to make pocket-handkerchiefs as easy as Charley Bates" (Dickens, 1994, p. 56). Fagin, the master of his career, starts to teach innocent Oliver how to be a great man and how to be a pickpocket. Consequently, Fagin's evil and criminality are forced on Oliver. The first crime has been committed when both The Artful Dodger and Charley Bates along with Oliver go on a mission of robbing people on the streets. Oliver understands that what he has been trained for is robbery. Dickens wants to prove that although Oliver has been raised in a poor workhouse and suffered the harshness of life there, "he was not theoretically acquainted with the beautiful axiom that self-preservation is the first law of nature. If he had been, perhaps he would have been prepared for this" (p. 60).

The gang once again tries to drive Oliver to other crimes, convincing him that it is easier for him to "make [his] fortun' out of hand" and "retire on [his] property" (p. 112). The innocent boy with his purity is forced to commit crimes. Oliver represents most of abandoned, outcast and deprived children during the Victorian era. When they try to persuade Oliver of robbery, he refuses, which confuses them: "you've been brought up bad, 'said the Dodger... Fagin will make something of you, though, or you'll be the first he ever had that turned out unprofitable" (p. 113). Dickens here wants to highlight the prevailing misconception in the Victorian society that corruption and vice are born in poor people. So, when Oliver has to participate in the second crime, burgling the Maylie's house, he "fall[s] upon his knees, he pray[s] Heaven to spare him from such deeds" (p. 124). Oliver is not willing to indulge in the world of crime; Miller (1958) points out that "Oliver's volition is the volition of passive resistance. Oliver wills to live, and therefore resists violently all the attempts of the world to crush him or bury him or make him into a thief" (p. 43). In addition, Pykett (2002) states that "Oliver's experiences are designed to demonstrate how the law (and especially the New Poor Law) and a classbound judiciary on the one hand, and hunger, need and social exclusion on the other, conspire to create criminals" (p. 48).

Poverty, which is the cause of miseries of poor classes, prompts not only men but also compels women to commit crimes. Dickens shows the relationship between criminal law and women through the character of Nancy. Nancy violates the norms of the Victorian society where a woman has to be an "angel in the house." Most of the common crimes committed by women in the Victorian era are linked to prostitution. Emsley (2005) states that "Parent- Duchatelet and William Acton both noted that prostitution was a transitory stage for most women who followed the 'profession' during the nineteenth century; women became prostitutes because of temporary economic hardship" (p. 180). During the Victorian Era, there has been a parallel between "male criminal and female prostitute" (p. 79). Although prostitution is not in itself considered a crime, it has been counted as "victimless offences" related to drunkenness, street gaming, street selling, petty theft and soliciting (p. 15). Dickens, in *Oliver Twist*, introduces the story of Nancy who joins the gang and acts as a juvenile prostitute involved in a criminal world. Fagin does with Nancy what he does with other poor children. He exploits their need, provides them with a shelter and trains them to be members of the gang. Nancy reveals her sufferings and accuses Fagin of what she has reached to, saying: "'I thieved for you when I was a child not half as old as this!' pointing to Oliver 'I have been in the same trade, and in the same service, for twelve years since'" (Dickens, 1994, p. 100). She adds: "It is my living; and the cold, wet, dirty streets are my home; and you're the wretch that drove me to them long ago, and that'll keep me there, day and night, day and night, till I die!" (p. 101). The portrayal of Nancy as a criminal is presented by Dickens through her role in the gang. Fagin leads her to the underworld and lets her believe that "it is [her] living" (p. 101). Priestman (2003) states that "crime is both a social construct and the product of inequitable social conditions" (p. 23). Being parentless from a poor background and trapped in the world of crime, Nancy is doomed to sink in the world of vice and crime. Nancy emphasizes this point: "When such as I, who have no certain roof but the coffin-lid, and no friend in sickness or death but the hospital nurse, set our rotten hearts on any man, and let him fill the place

that has been a blank through all our wretched lives, who can hope to cure us?" (Dickens, 1994, p. 258). Raised in such an environment, Nancy has no other choice but to be a member of the gang. Out of poverty, she is aware that if she has not been with Fagin's gang, she will be living in miserable conditions in the workhouse. Nancy's work as a prostitute is portrayed as the product of environment conditions; "Fagin, who had led her, step by step, deeper and deeper down into an abyss of crime and misery, whence was no escape" (p. 283).

To highlight the role of environment in forming the personality of the woman, Dickens presents Rose Maylie who is an orphan, but unlike Nancy she is raised by Mrs Maylie and surrounded by people who care for her. Rose is saved from living the life Nancy leads. Ayres (1998) points out that "more accurately, the good people surround her and contain her within a proper domestic sphere so that she will never be a social misfit like Nancy and Agnes [Rose's sister]" (p. 124). Dickens tries to portray two orphan girls in the same society but with contrasting circumstances. Rose is rescued from a harsh destiny with the love of the caring family of Mrs Maylie while Nancy, who lives in a vicious world and is deprived of love since childhood, has no other choice but to work as a prostitute, which makes her a victim of circumstances and society. Nancy emphasizes this when she says:

'Thank Heaven upon your knees, dear lady,' cried the girl, 'that you had friends to care for and keep you in your childhood, and that you were never in the midst of cold and hunger, and riot and drunkenness, and—and— something worse than all—as I have been from my cradle. I may use the word, for the alley and the gutter were mine, as they will be my death-bed.' (Dickens, 1994, p. 255)

Although Nancy is a member of the criminal gang, goodness still resides in her heart. She feels sorry for helping the gang in kidnapping Oliver, saying: "I wish I had been struck dead in the street or had changed places with them we passed so near tonight, before I had lent a hand in bringing him here. He's a thief, a liar, a devil, all that's bad, from this night forth" (p. 100). The implication that Dickens here wants to prove is that criminality is something acquired not innate. To rescue Oliver, she visits the Maylies, risking her life. Fagin prompts Sikes to kill her in order to prevent divulgence. Contrasting Nancy's good nature to Sike's criminality proves that both characters go under the same conditions of the underworld of London; however, the motives behind criminality differ; once self-interest motivates criminal deeds, appalling consequences will result.

Different crimes are presented and several criminal characters are introduced in distinct circumstances and social conditions to validate what Dickens wants to prove. Most Victorian people believe that crime is rooted in poor classes. It has been familiar that "family trait" plays a fatal role in originating peoples' future. Dickens constantly draws the reader's attention to clarify social concepts and whether crime is the outcome of "nature or nurture." To illustrate this point, Dickens, through the progression of events, presents a parallel between two characters: the protagonist Oliver and his half-brother, the antagonist Monks. Monks, who belongs to the middle class, is the offspring of a loveless marriage and has been raised to hate his sole half-brother. Though both brothers share genetic characteristics, they are exposed to different environmental conditions (Swift, 1999, p. 12). Monks is described as the devil, sick soul, and mysterious criminal. He plans to corrupt Oliver to deprive him of his part of the inheritance. He conspires against his half-brother with Fagin to "[keep] him here among the rest [gang], and [make] a sneaking, sniveling pickpocket of him at once" (Dickens, 1994, p. 163) so that he violates the condition of the will.

Through his adventure from the workhouse to the underworld of the gang, *Oliver Twist* faces sordid criminals, child abuse and exploitation; however, with the help of his father's best friend and his mother's sister, he manages to avoid sinking deep into the world of crime. Oliver proves his pure nature and his morality despite the difficulties he has encountered. In portraying a real world of crime and criminals, Dickens keenly manages to give a parallel world of his characters to prove his point of view. He does not only want to criticize the characters, but also the institutions of his time, and he conveys a clear message that the world of crime is not related to a certain class.

As mentioned before, Sutherland's theory of "differential association" stresses that "criminality is not a biological, psychological or climatic phenomenon," as individuals "acquire patterns of criminal behavior in the same way they acquire patterns of lawful behavior-through learning in interaction with other persons" (Cressey, 1952, p. 43). The idea that criminal behavior is acquired is also stressed in Dickens's other novel, *Great Expectations*. In this novel, Dickens presents the world of crime and criminals and depicts the causes and results of crimes. Compeyson, Magwitch and Orlick are convicts who have committed different crimes against law for several reasons. Dickens, through visualizing a small sector of society, shows the devastating influence of the environment on individuals by extending the picture to a wider sector and presenting different classes and characters. Abel Magwitch's tragic life is related to his choices which have been forced upon him. Magwitch tells Pip: "I've been carted here and carted there, and put out of this town and put out of that town, and stuck in the stocks, and whipped and worried and drove. I've no more notion where I was born ... I first became aware of myself ... a thieving turnips for my living" (Dickens, 2008, p. 657); this indicates the cruel circumstances he has been through. Makati (2008) points out that "Magwitch's character is Dickens' revelation that from childhood, all that the poor are exposed to is crime. Therefore, members of the lower class are stereotyped as criminals from an early age" (p. 15). Dickens, in his work, criticizes the wrong conventions of society and the institutions which

are supposed to protect people and serve their needs. The narration of Magwitch proves that one is the creation of one's society; instead of being helped to have a good life, Magwitch has to steal turnip to survive and is punished for that. So, Van Horn (1973) states that "prejudice toward Magwitch was not only condoned by society—it was also institutionalized by the judicial system" (p. 32). Magwitch has a family which has been distorted by his wife's jealousy. They have a daughter, who turns lately to be Estella, whom his wife pretends killing as a revenge of her husband's betrayal. Magwitch keeps hiding because he does not want to testify against his wife, and later Compeyson makes use of his situation and exploits him. Hagan (1954) says that "an important element at root of Magwitch's career is great social evil: the evil of poverty, and the evil of a corruptible judicial system. Though not entirely so, Magwitch is certainly, in part, a victim" (pp. 170-171).

Though Magwitch is a criminal, criminality is not something innate in his personality. On the other hand, Compeyson is wicked by nature, favoring the violation of law, and despite the privileges he has as a gentleman, he is a criminal by his own free will. Although he has not participated in any crime, he is worse than any other criminal in the novel. Compeyson is like Fagin, the leader of the gang in *Oliver Twist*, in that he "keep[s] his own legs out of and get[s] the profits from and let[s] another man in for, [is] Compeyson's business" (Dickens, 2008, p. 661). His appearance as a gentleman from the upper class conceals his true identity as a criminal, and his "business was the swindling, handwriting forging, stolen bank-note passing, and such-like" (p. 661). Dickens describes his criminality which has been covered by his manners: "[h]e'd no more heart than a iron file, he was as cold as death, and he had the head of the Devil afore mentioned" (p. 661). Here, he wants to show that criminality among the upper class pervades due to the power and advantages they have. Van Horn (1973) states that "the characters in this novel persist in venerating false principles and in dehumanizing others for the sake of those principles" (p. 30). As a result, Compeyson uses his class to manipulate others and the law agents to achieve his goals, which highlights the point that "society's corruption is less widespread, in that evil seems to be concentrated in the law and the gentlemanly class" (p. 30). Dickens presents different kinds of crimes committed by Compeyson. The first crime is committed against Miss Havisham, who is deceived by his gentility. After stripping her of her fortune, Compeyson jilts her on her wedding day without any consideration for her feelings.

Magwitch enters the world of crime out of poverty and need, and although he participates in crimes with Compeyson, he does that to survive whereas Compeyson knows the corrupted law and manages not to be involved directly in crimes. So, Compeyson and the law play the role of the oppressor against Magwitch in punishing him because of his low class. Magwitch says:

When the verdict come, warn't it Compeyson as was recommended to mercy on account of good character and bad company ... And when we 're sentenced, ain't it him as gets seven year, and me fourteen, and ain't it him as the Judge is sorry for, because he might a done so well, and ain't it me as the Judge perceives to be a old offender of violent passion, likely to come to worse. (Dickens, 2008, p. 667)

Van Horn (1973) concludes that Magwitch "understands that justice will not be executed in his case. He, who had to work for Compeyson in order to eat, was being considered the real criminal, while Compeyson was being treated as a victim" (p. 39). By presenting two criminals from different classes, who are accomplices in the same crimes, Dickens shows the role of bad environment in creating criminals. At the end, when Magwitch tries to get out of the country, he encounters Compeyson and kills him to protect himself, thus achieving the justice that society has failed to apply. Squires (1938) says that:

Compeyson plays the Devil to the bitter end, and meets a death in keeping with dramatic justice ... Magwitch did not, according to all the evidence, intend to kill Compeyson... But once under the water, locked in deadly struggle, there can be no doubt that Magwitch did what anyone would have done under the circumstances: kill his mortal enemy. (p. 181)

Magwitch has been arrested and sentenced to death; Dickens shows how "the judge condemns society's victims and by his conviction that they should be held responsible for their crimes" (Van Horn, 1973, p. 50), and that their story is a complete picture of the relationship between individuals and the corrupted environment.

Dickens succeeds in presenting various pictures of criminal characters that parallel the real world. He introduces Dolge Orlick who works as a journeyman in Joe's forge where he has been subjected to Mrs Gargery's abuse and offense. Dickens describes him mostly as "dogged ... suspicious, jealous to an extreme degree of any competitor, fearfully revengeful, and of distinctly homicidal disposition" (Squires, 1938, p. 175). All these personal qualities are seen through his many criminal deeds. At first, he tells Pip, when he was a child, that "the Devil lived in a black corner of the forge, and that he knew the fiend very well: also that it was necessary to make up the fire, once in seven years, with a live boy, and that [he] might consider [him]self fuel" (Dickens, 2008, p. 215). Without any regard to his young age or what it may cause to his mental state, he manages to terrify Pip just for his enjoyment. The descriptions that Dickens gives for Orlick as "obstinate disposition, Cain, the Wandering Jew and morose" foreshadow that some crimes are about to come. After a hard argument between Orlick and Mrs Gargery, she provokes him with her insulting words so he replies calling her "foul shrew, Mother Gargery" (p. 218). Orlick attacks her "where she had been knocked down by a tremendous blow on the back of the head" (p. 228). This crime has not been revealed until lately when another crime is about to happen. Squires (1938) states that "Orlick had planned his crime with sufficient care so as to commit it

under cover of darkness" (p. 176). Dickens exposes Orlick's wicked nature, yet he shows how the surrounding prompts these traits; Orlick's deeds are the consequence of his environment. McCarthy (1971) points out that Orlick and other criminals like him "held that the fault of their condition lay not in them, but in bad laws, defective social arrangements, inefficient administration and general neglect. In short they were the creatures of their environment" (p. 4). Many incidents lead Orlick more to the world of crime. Pip tries to put Orlick's chance with Biddy down out of jealousy; moreover, he makes him lose his job while working at Miss Havisham's house. As an act of retaliation, Orlick joins the world of crime with Compeyson to take revenge against both Pip and Miss Havisham; he plans to kill Pip by sending him an anonymous note to meet him in the limekiln. He admits his crime against Mrs Gargery, saying: "I come upon her from behind, as I come upon you to-night. / giv' it her! I left her for dead, and if there had been a lime kiln as nigh her as there is nigh you, she shouldn't have come to life again" (Dickens, 2008, p. 815). After he fails to kill Pip, Orlick robs Pumblechook's house with a gang and gets arrested and put in the county jail.

Bloom (2005) clarifies that Dickens has "sought to define and question the motivations and forces behind a rise in social status and the prejudices surrounding the divide between high society and the base criminal world" (p. 13). The story of Pip, the orphan boy, portrays how the power of the surrounding affects his decisions and expectations. The novel "depict[s] crimes committed against the child and adolescent in the name of civilization, normality and morality" (Lendvov, 1976, p. 20). Pip, during his childhood, is victimized through his relationships with his sister, Mrs Joe, Miss Havisham and other characters related to them. As Miller (1958) puts it, Pip, as a little boy, "feels guilty because he has no given status or relation to nature, to family, or to the community. He is, in everyone's eyes, in the way, superfluous" (p. 252). Pip is abused by his sister during his childhood out of her belief that he should be raised only according to manner. Such a crime against him makes him have less self-esteem and a passive personality. His sister projects her fury on him without any predictable excuses. Dickens manages through most of his novels to portray crimes of society against children. Pip is like Oliver Twist in that both are orphans mistreated, deprived of their childhood and subjected to a criminal world, so both children are the outcome of a bad environment. To escape this prejudice, Pip aspires to a new position that will give him a new identity. However,

all of these things are foregrounded in Pip's narrative of how he was brought up by hand, experienced generalized feelings of guilt for the crime of being alive, as well as specific feelings of guilt for the 'crimes' he does commit (from stealing pork pies under duress to betraying Joe and the life of the forge) Dickens is concerned with a pervasive criminality, and with the social, psychological, and even physiological determinants of crime. (Pykett, 2002, p. 171)

Being raised with feelings of remorse, shame and disgrace, Pip's progress from childhood to adulthood is portrayed as destructive. The oppression that pip has been subjected to creates in him repressed emotions of hatred and anger that are manifested in criminal fantasies of punishment and killing others.

Pip believes that his salvation is about to come when he has the opportunity to visit Miss Havisham and her adopted daughter Estella who is a victim of Miss Havisham, as "Estella was set to wreak Miss Havisham's revenge on men ... Miss Havisham sent her with the malicious assurance that she was beyond the reach of all admirers" (Dickens, 2008, p. 577). As a passive and submissive character, Estella clearly tells Pip that they are raised only to fulfill society's conventions ; she says: "we have no choice, you and I, but to obey our instructions. We are not free to follow our own devices, you and I" (p. 505). Hagan (1954) states that

Injustice is thus at the heart of the matter-injustice working upon and through the elders of Pip and Estella, and continuing its reign in the children themselves Dickens [is] moved by a terrifying vision of the wide extent to which pollution can penetrate the different, apparently separate and unrelated, members of society. (p. 173)

So, the traditional patriarchal system that gives the male the power to control a woman's life and even her feelings is reflected by Miss Havisham's way of raising Estella. She uses her social rank and money to affect Estella; she says: "I stole her heart away and put ice in its place" (Dickens, 2008, p. 761). Miss Havisham also mistreats Pip who says: "I was so humiliated, hurt, spurned, offended, angry, sorry ... that tears started to my eyes" (p. 119). Brown (1977) points out that

Within the private world, Pip and Estella are manipulated as instruments of personal revenge, dolls forced to play leading roles in a cruel drama directed by Miss Havisham for her own perverted satisfaction As a result both Pip and Estella become passive objects, devoid of personal will and initiative. (p. 259)

All these incidents investigated in the selected two novels by Dickens show the role which the corrupted environment plays in driving characters to indulge in crime as well as unjust behavior against each other, proving that crimes are never inherited; they are rather learned and forced upon individuals.

5. Conclusion

In his novels, Dickens manages to present two different classes who participate in the same crimes to shed lights on some misconceptions in the Victorian period. His novels suggest that criminality has nothing to do with heredity; the surrounding environment has the most influence on one's behavior. Therefore, the present study has applied Sutherland's theory of

"differential association" to Dickens' *Oliver Twist* and *Great Expectations*, reading these two novels as crime novels. These two works depict characters who learn criminal behavior within gangs, which exemplify intimate personal groups in which one learns the techniques for committing crimes, according to Sutherland's principles of criminology. Oliver is taught how to pickpocket in Fagin's gang after being victimized and mistreated as an orphan in a workhouse. The corrupted social environment Oliver and Nancy are forced to encounter contribute to their involvement in criminal acts. Moreover, Compeyson in *Great Expectations* is like Fagin in that he exploits Magwitch, Orlick and other characters and has them indulge in criminal acts. Dickens' selected novels highlight the role of the surrounding in affecting characters' behavior and their course of life. The influence of a corrupted environment and its role in creating criminal characters in literary works should be investigated further in future studies by tackling works set in the twenty or twenty-first centuries to give support for the idea that criminality is learned rather than inherited.

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