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# The Minority Anti-Hero: Race and Behavioral Justification in Power

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**THE MINORITY ANTI-HERO: RACE AND BEHAVIORAL JUSTIFICATION  
IN *POWER***

by

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**SUBMITTED TO SCRIPPS COLLEGE IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE  
DEGREE OF BACHELOR OF ARTS**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the minority anti-hero on television as it relates to concepts of race and behavioral justification. Previous studies have addressed the ways in which whiteness functions advantageously for popular criminal anti-heroes on television, yet little is known regarding the effects of race for similar characters of color. I hypothesized that accessibility of the criminal stereotype does not allow men of color to inhabit the same immoral status as white characters without penalty. I subsequently analyzed the first season from the Starz series *Power* and conducted a textual analysis using theories of race and hegemonic masculinity to compare the behavioral justification of Ghost and Tommy, the minority and white anti-heroes featured in the show. Results show that *Power* develops a dichotomous relationship between the minority and white anti-hero based in work priorities, attitude towards violence, and public image. This relationship ultimately serves to distance Ghost from stereotype and deflect the characteristics onto Tommy, whose whiteness allows him to absorb criminality with less cultural consequence. While this strategy broadens the palatability of the show, I find that it is ultimately harmful for minority representation on television. Implications of media representation and directions for future research are discussed.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

A quick survey of television characters today will demonstrate the fixation audiences have with anti-heroes. Yesterday's heroic protagonists have ceded their positions to the morally ambiguous characters that dominate television screens today. The immense popularity of *The Sopranos* has been credited with ushering in what has been labeled a "Golden Age" (Bradley, 2014). This era is supported not only by audience buzz but also acclaim from television's biggest critics. In fact, the Emmy award for best actor in a drama series has overwhelmingly been awarded to actors playing anti-heroes since the turn of the century (Feinberg, 2017). Female anti-heroes, on the other hand, often star in light comedic series or play the counterpart to an even more immoral man (Nikolas, 2013). While it is no secret that men have cornered the market on morally ambiguous protagonists, it is often overlooked that the leading roles in these series are typically white men.

The association between the anti-hero and whiteness does not seem to be a coincidence. Studies in social psychology and criminality have revealed racial biases in news coverage of criminal suspects that allow for the contextualization and even victimization of white crime, but the homogenization of minority suspects (Chiricos & Eschholz, 2002; Dixon, 2015; Entman, 1992; Gilliam & Iyengar, 2000). Given this pattern, it is no surprise that white men occupy the majority of anti-hero roles on television, as explaining the circumstances of white criminality can span seasons. It seems that minority characters do not enjoy the same privilege; Black and Latino men are typically subordinated into hyper-aggressive caricatures which thus assigns

criminality as a dispositional characteristic. The one-dimensionality of a stereotype does not have the flexibility needed to sustain a leading role. Seemingly notable exceptions, such as Omar Little of *The Wire*, occupy supporting character roles within the narrative of white protagonists.

Previous studies have addressed the ways in which whiteness functions for anti-heroes in shows such as *Breaking Bad*, *Sons of Anarchy*, and *The Shield* (Johnson, 2017; Wayne, 2014). Yet little to no literature exists that explores the minority anti-hero within the context of this genre, which may be due to the relative nonexistence of such shows. Given the frequency with which people of color are portrayed stereotypically on television (Tukachinsky, Maestro, & Yarchi, 2015), it is of particular interest to consider the ways in which a minority criminal is portrayed as a protagonist. This study seeks to explore these topics through a textual analysis of *Power*. How is the minority protagonist in *Power* portrayed in comparison to the white counterpart? What may explain potential differences?

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The rise of anti-heroes on television complicate traditional understandings of the audience/character relationship. Anti-heroes are those characters that audiences support in spite of, or even because of, the moral ambiguity they demonstrate. Communication scholars Shafer and Raney (2012) propose that enjoyment of an anti-hero narrative has less to do with the audience's moral judgement of the character, as Affective Disposition Theory would suggest (Raney, 2017), and more to do with previous exposure to similar moral disengagement schema. Moral disengagement describes a set of processes that lead one to overlook immoral actions, and these processes can apply to television narratives (Raney, 2004). Shafer and Raney (2012) assert that these schemas contain moral disengagement cues which signal to the audience that the immoral behaviors of a character can be justified, therefore allowing the enjoyment and support of the narrative. These cues have led audiences to justify most anything, from the serial infidelity of *Mad Men's* Don Draper to the serial murders of the title character in *Dexter*.

Wayne (2014) explains that "since the debut of *The Sopranos* (1997-2000), original hour-long dramas with narratives centered on morally ambiguous, white, male protagonists have become increasingly common on US cable television" (p. 206). Series such as *Breaking Bad* (and its spin-off *Better Call Saul*), *Sons of Anarchy*, and *House of Cards* feature the stories of extreme anti-heroes, those who knowingly commit criminal acts with a disregard for the law: a drug dealer, corrupt lawyer, a gun-running motorcycle club, and a crooked politician, respectively. These shows focus their

narrative on white men committing real, and often violent, crime. Yet, each of these shows maintain emotionally invested audiences. In one of the most public displays of this investment, fans of *Breaking Bad* held a mock funeral in Albuquerque for the main character, Walter White, and placed a flattering obituary in the local paper (Gomez, 2013; Hare, 2013). Meanwhile, fans of *Dexter* can purchase blood-splattered home décor and anatomical accessories to display their devotion (Donnelly, 2012). Yet the simplest example of audience investment is pure viewership, which each of the aforementioned shows enjoys. Both *Dexter* and *Breaking Bad* set viewership records in their series finales, with the latter reaching a staggering 10.3 million viewers (Hibberd, 2013; O’Connell, 2013). This popularity, it seems, is no coincidence.

One commonality of such beloved television anti-heroes is their definitive whiteness, a socially constructed position that Communication and Sociology scholars find is rather uninterrogated (Guess, 2006; Nakayama & Krizek, 1995). Nakayama and Krizek (1995) write that whiteness “affects the everyday fabric of our lives but resists, sometimes violently, any extensive characterization that would allow for the mapping of its contours. It wields power but endures as a largely unarticulated position” (p. 291). This absence of characterization allows for the fluctuation of its membership over time, so the white “identity” is neither essential nor inherent. Nayak (2007) says that the purpose of whiteness is less about being and more about being perceived, explaining that whiteness is a “strategy of authority” rather than a fixed identity. This authority increases as it interlocks with similarly hegemonic identities such as masculinity.

Hegemonic masculinity is defined by the behaviors that sustain the gender hierarchy (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). The social practices of gender (West &

Zimmerman, 1987) have consistently centralized white masculinity as normative, and the point from which all others are referenced or qualified (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Nakayama & Krizek, 1995). Despite a lack of biological grounding, perceptions of whiteness as normative become “social facts” and have consequences in reality (Guess, 2006). Thus, the distinction that white men receive on-screen simply reflect the societal status they enjoy off-screen.

The gender hierarchy positions men as dominant over women, but non-white masculinities find themselves subordinated as well (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Therefore, Asian men are stereotyped as effeminate and lacking in the “appropriate” amount of aggression required for manhood. Conversely, Black and Latino men find themselves stereotyped as hyper-aggressive and violent, labels that easily lend themselves to an association with criminality. Heitzeg (2015) puts forth that the idea of the threatening Black man “has been a central cultural feature of ongoing efforts at oppression” (p. 202). This vilification extends to Black women as well, so it seems that “all people of color—Latinos/as and Native Americans, especially the poor, the queer are targets there too—but it is Blackness that provides the paradigm” (Heitzeg, 2015, p. 202). Whiteness, it seems, enjoys an objective position on this spectrum. Whiteness is not lacking in nor bursting with aggression; it is essentially unmarked (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995). This neutrality allows for the assumption of humanity, so that aggressive acts perpetrated by white men mandate context rather than condemnation.

This link between whiteness and humanity is essential to developing the necessary justifications for several well-known anti-heroes and their criminal acts. For example, Johnson (2017) finds that whiteness is integral to the exoneration of *Breaking*

*Bad*'s Walter White. The author suggests that "fans and critics often focused on the humanity of Walt as a timeless case which testified to how traumatic injury to the white man is paradigmatic to the human condition" (p. 25). *Breaking Bad* was able to benefit from the cultural centralization of whiteness in that victimizing Walter White sparked a sympathy that excused his dive into darkness. In the Showtime series *Dexter*, the title character mitigates his murderous tendencies by adhering to a strict moral code. Other than his one felonious habit, Dexter is a model hegemonic man: straight, white, attractive, middle-class, and with a strong moral compass (Donnelly, 2012). In the FX series *Sons of Anarchy* and *Justified*, the moral ambiguity of the white protagonists is excused by their juxtaposition to overtly immoral characters. This strategy elevates the behaviors of the protagonists in comparison to more bigoted characters, and uses their whiteness as demonstrative of their rationality (Wayne, 2014). This apparent connection between race and behavioral justification seeks to answer a question of defensible deviance: who is a criminal?

People of color on television are not often given the flexibility that whiteness allows, even outside of extreme anti-hero roles. Bonilla-Silva (2015) asserts that new expressions of racism are more covert in their allocating of "subjects in[to] common social locations" (p. 1360), but these stereotypes can be found across the media landscape. Studies suggest that the media, specifically television, play a central role in either enforcing or changing stereotypes about minority groups (Tukachinsky, Maestro, Yarchi, 2015; Zhang, 2009). Dong and Murillo (2007) find that respondents who relied on the media to learn about racial minorities held negative views towards Latinos. This finding is unsurprising given the results of a largescale content analysis by Maestro,

Tukachinsky, and Yarchi in 2015. Their research analyzes the 345 highest viewed television shows from 1987 to 2009 and finds that, in addition to stereotypical portrayals, people of color were largely lacking in character roles. In fact, Rader and Rhineberger-Dunn (2017) find that even when minorities are portrayed as criminal justice professionals, they are less likely to hold positions of power and demonstrate less authority than their white counterparts when presenting facts. So it would follow that minorities with a criminal connection would be treated even more punitively. This pattern is not limited to entertainment media; researchers have found that news media take a similar approach.

Gilliam and Iyengar (2000) explain that local news follows a script with “two core elements: crime is violent and perpetrators of crime are non-white males” (p. 560). They show evidence that familiarity with this script allows viewers to expect these elements of crime coverage, similar to the ways in which audiences develop expectations from anti-hero narratives (Shafer & Raney, 2012). For example, Gilliam and Iyengar (2000) found that 60% of respondents recalled seeing a suspect after being shown news coverage of a violent crime, despite no suspect information being given. Among these respondents, 70% recalled the suspect as an African-American male. This recollection was presumably formed from an expectation aligning with the elements of the news script. If the crime was violent, the suspect must be a non-white male. Quantitatively, the depiction of minority suspects on television has become closely proportional to crime reports, but yet whites continue to be overrepresented as police officers and victims (Chiricos & Eschholz, 2002; Dixon, 2015). Dixon (2015) suggests a reason for this overrepresentation in that stories featuring “White victimization” (p.

13) attract higher ratings and are likely in the economic interests of local news stations. Therefore, even when whites are depicted as unambiguously guilty, or criminal, it is likely they will be viewed as victims of circumstance.

Johnson et al. (1997) finds that respondents tend to attribute the violent acts of a Black suspect to dispositional characteristics, while the same acts committed by a white suspect were considered a result of situational conditions. Entman (1992) finds that Black suspects were more likely to appear nameless, in poor dress, and in physical restraint whereas coverage of White suspects was more likely to include soundbites from their defense team. Entman (1992) suggests that this pattern may homogenize Black men and serve to perpetuate the stereotype of the Black male criminal. As the media continue to enforce an inherent association between men of color and guilt, audiences are closed off to the possibility of a minority anti-hero on television.

Previously, narrative theories established a clear divide between the criminal and hero on television. But the rising popularity of anti-hero narratives have blurred this line, as whites seem to inhabit the majority of criminal protagonist roles on television. The immoral acts of white anti-heroes are consistently justified as products of circumstance, which parallels a similar pattern in news media. Their whiteness affords them a three-dimensional storyline that can span seasons because the neutrality of their identity repudiates inherent criminality. Conversely, minority criminals in the news do not receive similar treatment. Their existence is already associated with criminality, which may explain the relative nonexistence of minority criminal anti-heroes. Considering the alarming severity of crimes that audiences excuse in *Breaking Bad*,

Johnson (2017) asked, “can one imagine critics heaping praise on a black, drug-dealing, wife-raping protagonist?”

This study seeks to understand the ways in which race functions advantageously or disadvantageously for criminal anti-heroes on television. Quantitative studies that identify problematic representations of minorities or white victimization offer a broad overview of this pattern (Entman, 1992; Maestro, Tukachinsky, & Yarchi, 2015) but do not fully articulate the details of these portrayals. By conducting a textual analysis of *Power*, this paper will evaluate the function of race in moral disengagement cues for a criminal anti-hero that is, in fact, a drug-dealing Black man.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

A crime drama airing on Starz, *Power* premiered in 2014 and is currently slated to premiere its fifth season in 2018 with a sixth season already greenlit. Creator Courtney Kemp Agboh and producer Curtis “50 Cent” Jackson have managed to attract an average of 7.4 million viewers each season, making *Power* the most popular franchise in the Starz line-up (Patten, 2017; Petski, 2018). The show stars Omari Hardwick as James “Ghost” St. Patrick, a drug kingpin attempting to leave his life of crime in favor of a legitimized career as a nightclub owner. *Power* is of particular interest to this project considering its position as a critically-acclaimed franchise whose protagonist is a criminal anti-hero of color. Additionally, the show focuses similar attention on St. Patrick’s white business partner Tommy, played by Joseph Sikora, allowing for a comparison of behavioral justification as seen through race.

A textual analysis was conducted of the first season, which consisted of eight hour-long episodes, in order to interrogate these concepts. Time constraints limited the scope of this project to the first season and further analysis should look to extend into later seasons which see a more complex relationship between St. Patrick and criminality (Venable, 2017). A preliminary viewing of each episode was conducted in order to establish familiarity with the narrative as well as to take note of potential emerging themes. Shorthand notes were taken throughout this viewing that noted main characters and details of their behavior, language, and relation to behavioral justification. The season was subsequently viewed twice more in full with character summaries and analyses written after each episode (Appendix).

Summaries were written for the main characters of each episode, meaning that not every main character in the show was included in every episode summary. Yet each episode summary did include the protagonist in three forms: James the nightclub owner, Ghost the drug kingpin, and Jamie the boyfriend to Angela. Summaries and analyses were later compiled into one document and major themes were identified in relation to criminal behavior and moral disengagement cues for both Ghost and Tommy. Other characters including Tasha, Angela, Holly, and Kanaan were analyzed in relation to the two criminal anti-heroes.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### FINDINGS

#### **Plot Summary**

*Power* centers on the life of James “Ghost” St. Patrick: owner of promising nightclub Truth and boss of a major drug ring in New York City. Ghost dreams of leaving the illegal drug business behind in order to build a legitimate nightlife empire, which upsets his wife Tasha and partner Tommy who crave upward mobility in the drug empire. The motivation to withdraw from the drug business is intensified when he rekindles a high school romance with Angela, a federal attorney. The first season focuses on Ghost and Tommy attempting to identify the person responsible for robbing their organization. This becomes more important as they realize the robberies are an inside job and most likely being committed by a primera, smaller dealers they distribute to. Despite the threat to their organization, Ghost begins to prioritize Truth as its success attracts both event planner Cynthia Sheridan and nightlife investor Simon Stern. While Ghost seeks to expand the club, Tommy must keep their network up and running.

*Power* develops a dichotomous relationship between Ghost and Tommy which is defined by their work priorities, attitude towards violence, and public image. These opposing features culminate in their proximity to arrest and ultimately, their association with criminality. Ghost’s racial identity prevents him from inhabiting the singular criminal identity that Tommy’s whiteness allows. As a Black man, he must maintain and favor a high class, lawful-leaning not only for Ghost’s success as a business man but also as a sympathetic character in the television landscape.

## Work Priorities

Ghost and Tommy grew up together in the streets of Queens, New York and began their ascent in the drug business at a young age, remaining close friends through the expansion of their empire. Now adults, they are equal partners in their businesses whether it be their drug network or the fronts used to launder their money. Ghost reveals early in the first episode that opening a nightclub was a dream of both he and his father, meaning his emotional investment in Truth is larger than his friends. Despite the equal partnership between Tommy and Ghost, it becomes evident that they favor different worlds.

Ghost considers the nightclub to be a “retirement plan” (Ep. 1) and as a result, he routinely prioritizes his responsibilities to Truth over those of the drug business. He maintains control over the day-to-day operations at Truth, and rarely delegates responsibilities to others. This strategy allows him to provide the highest quality customer service to both clubgoers and potential partners, demonstrating his motivation to expand Truth beyond its original money-laundering purposes. His success with both customers and event planners is rooted in personalization, and he explains this strategy when attempting to win the business of party-planner Cynthia Sheridan: “I make it my business to know what you know. If I’m doing my job, I should know what you want before you ask me for it” (Ep. 2). Ghost is extremely invested in gaining Sheridan’s business, considering her connections to powerful and public companies such as *Vogue*, *GQ*, *Allure*, and *Vanity Fair*. Ghost accepts a “long-term” partnership with Sheridan that would pose an obstacle to his business with Tommy, who is visibly frustrated at his increasing absences.

Ghost does not extend this level of personal involvement to the drug business, and this is evident in the multiple meetings he misses in favor of his responsibilities at Truth. In episode four, “Who Are You?”, Ghost chooses to meet with the police when they threaten to shut down Truth rather than attend a meeting meant to identify the primera responsible for hitting them. If these hits were to continue, it would mean disaster for their business. Yet, major news of the drug business often arrives through Tommy, who attends most meetings alone.

Throughout the season, Tommy attempts to maintain the drug business in the face of Ghost’s withdrawal. He is the partner more likely to communicate with primeras directly and relay the information back to Ghost. When one of their primeras is stabbed, Tommy individually meets with him in order to gather information to update Ghost, who is at the club (Ep. 6). Although he works to bring Ghost back into their partnership, Tommy jumps at the opportunity for more responsibility. When their supplier asks them to distribute twice as much product, he is more than excited to expand their network and must convince Ghost to do so (Ep. 8). While attempting to garner support for the expansion, Tommy carries out a murder as a favor to one of the primeras. Despite the impulsivity of his actions, Tommy ultimately acts out of commitment to the business and puts himself at more risk than his partner.

### **Violence**

Due to the nature of their business, Ghost and Tommy are often confronted with the necessity of violence. Whereas Tommy is quick to act, Ghost consistently demands substantial proof before inflicting injury to prevent unnecessary bloodshed.

Although the series opens with Ghost killing a man that stole from them, he comes to defuse more violence than he enacts. When Tommy suggests that a primera named Anibal is responsible for the robberies, Ghost demands an entire network meeting before pulling the trigger (Ep. 3). He mandates the same process when Tommy suggests the guilt of other primeras, and ultimately discovers their innocence. The discomfort that Ghost feels towards violence is most evident when he actually commits it, which only occurs twice in the season. In both instances, Ghost suffers vivid flashbacks and severely distorted senses (Ep. 1 & 7). In more paternal scenes, Ghost discourages his son from playing violent video games. This is especially notable considering that his son is most often seen playing these games with Tommy. Later, Tommy wants to include Ghost's driver Shawn, a young Black man, in a "chop shop," or the dismemberment and disposal of a dead body. But Ghost warns Shawn against Tommy's violent tendencies, and attempts to dissuade Shawn from participating in the "street side" of the business. Ghost's partiality towards pacifism often puts him at odds with his partner, who requires less justification before unleashing his aggression.

Tommy not only enacts more violence than Ghost, but visibly enjoys it. Scenes in which Tommy inflicts injury upon others are often used as moments of comic relief. As he tortures a man captured mid-robbery, Tommy hums, laughs, and quotes *Scarface* while lighting the man on fire. When Tommy discovers the man has died, he responds, "I thought I cooked him medium rare" (Ep. 3). In another instance, Tommy beats up a man who has been dealing drugs in Truth and tells him ironically, "Get out the damn drug business, dummy. Your shit could kill somebody" (Ep. 4). Despite the apparent irrationality of his actions, there are several instances in which Tommy acts out of

protection. Tommy encourages his partner to carry a gun and discourages him from attending meetings alone, reasoning that he must protect himself for his family (Ep. 1 & 6). In a significant scene, Tommy explains to his girlfriend Holly that as a child he was beaten up daily for being the “only white kid for twenty blocks.” This racialized treatment is also demonstrated in the present as a primera nicknames him “Eminem” and “Marshall,” in reference to his whiteness. As a result, he “never stopped fighting” and is not hesitant to injure or kill someone who has crossed him.

### **Public Image**

In order to maintain their own security, Ghost and Tommy both maintain relatively low profiles. Yet while Ghost maintains two identities in order to distance himself from criminal association, his partner is comfortable with one.

Tommy’s lack of precaution is evident in the fact that he uses his legitimate name in both the legitimate and illegitimate businesses. In contrast to his partner, Tommy consistently dresses in street clothes and drives his own car. Despite holding the same status as Ghost in the business, and less people to support, he does not live an extravagant life. He is unbothered by the perceptions of others but well aware of the need to lay low. When Ghost attempts to take publicity photos with Cynthia Sheridan, Tommy quickly intervenes to let him know that they are “not like these people” (Ep. 2). Notoriety inspires questions, and questions put them at risk of discovery. Tommy does not strive to be seen the way Ghost does, and he displays more connection to his roots than Ghost, even speaking with a heavier Queens accent. He is not hesitant to share stories of his past, as evidenced by his recollection of being bullied. While at dinner, he

playfully reminisces about the rap duo he and Ghost used to have, and performs a song Ghost claims to have forgotten.

Tommy's ability to retain one identity is strengthened by his relationship with Holly. On their first date they instigate a bar fight and are consequently thrown out, but not before she is able to steal the necklace of the man they fought. When Tommy reveals himself as a large scale drug dealer, Holly responds, "I am a fucked-up thief, and you are a crazy drug dealer. I think we were made for each other" (Ep. 6). In the season finale, Holly suggests that she begin working in the organization. She tells Tommy they would be "in it together," demonstrating her loyalty to him. With Holly both supportive and complicit in his crimes, Tommy casually invites another layer of risk to his life. He blends the drug business with his personal life without concern, while his partner struggles to keep them separate. They demonstrate a carefree attitude towards consequence in two notable scenes in which Tommy tells Holly, "I hear [no] all the time, I just ignore it," and Holly tells Tommy, at a later time, "I don't think first, I just do what I want." Ghost, on the other hand, does not express such indifference in regards to criminal behavior or otherwise.

St. Patrick inhabits two identities: in the drug world he is Ghost, but to the rest of the world he is James. James St. Patrick lives in a penthouse, employs a driver, and sends his children to private school. He rarely appears outside of a suit, and this well-manicured appearance is essential to his high class image. He explains that his appearance is a sign of status allowing him to distance himself from his past, and yet he is the only person in his network looking to do so. It is obvious to those around him that he favors himself as James, and each of his actions serve this purpose. While Ghost's

efforts to brand himself jeopardize the anonymity that has made his drug business so successful, they allow him to gather more power as a club owner and distance himself from a criminal image.

This dual image maintenance also becomes evident in his love life as he is caught between his wife Tasha and girlfriend Angela. Tasha's behavior is often a source of frustration for Ghost, considering that she pushes him to continue in the drug business and dismisses his fears of prison or death. When a significant opportunity is presented for Ghost to expand the club, she deliberately deletes the voicemail from his cellphone (Ep. 5). Her image is not aligned with the persona he presents, telling her in the pilot episode, "When you come to the club tonight, you need to look like you own the place, not like you tryin' to get in for free." Tasha sees Truth as a distraction, and is unsupportive of his aspirations for legitimacy. In one instance, Tasha donates a large sum of money in order to land their daughter the lead in a school play. Ghost is angered to find that Tasha cheated her way to success in the face of his hard work. Ghost reminds her, on more than one occasion, that his work does not only provide necessities but also "for that weave and that dress and those shoes" (Ep. 2). Her encouragement towards the drug business and lack of support for the club find Ghost falling for a partner more aligned with his aspirations.

In episode seven, Angela asks Ghost to describe his wife and he responds, "Well, Tasha is...not you." Angela is not only a hard worker, but one on the right side of the law. This is continually displayed throughout the season as she underscores her independence: "Some people have everything handed to them on a platter. All they have to do is count their money. That's never been me. No one's ever bought me diamonds

or paid my rent” (Ep. 3). Although her federal job does not afford her the life of luxury that Tasha seems to require, she explains that material gifts are of no value to her, telling Ghost, “I feel special when you look at me. You don’t need to buy me anything” (Ep. 4). Angela is supportive of Ghost’s aspirations for Truth, and her position as an attorney allows her to push him towards a legitimate life. When a model overdoses in the club, she persuades Ghost to cooperate with the police and keep Truth open. When he expresses his distrust for law enforcement, she assures him that “not all [cops] are like that” (Ep. 3). While unaware that he is the culprit, Angela tells her task force that she can offer the distributor “way out,” and it becomes apparent that she serves that purpose in his love life as well.

The most significant scene illustrating Ghost’s dual identity comes in episode seven, during his meeting with nightlife investor Simon Stern. Ghost explains the reasons for his success after Stern asks about his ability to attract such diverse crowds:

There is no secret. Just me...I’m a Black man from the ‘hood. Most of the guys I came up with are either dead or in jail. I live in the penthouse of my building, above the lawyers and doctors trying to get into my club. See, people take you at face value, Simon. Me, well, I have to transform to meet everyone’s expectations constantly. Truth isn’t one thing because I’m not one thing. You understand? I take all my experiences and use them to cater to all different kinds of people, under one roof. Whether it’s the black professional athlete ordering his next bottle of Cîroc or whether it’s the wall street motherfucker getting blackout drunk on the

company's dime, I understand him. I get him. And because I get him...I get him. And because I get him, I get rich (Ep. 7).

Ghost explains that duality is essential to his success, suggesting that a single identity would be inadequate. He is able to accommodate his guests because he is able to transform between two worlds, but it ultimately serves one. The end of season establishes that Ghost cannot leave the drug business behind anytime soon, in fact, he calls Lobos directly to demand more product. Yet this comes after the police close down Truth, so it becomes apparent that his drug involvement is merely a means to an end. Ghost convinces Tommy that he will need to open a second nightclub in order to launder the extra money that will come from this expansion, and delegates all drug business duties to Tommy. Ghost's investment in Truth allows him to step away from the criminal behavior that Tommy is so eager to become a part of.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION

The dichotomous relationship developed between Ghost and Tommy serve to distance the main character from criminality, and therefore stereotype. Ghost's commitment to the club, discomfort with violence, and high class image both prevent him from arrest but also from the Black criminal stereotype. We witness Ghost inhabit a "double consciousness" of sorts in which he feels that his identity must be modified according to his audience (DuBois, 2015). While at Truth, he encounters white men as rivals (Simon Stern, police officers) and white women as potential partners (Cynthia Sheridan). In these environments, Ghost becomes James St. Patrick and sheds all possibility of criminality.

This criminality is instead deflected onto his counterpart Tommy; whose whiteness allows him to inhabit a singular criminal identity with less consequence. While both he and Ghost are technically criminals, the direction of their narratives are reversed. We see Ghost's violence peak when he shoots a man in the first episode, and from that point on he becomes the more passive partner relative to Tommy. Ghost's storyline strives towards redemption and attempts to remove himself from his past, whereas Tommy embodies his working class background and looks to expand the drug business. The issue is not that Ghost is not complicit in crimes, but that he desperately does not want to be. Despite Ghost's position as the protagonist, Tommy's narrative becomes more indicative of the typical anti-hero that is acclaimed by critics and audiences alike.

The necessity to transform between dual identities in order to be palatable to a wide audience is applicable both in and outside the show. The risk of invoking stereotype mandates that Ghost compensate his immoral identity with a relatively lawful one. The Black criminal stereotype is one-dimensional by nature, and for Ghost to be a singularly criminal character would close his narrative to contextualization and invite generalizations of an inherent criminal disposition (Johnson et al., 1997). Consequently, he is removed from characteristics that would signify this stereotype: violence, direct involvement in drugs, and working class status. These characteristics are instead attributed to Tommy, who is able to directly commit the crimes that give Ghost his criminal status and still retain dimensionality. Despite his singular identity, Tommy has numerous scenes that display him as a good uncle, protective friend, and generally funny guy. Ghost's increasing withdrawal from the business becomes frustrating because Tommy emerges as a more sympathetic character.

The social practices that allow for whiteness to exist as a neutral and objective identity (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995) mandate contextualization when the identity is associated with criminality. Tommy is able to benefit from this because *Power* does not offer the audience a substantial amount of background on the two characters other than the superficial narrative that they "hustled together" to make it out of the streets. As a result, the small recollections that Tommy offers provide his character with significant behavioral justification. The racialized harassment pointed towards him in both the past and present fit the "white victimization" narrative that has proven successful in entertainment media for shows like *Breaking Bad* (Johnson, 2017) as well as news media (Dixon, 2015). His race is used to indicate an outsider status that justifies his

aggressive tendencies as defensive responses. This contextualization is not present for Ghost; whose character is so aligned with his high class image that potential behavioral justifications are lost. Despite the visibility of his desire for a clean life, his character is not given sufficient urgency for such a goal. His family is neither in immediate physical danger nor economic insecurity. Where Ghost has simple desire, Walter White had cancer and Dexter Morgan had an undying urge to kill.

The accessibility of the Black criminal stereotype stems from the social practices related to hegemonic masculinity (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005) and is enforced by both news and entertainment media (Entman, 1992; Gilliam and Iyengar, 2000; Maestro, Tukachinsky, Yarchi, 2015). Ultimately, the vulnerability of the minority anti-hero to this stereotype results in a depiction that differs from that of the white anti-hero in *Power*. Whiteness afforded Tommy a neutral identity where criminality and brutality are not dispositional but rather reactionary, similar to the ways in which respondents evaluated real white suspects (Johnson et al., 1997). This narrative has allowed other white anti-heroes to become more than simply criminal but even evil. Johnson's (2017) assertion that audiences were able to excuse the heinous crimes of Walter White in *Breaking Bad* testifies to the power that the white victimization narrative holds. Tommy is able to enact significant violence throughout the first season yet still garner laughs.

Ghost committing similar crimes puts him at risk, so instead his most prolonged transgression is his infidelity. Yet, this action is mitigated through the understanding that Tasha represents criminality whereas Angela represents lawfulness. It would be disingenuous to compare the two love interests without a discussion of colorism.

Angela, played by Mexican-American actress Lela Loren, is a Puerto Rican woman who is light-skinned and largely white-passing. As Angela is elevated as a partner in comparison to Tasha, played by Naturi Naughton who is a darker-skinned Black woman, racialized parallels are immediately established. In order for Ghost to sustain an anti-hero role, his narrative is opposite that of typical white anti-heroes. Rather than becoming progressively darker, Ghost's story finds him moving toward redemption. This includes choosing a partner that affords him more cultural capital, not less. Yet this narrative essentially removes him from contention with the most acclaimed white anti-heroes, and instead elevates Tommy to the more powerful anti-hero.

The frequency with which minorities are portrayed stereotypically on television complicates a call for more criminals of color on television. Yet the issue does not stem from mere criminality but the dimensionality with which they are depicted. Green (2014) writes that shows featuring Black criminal anti-heroes are as necessary as light-hearted comedies "in order for the humanity of Black people to be fully realized." When *Being Mary Jane* premiered in 2013, it opened with the disclaimer that the show was simply reflecting the experience of one woman rather than Black women in general (Okoro, 2014). It seems obvious that generalizing the experiences of a population from one television character is wrong, but the necessity of the disclaimer is evident of the difficulties that arise when attempting to write an anti-hero of color that is on par with the most acclaimed white anti-heroes. A protagonist like James St. Patrick, one who is just criminal enough for the label but otherwise removed from any real darkness, is just not able to compete.

Television's "Golden Era" is marked by a definitive whiteness, and parallels larger patterns of white victimization in media. The lenient sentencing of Brock Turner, convicted of sexual assault, drew major media attention last year when a judge agreed that his crime was a product of circumstance (Stack, 2016). The racialized narratives we see in entertainment media are reflected in news media and beneficial to whites but disadvantageous to people of color. Although this study explored racialized narratives as they relate to the anti-hero, it is unable to quantitatively diagnose racial disparities in anti-hero roles. Future research should look to quantify these disparities so that the problem may be viewed in a broader context. Additionally, experimental research with audiences in relation to the minority anti-hero and moral disengagement cues may be beneficial so that a bridge may be built between stereotype risk and complex representations of criminality.

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## APPENDIX

### I. Summaries and Analyses

*Power*

Season 1

Episode 1

#### **Ghost (Distributor)**

In this episode, we are introduced to Ghost as the “boss.” He is driven places by Shawn and not seen driving himself in this episode. After being taken away from club business, Ghost is asked to weigh in on the punishment of Miguel, who just robbed one of Ghost’s associates. In this situation, we see Ghost is level headed but frustrated with the situation at hand. He discourages Tommy from quick judgement and stops him from killing both Miguel and his partner Maria. Instead, Ghost lets Maria go and beats up and eventually kills Miguel himself. Prior to doing so, Ghost carefully removes his suit and puts on gloves. Most likely for his own hygiene but also to avoid the accumulation of evidence. We see that Ghost is capable of murder, as he tells Miguel: “I’m not afraid to kill you.” Immediately after, Ghost washes his hands of the situation and delegates the clean-up to others. We see him transform back into a suited nightclub owner in the elevator.

While meeting with the cartel leader, Felipe Lobos, the audience is told that Ghost beat out several other organizations to be the New York distributor. Lobos tells us Ghost distinguished himself from the other organizations as a business, not a gang. Ghost handles himself well in the meeting and we also see that he is able to communicate with Lobos in Spanish. Lobos tells Ghost that he is feared, and capable of running his own cartel. But Ghost is still under his control, as Lobos demands they fix the robbery that just occurred. Later, we see Tommy and Ghost communicate with their primeras to figure out who has been hitting them. This is one instance where Ghost is wearing a leather jacket, rather than suit jacket, over his shirt and tie.

Later in the episode, Tommy and Ghost are discussing business in Ghost’s home office. Once again, he diffuses Tommy’s quick and irrational, often violent, decisions. He does this with the reason being he has too much to lose to go into hiding. Tommy also recognizes that Ghost is letting club business dictate their drug running, signaling that the club is more important to Ghost than anything else. This is also emphasized as we see Ghost dictate more drug duties to Tommy, and Ghost stepping away from more hands on responsibility.

#### **Ghost (Club Organizer)**

The episode opens with scenes of Truth, and Ghost is seen giving directions and strategy to his employees throughout this sequence. We are giving understanding that Ghost is the primary boss of the nightclub. Later, we find out that a nightclub investor is interested in Truth, and Ghost is very much interested. But this investment in the club is weakened by his drug business, and it is constantly drawing him away. We see Ghost attempt to prioritize the club over the drug business but it is difficult. He calls Truth his retirement plan and attempts to sway Tommy on this idea, he hopes that Truth will be

their way to a clean life. He calls it a business, similar to how he branded his drug organization. We see that Ghost attempts to legitimize and make excellence everything he does.

### **Ghost (Other)**

The audience is given the understanding that Ghost is a good father. We see him physically embrace and show affection to each of his three children, and ask questions about events in their lives. He tells his son Tariq that he wants to read a draft of his report, showing that he is involved and aware of the small things. But he is distracted by the club and his drug business, and his mother-in-law is suspicious. This distraction, then, is noticeable to those in his life.

### **Drug Business**

In this episode, we are shown the smaller workings of the business. We see drug runners making deals with customers and that they are connected to their bosses through cellphones. We are also introduced to their primeras, those that distribute drugs according to regional territories, which include Ruiz and Annibal. In order to clean the money they receive through their primeras, Tommy and Ghost own landromats and the club. Later in the episode we see Ghost and Tommy oversee their runners and distance themselves from the little guys: “do you think the fry cook knows the CEO?”

Ghost and Tommy, after being hit by an unknown rival, meet with their connect Felipe Lobos. Lobos leads a drug cartel that employs Tommy and Ghost as distributors for the New York region. He is portrayed flamboyantly and later in the episode refers to Ghost by the n word.

### **Background**

The first piece of background the audience is given is 14 minutes into the episode when Ghost is facing the front of the club and says “see that pops, I did it.” This implies that owning the club was a goal he shared with his father, or success in general. Later, Tommy refers to their “working the corner” for characters named Breeze and Kanaan. He calls them “knuckleheads” who “made it” after “hustling together.” We see that Ghost and Tommy came from working class roots, and the success they have now is a result of hardwork.

In the club, Ghost spots Angela. Angela is an old friend from high school who has not seen Ghost in 18 years, she says that seeing Ghost so successful is new. The two characters are engrossed in conversation in a crowded and noisy club, which implies that they share or shared a strong connection. Later Ghost takes her to lunch where they discuss their tight relationship. Angela left for boarding school when they were young and the two had no contact until the present day. Ghost mentions that his father died when he was young, and the two discuss making it out of the “hood” like they “always planned.” Angela also mentions that she taught Ghost Spanish. The connections from their childhood pop up in Ghosts everyday life.

### **Tasha**

Tasha is Ghost’s wife, and the beginning of the episode shows them to be a close couple. The audience quickly sees that Ghost is drawn away from her just as he is

drawn away from most aspects of his life because of both Truth and the drug business. Yet, Tasha knows that Ghost deals drugs and encourages it. She is in agreement with Tommy that the club is too distracting from the drug business. Still, we see that she holds down the fort. Later, after seeing Ghost so enamored with Angela in the club, she takes off home. While being driven by Shawn, she masturbates in front of him. We see that she is complicit in the drug business as well as maintaining the front of a happy family.

### **Tommy**

Tommy is Ghost's best friend and business partner. We first see him threatening to kill both Miguel, the man who robbed them, and his partner Maria. We see that he is physically aggressive and a kind of hothead, who Ghost has to calm down. Tommy is always dressed in street clothes, and drives his own car. He is also shown interacting with Ghost's children and assumed to be a good uncle as he calls Raina "babygirl" and plays videogames with Tariq.

Like Tasha, Tommy does not like the idea of becoming clean. He discourages Ghost's deeper involvement with the club as it is distracting from their drug business. He attempts to give Ghost a gun later in the episode for protection, and tells him he should protect himself for his family. He also tries to sway Ghost from Angela, telling Ghost he should do right by Tasha. He is protective of Ghost like a brother, and we know that they have been friends since childhood. Tommy is used as comic relief in this episode. In addition to the working class background, we are twice told that his mother is sick, that he has a preference for red haired women and also that he enjoys watching Dr. Phil on television.

### **Angela**

We first see Angela in Truth, as she interacts with Ghost. She is an attorney for the federal government, though Ghost only knows that she practices law. Angela grew up with Ghost and Tommy and has also realized her own success. She is completely clean and in fact, puts people like Ghost and Tommy in jail. Angela says that she can offer Lobo's distributor "a way out" through a deal, but she is also a way out for Ghost to a legit life.

*Power*

Season 1

Episode 2

### **Ghost (Distributor)**

The second episode finds Ghost once again preoccupied with responsibilities at Truth while attempting to handle problems within the drug business. When he is able to be pulled away, he dissuades Tommy from irrational decisions. Although they decide to kill the man that was caught hitting one of their couriers, Ghost is hesitant to allow Tommy to involve Shawn. He is protective of him and not wanting him to be involved with the ugly stuff, similar to ghost keeping a hands off approach from the body dismemberment.

We see in this episode that mystery is key to Ghost's success as a drug dealer, hence the nickname. He must keep out of the spotlight otherwise his being known could cause others to dig into his life, possibly exposing him. This distance from crime is somewhat in motion already as he is not seen handling any business hands on but rather over the phone or through communication with Tommy. Similarly, while attempting to figure out how to send a message to his primera, Ghost takes advice from Tasha who puts forth a vicious suggestion: send the bodyparts of the hitter to every primera. This is conducted by members of the organization while Ghost is being straight shaven, which is symbolic of his distance.

### **James (Club)**

While inhabiting his club owner persona, Ghost goes by James, his birth name. This is the most legitimate title for him and representative of the clean image he wants to project onto this club. This episode consists of James working hard to impress Cynthia Sheridan, and land a party she is handling for Vogue. He strives for excellency and it is evident when he says to her, "I make it my business to know what you know. If I'm doing my job, I should know what you want before you ask me for it." We see James stay up late learning about a larger investor, Simon Stern, and later mentions to Angela that he hopes to open more clubs. But in order to do so he must establish a personal brand, which means putting his face into the public. In order to make his club thrive, he must lose the mystery behind his identity which is in direct conflict with the interests of the drug business. Tommy reminds him that they are not like "these people," but the audience knows that James wants to be one of them and not have to hide his face or his family.

### **Jamie (Angela)**

The third identity of the protagonist is shown while he is with Angela, and goes by Jamie, an affectionate nickname. No one else in the show refers to him by this except Angela, and it is obvious that their tight bond is still intact. We see that after having to rotate phones because of a hit, he writes down Angela's phone number so as not to lose it. Similarly, when inviting Angela to his Vogue party, he insists on "making the time" to see her. This is a gesture he does not extend to his wife or Tommy, who he is always pulling away from. Jamie takes Angela on thoughtful dates and recalls memories of childhood, seeming to be able to enjoy a normal romance without burden. Angela though is always being taken away by her work, a role reversal that Jamie is not used to.

### **Angela**

This episode introduces Angela more thoroughly to the audience. We are given glimpses into her lazy but lawful life. She supports her family financially and pays for her father at a nursing facility, so we know that Angela has deep family ties. Although she is a lawyer, her apartment is not nearly as big as Jamie's but she does not mind. Her clean life is not one of luxury that Tasha seems to insist on having, and removing himself from the drug business could easily support Angela's lowkey lifestyle. We see that she struggles at work holding authority and receives gendered advice about working in law as a woman, but nonetheless is very talented at her job. Jamie is a distraction for her, but she cannot help herself. We are again reminded of her working

class background and the hardwork needed to obtain her success, the same narrative we are given for Jamie.

### **Tasha**

Tasha once again is shown holding down the fort and protecting Ghost and her family, despite the lesser attempts from Ghost to do the same. She tells her mother that they are equal partners in their marriage but is quickly reminded that she is dependent on him financially, and if he were to leave she would have no claim to illegal money. Tasha consistently feels unappreciated whether it is being left alone in bed or not receiving his new number when Ghost rotates phones. When she confronts him about it, he reluctantly agrees to appease her but explains that he works in order to provide for the family and uphold her standard of living. It is no secret that they live a high class life and that their money goes to luxuries just as much as necessities, which does not give us a good enough motive for them to be in the drug business. A stand-out line from Tasha this episode is “You want a woman’s loyalty? Give her security. You give her that and she’ll never betray you.” This is symbolic of the security that Ghost provides for Tasha and their family, despite her wanting more affection. She cannot leave Ghost because of what he gives her, in addition to her strong love for him, and this sets Tasha up as a strong and unwavering partner for Ghost. But this episode also shows her once again finding validation in Shawn through flirting as well as masturbating in front of him during a car ride again.

### **Tommy**

In this episode, Tommy is once again conducting more of the drug business than Ghost. He is in contact with Julio and the couriers directly, and also is part of the crew that dismembers and spreads the body parts of the hitter. He is always in street clothes and even puts the body in his own car trunk. He wants to introduce Shawn to the dirtier side of the business and succeeds in fighting Ghost’s opposition. Tommy struggles against ghost more in this episode as he tries to keep Ghost from deeper involvement, and therefore vulnerability, with Truth. He and Ghost have a miscommunication as to handling the hit courier and Tommy is not happy. On a softer side, Tommy is also comic relief as well as shown being a hands on uncle. He plays video games with Tariq, games that Ghost discourages due to violence, and also roughhouses with him, something we don’t see Ghost doing.

### **Background**

The background given in this episode continues that of what was given in the first episode: Tommy and Ghost grew up working class in Queens and worked hard to get to where they are now. Tommy mentions that he and Ghost shared a ’91 Honda Accord and were “kept in line” by Shawn’s father Kanaan. In conversation with Angela, Ghost reveals that in order to buy Truth he and Tommy gradually bought several laundromats. He also mentions that Tommy did not like the idea of a nightclub from the start, but that it is a building connected to his father. Angela suggests that Tommy has always been a bad person and calls Jamie a “good influence” painting him as a stand up and moral character.

## **ANALYSIS**

We are never given enough background to establish a meaningful motive for Ghost and Tommy being in the drug business. Without one, the audience cannot understand why Ghost is having such a hard time leaving it and going legit. The most intense opposition he receives is from Tommy and Angela's disappointment and anger, no violence or imminent threats. Instead, we see Ghost actually managing both businesses relatively well albeit with some missteps but nothing major. Ghost's wanting to escape this life though, is emphasized and is visibly is discomfited by having to push aside club business in order to handle drugs. He is seen as a stand up citizen despite his drug associations by being a good father, discouraging violence and being able to show a vulnerable side with Angela. Angela is representative of the life that Ghost wants and can maintain, she is his legitimate way out. Tommy on the other hand, manages all of the hands-on duties of the business and is the more outright criminal. He does not manage two sides and is known as an outlaw to everyone including Angela. His taking on of this criminal persona is opposite Ghost's striving to be a stand up citizen. If not, he would fall into the stereotype. His distance from direct drug business keeps him distanced from his working class background and from jail as well.

*Power*

Season 1

Episode 3

### **Ghost (distributor)**

Once again, we see Ghost receiving details of the drug business through Tommy. Not only that, but when Tommy tells him they need to meet with Julio to discuss a shipment, Ghost declines and sends Tommy to take care of it on his own. Ghost continues to distance himself from the business as well as Tommy. Despite their close friendship, Ghost subtly warns his young driver Shawn that "ain't nobody like Tommy" in reference to how he enjoys violence, and says he does not want Shawn involved in the business in that way. We see this again when Ghost is called in to the warehouse to deal with a guy that attempted to rob their shipment. He comes in only after Tommy has brutally tortured this man, and scolds Tommy for doing so. A reoccurring line from Ghost is "Think Tommy!" where he diffuses the situation and condemns his irrational decisions. Ghost refuses to kill Annibal and place the blame on him for the hits without proof, a rational and almost lawful decision despite Tommy's insistence otherwise.

Also in this episode, we are presented with Ghost's real fears about continuing in the drug business. He reveals these fears to Tasha that drug dealers never last long, they either wind up in jail or dead. But his fears are dismissed by his wife, who is angered that he is even considering leaving the business.

### **James (club)**

This episode opens with James at the club, running strategy like always. He is dressed in his typical suit and when crisis occurs, a model overdosing on cocaine in the club he remains calm and protects his brand from bad press. Later, he skips his bank meeting with Tasha in order to tend to this club matter. Just as he delegates drug duties

to Tommy, he delegates financial matters to Tasha and makes the club his priority. Yet, in order to quell the model that overdosed, he calls in Angela to assist him. We see that Truth is incredibly meaningful to James because he used his personal money to finance its opening, and including Angela in saving the club parallels her importance to him.

After the model overdoses, Ghost and Kantos decide to cooperate with the police in order to keep Truth open. In doing so, they attempt to find the dealer who sold the cocaine in their club in order to hand him over to the police. Despite his old distrust of police, Ghost voluntarily decides to make them happy and becomes a lawful citizen in attempting to find this dealer and put him away. Tasha calls him a snitch for doing so, but Ghost calls the club a “dream” and a “way out” and a way to “have it all.” The club makes Ghost a cooperative legitimate citizen, and no one else in his life seems to agree except Angela.

### **Jamie (Angela)**

Although he continues to push away both Tommy and Tasha, Jamie shows the Angela is a priority in his life. We see this as he texts Angela while managing Truth, as well as in the morning when he wakes up. We see that he involves her in club business by consulting her before speaking to the model, but also that he can reveal his work anxieties to her without fear of retaliation. He is comforted and calmed by Angela who supports his club endeavors.

### **Tommy**

Tommy continues to be the more hands on partner of the drug business and it is evidenced by the way he has to inform Ghost of the major details of their ventures. Tommy directly stops Julio and the shipment from being robbed, and takes the primary role in torturing the man who attempted to do so. He lights him on fire while humming, laughing and even quoting Scarface to himself, so that the audience sees that he enjoys doing so. Tommy is often the comic relief of the show, despite being the most visibly evil. We get to see him fail at his attempts to flirt with Holly, a waitress at Truth, and are sympathetic each time he is shot down. Tommy inhabits the comedic, dramatic, and evil sides of an anti-hero.

### **Tasha**

We first see Tasha attempting to get Ghost to come home from the club, and failing. He continues to pick the club over his wife and family, most evidently when he sends Tasha to the bank alone to deal with club business. Similarly, Tasha is angered to find that Ghost took their personal finances to pay for Truth without telling her. She is left out of the loop of both the business and personal matters of her husband, despite her seeing herself as an equal partner. When Ghost attempts to take ownership of their money he’s earned, she tells him that she has helped him “earn every cent.” Her assertive nature is always on display whether towards Ghost, Kantos or even the bank teller. She is dismissive of Ghost’s fears of prison or death, and pushes him to continue dealing drugs. She walks the line of the angry black woman, only because her character is put in such stark contrast to Angela.

### **Angela**

Angela's character is set up to be the antithesis of Tasha. She is shown working late, cultivating Jamie's affection and not being dependent on anyone to take care of her. This is most evident by a quote spoken during lunch with Jamie: "Some people have everything handed to them on a platter. All they have to do is count their money. That's never been me. No one's ever bought me diamonds or paid my rent." This, with reference to several events that have already played out showing Tasha receiving jewelry, having her rent paid and counting money she has not directly earned. Angela is a lawful woman that the audience knows would not encourage Jamie to continue in the drug business, in fact her job condemns it. She is even quoted as promoting cops in response to Jamie's mistrust of the law, she says "not all are like that." Angela's character is one that Jamie is drawn to, and one that diffuses the immorality of his infidelity.

### **Kanaan**

A new character introduced this episode, Kanaan is one that has been references a few times in the past three episodes. He is Shawn's biological father, and taught Tommy and Ghost the ropes of the drug business. Kanaan is in jail, and although we don't know why, we assume there must be a reason for it. His paternal connection to Shawn is in opposition to Ghost's paternal connection to Shawn, and he authenticates it with "I always knew this day would come."

### **ANALYSIS**

This episode shows the continued distance that Ghost is putting between himself and the drug business. He becomes a more lawful man by helping the police, and reveals his fears of continuing in the drug business. His small reveal of distrust of the cops subtly references race, but not directly, and is quickly soothed by Angela. This all serves to distance him from the black stereotype. No rich background is given for Ghost other than that he grew up in the "hood" and made his way out, a very neoliberal narrative is given for both him and Angela in the form of hardwork. Ghost's story seems to be becoming one of reformation of a boy from the hood, one where he goes from bad kid to lawful guy. Tasha and Tommy stand in direct opposition to that, making Tasha seem like the enemy. Tommy on the other hand, takes on all of that criminality and there are no consequences for doing so. Ghost only enacts violence when completely justified, and even then he has not done so since episode 1. He is the diffuser of violence, often telling Tommy to think. Tommy gets to comically torture and kill a man whereas Ghost doing so would make him a criminal too quickly. A criminal much like Kanaan.

*Power*

Season 1

Episode 4

### **Ghost (distributor)**

In this episode, we see ghost directly distance him from violent activity. The assumed animosity between him and Kanaan is actualized when Ghost directly tells Tommy that he is not Kanaan. This, in reference to Tommy's explanation that Kanaan

would have already killed Annibal without the proof that Ghost is requiring. A major moment in this episode is when Ghost send Tommy to the network meeting on his own because he needs to attend to matters at the club. This meeting, at the request of Ghost, is incredibly significant because all of the primeras will be there and they want to find out who has been hitting them. At this meeting, the primeras recognize Ghost's recent withdrawal from the business and are angered. Ghost and Tommy quarrel over miscommunication and the prioritization of the club.

### **James (club)**

James faces major issues with Truth as the police are attempting to shut it down after it was revealed to them that drugs were being sold. This issue takes priority over everything else in James' life and he skips an important organization meeting to deal with the police. Of course, this angers both Tommy and Tasha. Yet, Ghost retaliates when he tells Tasha that everything he does is for her. He is obviously frustrated at her mingling despite his providing for her and their family. When he needs to take care of the dealer once and for all, he calls Tommy in to get violent with the man and to discourage him from ever coming to Truth again. Even when it has to do with the most important aspect of his life, he has Tommy commit the violence for him.

### **Jamie (Angela)**

Jamie communicates with Angela even when he is at the club, as both have become his priorities. He affords these privileges to Angela but not to Tasha or Tommy. We see that he is romantic with her, and even honest with her the way he is not always honest with his own wife. He owns up to her that he is married with children, and is able to reconcile that with her. But of course, he keeps her in the dark about his drug dealings.

### **Tommy**

Tommy wants to kill Annibal, he is more in line with what he says Kanaan thinks that Ghost. Ghost shuts him down and demands more rationality and restraint. But we also see his softer side when he is concerned and holding Yasmine. Similarly, he retains a good hearted side as we see him continue to flirt with Holly. He reveals to her that he had a rough upbringing being the only white kid in his neighborhood, an identity that got him beat up daily. This is the first time that his race is brought up, and it is used to explain another hardwork neoliberal narrative. Being victimized for whiteness is the explanation he has for being so tough.

### **Tasha**

Again, feeling abandoned and left out she finds validation in Shawn. She uses him to know Ghost's whereabouts and subsequently showers in front of him to feel appreciated. She reveals her frustrations to Tommy who agrees but also calms her down, making her the most outraged and irrational. Ghost tells Tasha that she wants him stuck with her.

### **Angela**

Angela remains the lawful good character as she breaks things off with Jamie when she finds out about his family. But later gets back together with him because their

love cannot withstand separation, the high school sweethearts seem to be meant for each other. Angela is again set up to be the opposite of Tasha as she tries to return the necklace and explains to Ghost that he is all she needs to feel special.

## **ANALYSIS**

Ghost skipping the network meeting marks a large distancing of himself from the drug business in favor of the club, everytime we see Ghost directly handling anything it is within Truth. He directly deals with the cops, Kantos, and Cynthia Sheridan. We even see him reading about Simon Stern will he is speaking with Tommy about drug business. His honesty and romance with Angela continues to draw him to the more lawful side and we see him finally deal with the dealer in his club once and for all. But he uses Tommy to enact violence, again. Tommy is able to absorb all direct criminality at the favor of Ghost with little consequence. Tommy being so rough and aggressive is directly explained at the result of white victimization. He is allowed to be so violent because it is only in response to having to survive as a white kid in a black world.

Angela is set up as the better partner for Jamie because of the good qualities she inspires in him as well as her low maintenance needs. She does not need jewelry to know that she is loved, she just needs Jamie. This signifies that she would be willing to be with him despite the loss of money he'd face if he dropped out of drugs, something the audience cannot see Tasha putting up with. Tasha is seen shopping with her best friend, and being demanding. When Ghost frustratingly tells her that everything he does is for her, the audience knows that his money sustains her lifestyle.

*Power*

Season 1

Episode 5

### **Ghost (DISTRIBUTOR)**

In this episode we see Ghost handling business more directly while talking to Ruiz and attempting to figure out if he is the hitter. Similarly, he discusses business with Rolla, though over the phone. But it is only when problems are rising to the top that he steps in to do business. This episode we also see him distance himself again from Kanaan, insinuating that Kanaan is not fit to run their organization and would have held him and Tommy back.

### **James (CLUB)**

Again, we see him doing direct business and achieving high success with Truth as he closes in on top parties with Cynthia Sheridan. He receives praise from Kantos and his success is evident when Simon Stern comes into Truth to speak with him, though he misses the meeting. James is extremely upset when he finds out that Tommy is dating Holly because he says it jeopardizes his business, though Tommy is technically an equal partner.

### **Jamie (Angela)**

Jamie continues to get closer to Angela as we see him talking to her throughout the day despite being in the club or at home with his family. He takes her on romantic dates and they reminisce about their childhood, some of the only times where we receive any background on him. One particular moment stands out when he tells Angela, joking, that he sells fantasies. Angela takes this seriously and begins to doubt the sustainability of their relationship, but this only serves to label them as too good to be true. Too good of a relationship in the face of what he has now. He deliberately chooses Angela.

When Angela recognizes Jamie's tattoos he explains that the wings were meant to symbolize wanting to fly away. Despite their continuous referencing of the past, it is clear that Jamie wants to distance himself from who and where he used to be. He was able to do so through hard work, and it is symbolic of the audience never really getting a glimpse into his past.

### **Tommy**

We see Tommy continue to encourage, enact, and enjoy violence as he is quick to want to kill Ruiz for being the hitter. He first considered Annibal to be to blame and now he says it is Ruiz, though he turns out to be wrong both times showing him as irrational. Tommy even aligns himself with Kanaan, who he contrasts to Ghost. In addition to this violent side, Tommy is also shown in more tender moments when he eats at Tasha's and confides in her about Holly. He sees their family as his family, and seeks their approval. He is so devoted to their relationship that he is overwhelmed with anger when Holly tells him that Ghost is cheating on Tasha. Tommy is afforded way more complexity and dimensionality than Ghost.

### **Tasha**

Tasha is specifically vilified in this episode. Firstly, she is outraged when Raina is passed up for the lead in the school musical. She brings up race as a factor for the decision and is angered when Ghost preaches a narrative about hard work and perseverance in the face of failure. Tasha goes behind his back to pay Raina's way into the lead spot, despite the show's repeated bootstrap narrative. This feeds into the angry black woman narrative, and her scamming her daughter's way to success. Second, she keeps Ghost from attending a big meeting with Simon Stern, the investor. She purposely keeps information from Ghost and denies him an opportunity. This episode frames Tasha as cheating and manipulative, so it makes it no wonder the Ghost is running to Angela who understands his work demands.

She also continues to find validation in Shawn, who Ghost is always trying to protect because of his age. Since he is so young, he is visibly uncomfortable and nervous when Tasha attempts to manipulate him into giving her information on Ghost. Again painting her in a bad light.

### **Angela**

Angela this episode does not do much but continue to inhabit a better option for Ghost than his wife. Though she is visibly upset when Jamie mentions selling fantasies, she ultimately accepts their relationship and continues to be happy.

*Power*  
Season 1  
Episode 6

### **Ghost (distributor)**

This episode does not expand much of Ghost's involvement with the drug business as well continue to see him favor Angela over the organization. He puts off Tommy during a date with Angela and misses a meeting with Ruiz in favor of Angela's personal matters with her father. We see though, that Angela's father remembers Ghost as a punk and a drug dealer and it bothers him. His internal struggle with being a bad man continues. We also hear a sort of explanation for Ghost's constant high class appearance in suits, he explains to Rolla that his high status in the organization means that he doesn't have to wear street clothes anymore and says that Rolla can do it too. Rolla, though, seems unfavorable towards such a lifestyle. Yet there is some confusion given that Tommy occupies the same status as Ghost and does not inhabit the same class appearance as Ghost. Tommy is more connected to the street background that Ghost is.

### **James (club)**

Again, Ghost fulfills his duties at Truth directly and successfully. He is finally able to sit down with Simon Stern and holds his own as an owner. One rare moment in this episode though is that we see Ghost pass up a call from Kantos while with Angela, rearranging the order of his priorities.

### **Jamie (angela)**

This episode features Jamie, of the three identities, most prominently as we see him tend to Angela's need with care and speed. He texts her during business hours, drives her to Long Island to see her father and takes her to the old neighborhood for a milkshake. Angela inspires goodness in Ghost and we can see that he struggles to be that man in the face of his biggest secret, the drug dealing. He continues to prioritize Angela over all else in his life and it is most evident when he takes her call during his wife's birthday performance. While the audience may feel sympathetic towards Tasha in this moment, Angela remains the better option for a spouse given Ghost's wants and needs. He later makes a joke referring to Angela as a drug, and the audience knows that she is the better drug than the real ones he sells in the daytime.

### **Tommy**

Tommy also receives a lot of development in this episode. We see that Rolla refers to him as Eminem and Marshall, again referencing his whiteness in an overwhelmingly black world it seems like. Tommy does not allow Ghost to even consider attending a meeting with Ruiz alone for fear of his death and what would happen to his family, yet Ghost has sent Tommy to meetings alone time and time again. Tommy winds up meeting Ruiz alone because Ghost is busy with Angela. Tommy's consideration and devotion to the St. Patricks is unwavering and evident when Tommy remembers Tasha's birthday, and gets her a thoughtful gift. But he also develops a love

arc of his own with Holly, though we see that he loves her, he is always loyal to the St. Patricks and concerned with Ghost's relationship to Tasha.

### **Tasha**

There are two dynamics at play in this episode for Tasha. One sees her continue to be set up as the worse partner for Ghost as it seems she is only appeased with luxury. She is happy with Ghost when he gives her an unlimited budget to plan her birthday party and when she wakes up to a brand new bag. But the audience also sees her sadness at being left behind by Ghost, and it is the first real moment that we are sympathetic towards her. When Ghost leaves her performance to speak with Angela, she is singing a song from the point of view of the mistress. Tasha has unconditional loyalty towards Ghost and they both know it.

### **Angela**

We see a more vulnerable side of Angela this episode as she deals with her sick father. She allows Jamie to comfort her, but still takes the moral high ground when confronted with his infidelity. She is able to tell Jamie that she ended her relationship with Greg but does not receive the same news of his own relationship. Yet despite this hesitation, she finds herself drawn to him. The continuous reference to their childhood connection serves to solidify the hold they have on each other.

### **Kanaan**

We finally see more of Kanaan this episode and understand that he essentially runs the jail. He is powerful and violent, as evident when he holds the life of another prisoner in his hands after a bad chess game. Kanaan is set up as the opposite of Ghost, hungry for power and irrationally violent in his quest to do so. His relationship with Shawn is almost manipulative, whereas Ghost is extremely protective of him.

### **ANALYSIS**

This episode marks an interesting shift in the series considering that Tasha becomes a sympathetic character and the relationship between Jamie and Angie becomes almost too consuming. Nevertheless, Ghost remains as distant as possible from the drug business and so his relationship with Angela is not viewed as favorably as normal, it is not criminal. On the other hand, Tommy is given so much more depth within one episode. His devotion to family, direct criminality, and even racial victimization is on display. Tommy is set up to be the most likeable character in the series. If this wasn't enough, Kanaan is put on display as essentially an anti-Ghost. He is a legitimate labeled criminal who uses violence to sustain his power, and he is manipulative towards Shawn. It is also no coincidence that he is much darker than Ghost in skin color. Kanaan is the stereotype, he does not have redeeming qualities so far.

Despite the audience feelings towards Ghost, he is not an anti-hero. He is not even evil, if the audience is angry with him it is only because he is trying to be lawful. If the audience is angry with him, it is only because we agree more with Tommy and support his immoralities.

*Power*  
Season 1  
Episode 7

### **Ghost (DISTRIBUTOR)**

This is arguably the most important episode of the season, thus far, as we see the usual delegating or organization duties to Tommy but also see Ghost committing the most direct violence we have seen all season. After hearing from both Tommy and Kanaan that Rolla is responsible for the hits, Ghost personally kills Rolla. Yet, this Ghost is a much different person than the one that killed Miguel in the first episode. Earlier, we saw a more in-control man. In this episode, we see that the personal connection he has with Rolla affects him greatly. When he shoots him, Ghost's vision and hearing are distorted and tears stream down his face. We see that Ghost is not entirely convinced that Rolla is responsible, and he is right. Ghost commits the murder to appease Tommy and to protect his organization, but the distance he had had from all of those aspects shows in this killing. Ghost is not cut out for this business. If he was, he would occupy a much more criminal position similar to Tommy. Though Ghost directly commits this murder, he is very much distant from the blatant evil that other anti-heroes inhabit and we sympathize with it. His narrative goes backwards from most anti-heroes. He becomes softer.

After the murder, we witness a pivotal transformation. Ghost is seen outside of a suit which is extremely rare, he wears street clothes to commit this murder. But after is a long scene of him transforming back into the suited legitimate business man we know him as, and the type of man that he wants to be. Ghost wants to be James. He lingers between the two identities, but the audience knows which one is more suited to him.

### **James (CLUB)**

This episode is also the more pivotal in terms of the future of Truth. James is finally able to land a dinner meeting with Simon Stern, and it is incredibly important to him. As they pull up, we are faced with the enormous wealth of Simon Stern, the enormous and legitimate wealth that James strives for. He does not want more power in the organization, he wants more power in the club industry. We see how important this is to him because Tasha reveals that he dressed her, and he tells her not to drink and not to embarrass him. James' high class image is very important to him. But he is not there yet, and everyone knows it.

The most important scene of the episode occurs in the 37<sup>th</sup> minute, when he explains to Stern what makes him so successful. He explains the dual character he inhabits: that of a black man from the hood and a business man living in a penthouse. He insists that he has to "transform" to meet the expectations of the public, whereas Stern is taken at face value. This scene embodies the "twice as hard for half of what they have" concept, whereas Simon gets to be interpreted as is, James understands that there is a double standard for his success. This is incredibly important to understanding the dynamic of the entire show. In order for the show to be palatable to an audience wider than just people of color, James has to be both a perfectly groomed high class citizen in addition to his drug dealings. To be only one would mean to shut out half the crowd.

*“There is no secret. Just me...I’m a Black man from the hood. Most of the guys I came up with are either dead or in jail. I live in the penthouse of my building, above the lawyers and doctors trying to get into my club. See, people take you at face value, Simon. Me, well, I have to transform to meet everyone’s expectations constantly. Truth isn’t one thing because I’m not one thing. You understand? I take all my experiences and use them to cater to all different kinds of people, under one roof. Whether it’s the black professional athlete ordering his next bottle of Cîroc or whether it’s the wall street motherfucker getting blackout drunk on the company’s dime, I understand him. I get him. And because I get him...I get him. And because I get him, I get rich.”*

### **Jamie (Angela)**

Here, Jamie solidifies Angela’s position when he says “Tasha...is not you.” This captures the essence of her character, everything Angela is stands in opposition to his wife. And he chooses her for that reason.

### **Tommy**

Tommy continues to do the most direct business for the organization, he meets with both Drift and Ruiz solo in order to find the identity of the hitter and the woman who has been committing the murders. He starts to make organization decisions alone as he and the others feel Ghost slipping away, which largely upsets Tommy because it affects their personal relationship as well. Another layer of depth for Tommy. But after Ghost kills Rolla, Tommy feels that he can trust Ghost again.

### **Tasha**

This episode marks the start of deterioration in Tasha’s loyalty to Ghost. She manipulates Shawn in order to get information on Angela, and doing so upsets her. But she does not confront him, which is uncharacteristic of Tasha. She tries to remind Ghost of her loyalty. Instead she accompanies him to Stern’s dinner and plays the part of the wife. When one of the white women ask to touch her hair, she becomes angry and subsequently interferes on behalf of Ghost during his meeting with Stern. Tasha is not comfortable with the company that James is attempting to keep, and she upsets Ghost once again. She stays the antithesis to Angela considering that Angela did not scold Jamie for skipping out on their dinner for business. She voices this when she tells LaKeisha “She ain’t white. She ain’t black either. She’s nothing like me.”

### **Angela**

Angela faces tension with people in her life tearing down her relationship with Jamie, and it takes a toll on her as well when he cancels their dinner in order to be at Stern’s house. It is unusual for Jamie to choose the club over her, but it is significant that he returns to her house afterwards to make it up to her. Angela remains on the moral high ground as she confronts Jamie for his infidelity, she is forcing their fantasy into reality and forcing Jamie into goodness. She says she does not want to break up their family and yet doing so would put Jamie in a clean life. So while there is bad it is ultimately for good.

## **Kanaan**

Kanaan is finally revealed as the series' antagonist. Opposite of Ghost, Kanaan proves to be the one that is trying to cause his downfall. He manipulates Ghost into killing Rolla and then puts a hit out on Ghost himself. Kanaan is pure evil, as Ghost is not, and he is the villain because of it.

## **ANALYSIS**

This episode solidifies Ghost's positionality within the show. He is neither fully criminal nor fully lawful, but he is struggling to be the latter. His speech during dinner with Simon Stern explains the he must inhabit a dual character in order to be palatable to a large audience, and this applies both in the show and outside of it. It provides an explanation for the distanced criminality we have seen him inhabit, staying away from direct involvement with drugs or violence and instead allowing Tommy to absorb the identity. He makes it known that men like Simon Stern, powerful and white, are taken at "face value," they require no explanation. But men like Ghost, a "Black man from the hood" require transformation. This transformation we see in the elevator after his murders Rolla, he literally changes from street killer to suited business man. Where the success comes from though, is having him lean towards lawful. Sure, he killed Rolla but he is not cut out to be doing so and the audience knows it. He is with Angela because Angela forces goodness in him, she does not demand material and is understanding of his work schedule. But most importantly she would never tolerate him running drugs.

Setting Ghost up to be legitimate takes him being reflected off of two counterparts: Tommy and Kanaan. Tommy is his violent and criminal partner, the one that is able to commit direct violence without consequence. Kanaan is Ghost's adversary, he is power hungry and violent. Ghost is neither like Tommy nor Kanaan. We like Tommy, but we hate Kanaan. Despite them being incredibly similar characters. Kanaan is in jail, Tommy is not. Tommy has layers that involve drugs, family, love, and even comedy. Kanaan is a criminal.

*Power*

Season 1

Episode 8

## **Ghost/James (distributor/club)**

This episode intertwines Ghost's two worlds more than ever. Lobos sends a new opportunity in Ghost's way: distribute twice the amount of product and receive twice the rewards. While Ghost is initially hesitant to agree to deeper involvement in drugs, Lobos convinces him to consider it because it will allow him more power and therefore more distance between him and the street. Therefore, Ghost's involvement with drugs continues to be based on distance from criminality. Despite climbing the ranks of the cartel ladder, he does so to allow for more power within the club industry. We see that his interests really lie in the club because he convinces Tommy to become the sole boss within the drug organization, and explains that doing so will require Ghost to open a second club to clean the money. Taking on more drugs means being able to build a nightlife empire. Being able to do more business with Cynthia Sheridan means opening a second club in Miami. He is so devoted to this dream that he even ignores Angela's

call, something that is unprecedented. Though of course expanding his club means building a life for him and Angela.

When Holly is shot in the club, it causes major trouble for Truth. The police are shutting down Truth for a long time, and Ghost also loses the business of Cynthia Sheridan. All of these problems culminate in Ghost calling Lobos to take on as much weight as possible, he cites a need of more cash. This tells the audience that he is not entering into more drug business for the sake of power or greed, but rather to fix the issues that he faces with his club. He ends his call saying that he will be the “biggest goddamn drug dealer in New York City,” paralleling the identity that Tasha has always wanted him to inhabit since the first episode. While on the surface, this may seem as though Ghost has finally crossed to the dark side, his reasons for doing so are still out of want for a legitimate life. He may not be getting out soon or ever, but the passing of the baton to Tommy implies that as long as he’s in he may as well distance himself as far as possible from the drugs.

### **Jamie (Angela)**

This episode solidifies Jamie’s choosing of Angela, he finally begins the process of breaking things off with Tasha. He books a joint trip with Angela to scope out new club locations in Miami. He finally chooses to start his legitimate life. Although everything is complicated by the shooting at Truth, Jamie is unwavering in his goal to open a new location no matter what it takes. He may not be getting out any time soon, but he wants to.

### **Tommy**

This episode solidifies Tommy’s direct control over the drug business. He is excited after being kidnapped by Lobos and pushes Ghost to expand the business. He is given direct authority over the business decisions and does just that as he attempts to organize Ruiz and the other primaras into moving double the weight. In order to get Ruiz to cooperate, Tommy kills Nomar. This is an interesting scene because it is the only time all season where we see Tommy dress up in a suit, implying that this is a business decision for him, and it is important. Tommy’s direct involvement with the business all season meant he has always been the most vulnerable, and this is demonstrated in his realization that Angela is an AUSA. Tommy is identified as Ghost and there is a partial sketch that may serve to identify him as such. Tommy is at the most risk of going to jail logically and because he will not occupy a stereotype for doing so. This plotline protects Ghost but also protects the show from putting another Black actor in a prison cell. Doing so also protects the relationship between Ghost and Angela and allows him time to get out. Giving Tommy this information gives him the power to end their relationship and finally put Ghost back in line.

### **Tasha**

Although the last episode placed Tasha in a sympathetic position, that quickly disappears when Ghost finds out about Tasha essentially paying for Raina’s part in the school play. It sets her up as a liar and a cheater, despite the acts of the characters around her. It justifies Ghost leaving early for work, as he says he must earn back the money she spends. It justifies Ghost becoming closer to Angela and eventually leaving

her. Tasha finally breaks down over the deterioration of her relationship and moves to protect herself and her family by opening a solitary bank account with legitimate money.

### **Angela**

Although Angela has been set up as Tasha's opposite, we do see Angela work the system to get what she wants. Although her means are always for a good end. She retains moral high ground when she is sad over hearing Ghost left Tasha for good, though it is the future she ultimately asked for. Angela is distracted by Ghost and the audience knows it, but them moving to Miami offers a fresh start. Miami offers everyone the chance to make it all right: Ghost gets a new club and Angela gets a new position and a new man.

### **Kanaan**

Kanaan getting out of jail is more a set up for the second season than it is meaningful for this first season. He provides a new threat for Ghost, especially as Ghost takes on more responsibility in the drug game. He provides more danger.

### **ANALYSIS**

We finally see Ghost's two most important worlds collide in this episode. Throughout this season Ghost has reasonably handled both Truth and the drug business with frustration, but little major difficulties. But with Lobos asking for him to move more weight and Cynthia Sheridan/Simon Stern forcing him to open a second location, he realizes he can't have one without the other. He must inhabit the dual character he explained to Stern last episode. Moving more weight will allow him to open a second location, especially in the face of Truth shutting down over the shooting. Ghost might never get out of the game, but he can distance himself as far as possible from it by putting Tommy in charge of the streets. With Ghost running the clubs and cleaning the money, he can remove himself from vulnerability. This is most evident as Tommy winds up being identified as Ghost. Since he has had the most direct involvement with the drugs and crime, he is at the most risk of going to jail. This seems almost deliberate by the writers because Tommy going to jail has no big cultural significance, but Ghost in a prison cell stamps him a stereotype. By removing Ghost from the criminal equation, he is able to protect his lawful citizen side and the show is able to protect its Black protagonist.