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Psychology of Cultural Diversity

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*Crash* as a Culturally Diverse Movie

It is undeniable that *Crash* is a powerful movie. It webs together stories from different people, genders, ages, and races. Throughout two days in Los Angeles, viewers see the lives of many develop, including a black detective, who is having relations with his Mexican partner, and his criminal brother, who is in line with a gang associate; a Persian father and his immigrant family; a Hispanic locksmith and his young daughter; a white District attorney and his judgmental wife; a racist white police officer and his young partner; and an African American couple, who have to deal with the racist officer. This film is a bold approach to racism, revealing that often, the victims are offenders themselves, and vice-versa. It reveals the harsh realities of the thoughts that shape the very lives of people across the world.

All of the characters portrayed in this movie are relatable, and accurately present the cultural and ethnic stereotypes found in today’s society. It would be a lie to say that there is even one person on the face of this earth who is not stereotypical when it comes to race or ethnicity. No one is innocent of cultural prejudice. But why should this stop people from expressing their own cultural diversity? *Crash* successfully forces viewers to look at their own cultural background, and their experiences with those different from them. How many times have you skimped a white man’s change, assuming he did not need it? How many times have you crossed the street when two black men approach? How many times have you felt uncomfortable sitting next to an Arab on a plane flight? This movie makes us think about the lives others live, and how they are not much different from our own. We are all culturally diverse, but that does not mean that we are not all similar, and cannot learn to appreciate the lives of others surrounding us. This movie makes people reflect on their lives, the lives of others around us, and the impact two people can make in this world.

While the characters all hold their prejudices, the one that expresses her thoughts most is Jean, the District Attorney’s wife. After being held at gunpoint in a gun robbery, Jean coarsely shows her prejudices. “But if a white person sees two black men walking towards her and she turns and walks in the other direction, she’s a racist, right?” Jean shouts at Rick. She then carries on to show her prejudices against the Hispanic locksmith, saying “your amigo in there is gonna sell our key to one of his homies.” Like everyone, she is extremely prejudiced against people of a different race. But does that make her racist? If we call Jean racist, would that not mean that almost anyone in the movie, anyone in the world even, would be a racist?

Anthony, the young black criminal associate played by Ludacris, goes off on minute-long monologues of why whites are all ruling the world just to make African Americans feel unwelcomed. He even expresses how large windows on buses are to make the lower-class black people ashamed that they have to ride public transportation. Anthony cries racism at almost anything, from the bus windows to the white conspiracy behind hip hop. And yet, he visibly punishes whites by stealing their cars and holding them at gunpoint. Because someone has prejudices does not mean that they are racist. It simply means that they are members of society like each and every one of us.

To a certain extent, I even identify with Jean. She is not a bad person for playing into the game society lays out. Often, this is what people are taught. Growing up in a white privileged society, I have heard all of these stereotypes. I have even said them on countless occasions, either out of humor or fear. Like stated previously, no one is innocent of racial discrimination or cultural prejudice. But like Jean, that does not make me a racist. It is what I was taught both as a child, and as a young woman. Although, I also identified with the young police officer. I have seen people take these prejudices to the extreme, where they become racist acts. But when put into that situation, it is hard to stand up for people you do not know. While the acts were not extreme, I could have protested, but that also would make me an outsider, and even a target for their harassment.

Honestly, I cannot make myself completely innocent to acts of racial discrimination. I have crossed the street if two African American men are walking towards me while I am alone. However, the racial stereotypes are sometimes true, and I believe that it is better to be safe than in trouble, and if that means playing to racial stereotypes, then I will do that to protect myself. I would do the same to intimidating white males, so I personally do not view these acts as wrong, just cautious.

By watching this movie, I learned that one act can completely determine someone else’s life. This was particularly expressed by the Arab and Hispanic fathers. Because the Arab man did not speak English, and the Hispanic man was impatient, the Hispanic man’s daughter almost died. If both parties were more patient and thoughtful, the young girl would not have been put in that situation. I think people have to be more patient, and not immediately jump to conclusions. The Hispanic man was impatient because it was late at night, and the Arab man immediately decided that the locksmith had vandalized his store. Because of racial stereotypes, the young girl almost lost her life. We have to be more considerate to those around us. We all are more similar than we believe, and even though two people may be different externally, they can be more alike than anyone would believe.