Kathryn Atherton

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Reflection 2

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The 2004 Oscar-winning film *Crash* discusses the racial and social tensions in Los Angeles by showing explicit scenes in which bias between groups is brought to the forefront. Harrowing scenes force the audience to confront their own personal biases against people of all races, genders, and classes. The film tells its story by switching between perspectives of diverse characters. The characters discuss between each other their past experiences to show the audience why they think the way they do about people different from them. Eventually these characters’ experiences literally crash together, and they are made to interact with each other and question their biases against one another. The coincidences that bring the characters together show how the consequences of a person acting on their bias affects the lives of those who hold the bias and those who are on the other side of the action being harassed. The audience gets to see how the consequences of each person’s actions within each storyline and how it affected people on each side of the action.

On one hand, the film seems to overdramatize confrontations at times, making the implicit biases that one might hold explicit. These explicit moments force the audience to reflect on their own thoughts. One may hold the same beliefs and biases as a character in this movie but never act on them; however, once one is confronted with someone acting on a thought one has had, they must consider how their bias affects those around them. While these effects might not be as obvious as those depicted in the film, they can have a lasting impact on members of other communities.

Although some of the confrontations may seem to be too overt at times, certain situations still ring true to this day. The final scene of the movie shows a man rear-ending a woman. They both get out of their cars and scream at each other, the woman in English and the man in a different language. She proceeds to tell him to “speak American”. This situation is far too common in today’s American society. This past week, a woman was arrested on two counts of bias-induced harassment for telling two Latina women to speak English while they were shopping in a supermarket in Colorado (Horton, 2018). Another shopper defended the women and called the police, but this is not always the case. I am glad that people are recognizing and standing up for victims of bias, but, sadly, it is obvious that people’s biases against people of other cultures have not been challenged very much since 2004 when *Crash* was released.

In addition to addressing inter-group biases, the film also tackles the concept of intra-group conflict and how people grapple with the differences between how they perceive their identity within a group and how others perceive their group as a whole. A good example of this is the struggle that Don Cheadle’s character, Detective Graham Waters, undergoes throughout the plot of the film. Waters is a black man whose mother is a drug-addict and brother has had multiple run-ins with the law. He keeps himself at a distance from his family while working as a detective and consistently has to confront the class difference between himself and his family posed by his job and his mother. He is offered a deal to send a potentially innocent man to jail in order to cleanse his brother’s legal record while his mother holds him responsible for his younger brother’s actions and fate. These clashing values are central to his struggle to prove that he is more than the stereotype his coworkers throw around about “fucking black people”.

Another intra-group bias appears in the form of the Thayers’, a black couple, interaction with the white police officers Ryan and Hanson. Officer Ryan sees Cameron driving while being pleasured by Christine, whom he believes to be white. He pulls them over and sexually assaults Christine due to his jealousy that a white woman is with a black man. Although Christine is not white, her perceived identity led the officer to treat her with a bias against the interracial nature of their relationship. Again, this is not a new phenomenon and it has not improved since the movie was released. This summer, an interracial couple was asked by an airline to prove that their child was actually theirs because the mother and child had different last names and skin colors (NewsOne Staff, 2018).

*Crash* won the Oscar for Best Picture because of how uncomfortable it makes its audience. It forces people to reflect upon how bias has affected their lives and how they have affected others’. Although I don’t believe that our society has changed much since the film was released, I am enthused that when *Crash-*moments occur, people are quick to recognize and denounce them. This leads me to believe that future generations will be quicker to question and confront their own biases and prevent future bias-fueled confrontations from happening.

**Bibliography**

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