

Crash and privilege, power, and difference



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Matthew Miller Paper #1: Privilege, Power, and Difference* and *Crash The Movie Crash is set in Los Angeles and begins when several people are involved in a multi-car accident. From there the movie skips to the day before where we see the lives of several of the characters who were involved in the crash and the racial problems they encounter that day. The movie begins by showing an Islamic man and his daughter going into a gun shop to buy a gun. When the Islamic man speaks in a different language to his daughter the store clerk says to him “ Hey Osama, plan your Jihad on your own time. An argument ensues and the daughter ends up staying in the store and buying the gun, and instead of bullets she accidentally buys blanks as ammo, however the clerk does not tell her this. The movie then skips to a couple of young black men who are complaining about the service they received at a restaurant. One of them says it is because of the stereotype that blacks don't tip very well, and then says that he didn't tip anything because of the poor service. As the two black men are walking down the street they come across a white politician and his wife.

When the politician's wife sees the black men coming towards them she gets closer to her husband. One of the black men notices this and points it out. Shortly after they pass each other the young black men steal the white couples' car at gunpoint. The politician's wife is really upset about being carjacked and has all of the locks in their house changed. When the locksmith comes and she sees that he is Hispanic she takes her anger out on him. The movie then shows a white LAPD officer who is trying to get medical help for his ailing father.

The officer is having problems with a black clerk who won't give the officer's father permission to see another doctor. The white officer takes his frustration out on a black couple during a traffic stop and ends up sexually assaulting the woman. Next the Persian from the beginning of the movie calls the Hispanic locksmith to have him fix the lock at the shop that he owns. The Hispanic locksmith tells the Persian that he changed the lock but it wouldn't do any good because he needs to replace the door. The Persian gets mad and tells the locksmith to fix the door and the locksmith said that he doesn't do that, he just fixes locks.

The Persian shopkeeper gets really mad about this. Shortly after this, the Persian man's shop is robbed, and because he didn't replace the door insurance will not cover the damage. The Persian man is extremely upset about this and blames it on the Mexican locksmith. The white police officer has another run in with the HMO clerk. The white police officer basically tells the clerk that she only got that job because of affirmative action and that she probably beat out eight more qualified white men for the job.

He also tells her that despite the fact that his father's janitorial service employed only black men he was forced out of business by affirmative action laws. The movie then goes to the crash where the black lady that was assaulted earlier in the movie is trapped in her car and surrounded by gasoline. It is only a matter of time before the car will explode and the first officer on the scene is the white officer who assaulted her earlier. The black lady initially tells him to go away, but he is very nice to her and ensures her that he is only trying to save her.

He pulls her out of the car just before the car explodes. The movie then shows the Hipic locksmith getting home from work, where he is then approached by the angry Persian shopkeeper, who blames him for his store being robbed and pulls a gun on him. The Hipic locksmith's daughter sees the gun pulled on her dad and runs in front of him just before the Persian man pulls the trigger. The shot is fired and everyone thinks the young girl has been shot, but since the Persian man's daughter accidentally bought blanks in the beginning of the movie the young girl is fine.

The movie ends with one of the young black hijackers being shot by the partner of the racist white police officer over some confusion. The first time I saw Crash my initial response was that the movie is incredibly sad. It is upsetting that so many of the racial issues we are faced with today stem from ignorance and fear. Part of me thinks this movie goes a little overboard with the racism issues in the movie because I don't know if it is likely that so many people's paths would cross in such a way where so many of them have such deep rooted racism and misunderstanding.

It almost seems like the movie takes the racial stereotypes a little too far, but I think that was the point. It shows stereotyping and racism to an extreme and it makes you think that these peoples' actions are ridiculous. I don't think most of us are racist to the degree that is shown in the movie, but showing it to such an extreme really makes you aware of how ignorant racism is on any level. While the movie takes these examples to extremes, I do think a lot of the racial issues that occurred in the movie do happen on a regular basis, the movie just ties them together in the p of two hours to make a movie.

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At first I thought this was a little too much, but now I get the point of it. I really think the point of this movie was to raise awareness of the problem because awareness is a major step in the right direction towards solving the problem. One thing that stuck out to me because I've heard a lot about it is in the beginning of the movie when the young black men are talking about the poor service they received and that it was because of the stereotype that black people don't tip very well. I have been dating a server for a few years, and she really isn't racist at all, but she says this is true.

She says she hates it because anytime she is serving a table of black people this stereotype goes through her head and she hates thinking that but it's true. I seriously doubt she is a person who would ever give them poor service because of the stereotype but I am sure that in some cases that happens. I think sometimes stereotypes are reinforced because of people's preconceived thoughts. I am sure there are cases where a table of black people may receive poor service because the server assumes the table will tip poorly and then because the table receives poor service they probably do tip poorly, and the stereotype is reinforced.

I thought the movie *Crash* and the book *Privilege, Power, and Difference* were similar in many ways, but also very different in some ways as well. I think both the book and the movie take racial issues to extremes. I think they both do this to raise awareness of the important issues. In the book Johnson states " People can't help fearing the unfamiliar—including people of other races" (2006, p. 4), Johnson goes on to say this isn't necessarily true, but I think the movie tries to highlight this aspect of the problem.

In the movie when the politician and his wife are walking down the street, the wife gets closer to her husband when the young black men approach because she is afraid of them. She is a person that has probably not dealt with very many young black men and she probably thinks that all young black men are criminals. In the movie she turns out to be right about these two men and is carjacked by them, but real life isn't really that way. At some points I thought the movie kind of reinforced negative stereotypes like the young black men stealing the white couple's car after she seemed racist for thinking they would do that.

The book talks a lot about white racism and makes it sound as if it is white privilege that is holding back black people. I think the movie does a better job of showing racism from all aspects. The movie makes it seem like all races are racist against races other than their own, while concentrating heavily on the relationship between whites and blacks. In the movie one of the young thieves says that he would never rob a black person, and goes on and on about how white people hold black people down. Another important issue that the movie brought up is affirmative action laws.

The white police officer who is dealing with the black HMO clerk brings up the issue in an argument with her. I think obviously the officer is out of line with what he says, however he brings up a pretty good point. The book goes on and on about the advantages of being "privileged". When Johnson talks about the "privileged" he is referring to white men. Johnson says that the privileged have access to better jobs and will usually be hired instead of a black person or a woman. He is completely ignoring the affirmative action laws when he states this.

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Johnson states that “ watching movies and television the message came across loud and clear that white men are the most important people on the planet” (2006, p. 79). I think the idea of the white man being “ ideal” can be seen in the movie. When the black couple is arguing after the woman is sexually assaulted by the white police officer , the women says to her husband, you didn’t want to do anything because you didn’t want your name to be in the paper and all of your friends to know you really are black.

I think she is implying to him that he hangs around with all white directors and acts white like them so that he will be more successful, but in the process has lost his “ blackness”. Overall I thought both the book and the movie do a good job of raising awareness of the many racial issues that we are face with. They both take these racial issues to an extreme to make it clear that they do exist to a large extent. I thought the movie did a better job of giving a realistic portrayal of racism from all sides while the book seemed to be stuck on the concept of “ white racism”. White racism” is certainly not a topic to be ignored and if you want to understand the racial issues we are faced with today it is not a bad place to start. However, the race issue runs much deeper than just white racism and can really be seen in cultures all around the world. I thought that Crash did a really good job of showing racism, and the negative affect it has in our society. Bibliography Haggis, Paul (2004). Crash.