

The film crash



The Film Crash COM 200 Interpersonal Communicati November 06, 2011 The Film Crash In the 2004 film Crash (Haggis), several conflicts are explored between people living in a racially indicted city. While the conflicts occur at many levels between many people throughout the film, the most unproductive to watch as the viewer is the conflict between Daniel Ruiz, the locksmith, and Farhad, the shop owner. The conflict escalates as communication between the two breaks down over a language barrier. In due course, we see the conflict increase to the point that one man feels his only alternative is armed retaliation against the other.

The conflict begins as Daniel responds to a locksmith call at Farhad's shop. Daniel replaces a broken lock on the shop's back door, but tries to explain to Farhad that the door itself is the problem, not the lock. Farhad's English is not fluent, and he does not understand Daniel to begin with, but decides after interpreting Daniel's warning about the lock that Daniel is trying to cheat him. The encounter becomes a heated argument as Farhad refuses to pay for a door not fixed while Daniel explains that he only fixes locks, not doors.

The ultimate result being the unfixed lock leaves the shop exposed to thieves who ransack the place leaving Farhad without an income source for his family. Farhad decides the only justice is to gun down Ruiz for the loss and believes he caused by not fixing the door. Examining how the conflict might have been resolved, it's important to look at the communication styles of each participant. When we first see Daniel earlier in the film, he is being verbally disrespected by a rich and racist client who believes he is untrustworthy, and possibly a gang member.

As this scene unfolds, we see Daniel finishing the locksmithing job quietly. Researcher Kathy Sole might initially classify him as having a passive or submissive communication style (Sole, 2010, sec 9. 4 para 3). Before leaving the rich client's house though, Daniel angrily slams the new keys on the counter, showing us he is really a passive-aggressive communicator. This passive-aggressive nature is played out again while dealing with Farhad. Instead of asserting his point that the door is the origin of the problem, not the lock, Daniel crumples up the bill and walks out without getting paid for his work at Farhad's shop.

Farhad is not passive-aggressive like Daniel. While Daniel walks away from conflict while expressing anger indirectly, Farhad is openly aggressive and intimidating. Like our introduction to Daniel, we first see Farhad in a gun shop where he is thrown out after a loud argument with the owner who has a racist bias against him. Farhad's aggressive communication style makes it difficult for him to listen effectively, as seen when Daniel initially tells him the door, not the lock, is the problem. Rather than listening, Farhad begins assuming Daniel is setting him up for a scam or cheat.

This assumption leads Farhad to react even more aggressively in an attempt to force Daniel to fix the door. Although Daniel initially made attempts to resolve the conflict, it was ultimately handled incorrectly. Daniel's first response to Farhad's aggression was to try a basic assertion by explaining the problem directly, Farhad's weak English lead to further misunderstandings and a total breakdown in communication as both began yelling. The effective way to handle to conflict would have been empathetic assertion.

Empathetic Assertion is stating one's desired outcome while acknowledging the other person's feelings (Sole, 2010, sec 9. 4 para 11). At issue was not as much the locksmithing work as the emotions of both men involved. Upon seeing Farhad's violent reaction to the news that the door needed replacing, Daniel should have responded, " I understand how you feel; this shop is you and your family's livelihood. We need to fix the door to keep your shop safe, but I am only a locksmith, not a carpenter. " In this response, he addresses the other person's needs as the most important issue, not the lock or the door.

Had the two talked even briefly, they would have found out they had a lot in common, and shared a lot of the same emotions and feelings about family, racial tensions, and work. Although the piece with Daniel and Farhad ultimately ends well, the conflict between the two was handled poorly, and none of their actions would have resolved it amicably. References Haggis, P. (Director). (2004). Crash [DVD]. Los Angeles: Bob Yari Productions. Sole, K. (2011). Making connections: Understanding interpersonal communication. San Diego, CA: Bridgepoint Education, Inc. Retrieved from <https://content.ashford.edu/books/AUCOM200.11.1/back>