

Reaction Essay for Crash and Carefully Taught

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The experiences that one has in one's life teach them things about the world; essential things like ice can freeze, or fire can burn. Unfortunately, this same mechanism leads us to believe other things like Middle Eastern people are terrorists or black males are violent criminals. After viewing the movie *Crash* (Cheadle et al., 2004) and the clip of Mandy Patinkin singing the song "You've Got to be Carefully Taught" (Rodgers & Hammerstein II, 1949), particular themes regarding stereotypes became apparent. The first is that stereotyping and profiling are very real, dysfunctional belief systems. The second is these beliefs must be taught by another person, society in general, or experience. The final is that through some work, these beliefs can be overcome and unlearned. These themes are supported by the readings this week as well (Gladding, 2018; Payne, Niemi, & Doris, 2018; Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & Rafferty McCullough, 2016).

The movie does an excellent job of showing exaggerated versions of typical stereotypes doing very stereotypical things (Cheadle et al., 2004). However, by doing this, one massive implication for counseling is raised. People's beliefs shape their worldview (Gladding, 2018). Their worldview dictates how not only who they are as a person, but how they behave and actions that they take or do not take. Therefore, to properly treat a client, any dysfunctional biases, attitudes, or beliefs held by either the client or the counselor must be overcome and unlearned.

The beginnings of this unlearning process are depicted for many of the main characters in the movie (Cheadle et al., 2004). By seeing the damage that his bigotted behavior almost caused to Christie (Thandie Newton), if she were not able to overcome her fear of him, Officer Ryan (Matt Dillon's character) seems to question his previous actions. Jean (Sandra Bullock) realizes

that the person she disregarded the most because of her social standing, specifically her housekeeper, is one who actually takes care of her. Farhad (Shaun Toub) realizes, after almost killing Daniel's daughter, that the theft at his shop was his fault because he believed Daniel to be untrustworthy because of his race. Anthony (Chris "Ludacris" Bridges) realizes that he needs to rise above the stereotypes that surround him in order to be a better man (Cheadle et al., 2004).

Each of these characters had a life-changing mirror held up in front of their faces and seem to want to change. Unfortunately, this same mirror, when held up to Officer Hansen (Ryan Phillippe), uncovered something relatively unexpected. His subconscious, or implicit (Payne, Niemi, & Doris, 2018), bias created a situation in which he became afraid and assumed the worst about Peter (Lorenz Tate) and Peter ended up dead. The unlearning process is laborious and any counselor who is helping another through it should be ready to deal with unexpected, implicit biases.

The thing about this movie that was the most surprising is how overtly stereotypical all of the main characters were. Each one fits neatly into a grossly stereotypical box. Entitled, reverse-racist, black male is a criminal who steals cars. Rich, white couple drive a gas-guzzling, over-priced SUV. The woman, a neurotic housewife, is suspicious of everyone not white. The man is a politician who is overly concerned with his image in the community. The Middle Eastern family owns a convenience store. The gun store owner automatically believes the Middle Eastern father to be a terrorist. Bigot cop abuses power (Cheadle et al., 2004). The list goes on and on. After a while, because of this, it became hard to focus on the plot of the movie and the message of the film was almost entirely lost. Fortunately, there were some shining examples of people who did not fit into convenient boxes: Farhad's daughter, Peter, Daniel, and Daniel's daughter. These characters saved the movie and made it worth watching.

All in all, Crash (Cheadle et al., 2004) is a social commentary on the rampant racism and discrimination that happens every day across the United States, if not the globe. It brings up some very valid talking points and concerns for the future of humanity. It also gives some hope that people can change for the better if they are willing to try. This is where a well-educated, culturally aware counselor can come in handy. Being trained to understand various cultures, counselors can ultimately help those who wish to overcome their dysfunctional beliefs and attitudes (Gladding, 2018; Ratts, Singh, Nassar-McMillan, Butler, & Rafferty McCullough, 2016).

References

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