

Introduction:

I identify as being Singaporean-Malay-Chinese. Most of my beliefs, values and norms are influenced by the Singaporean way of life –which is a mish-mash of cultures and traditions from the Chinese, Malay, Indian and Eurasian life—as I spent an entire 17 years growing up in Singapore. In addition to that, my parents have made sure that I visited at least two countries a year whilst growing up. I credit my open-mindedness and independence to being well traveled.

For this assignment, I chose to watch the film *Crash* for many reasons. Besides the fact that most of my friends had recommended it, I also watched it because one of the group presentations in class featured a few scenes from the movie, and I was very interested in finding out what happened. *Crash* also received great reviews from the press, and it also won the Oscar for Best Picture and two other awards. I believe that quite a number of people are going to be reviewing the same movie, but I also realized that everyone would have a different spin on their review.

“Crash features a variety of different actors representing a myriad of cultures. There is a black police detective with a drugged out mother and a thieving younger brother, two car thieves who are constantly theorizing on society and race, the distracted district attorney and his irritated and pampered wife. It also has a racist veteran cop (caring for a sick father at home) who disgusts his more idealistic younger partner, a successful black Hollywood director and his wife who must deal with racist cop, and a Persian-immigrant father who buys a gun to protect his shop. To end it off, there is a Hispanic locksmith and his young daughter who is afraid of bullets, and more. The movie interweaves several different stories during two days in Los Angeles involving a collection of inter-related characters into one full movie” (taken in part from a review by Martin Lewison and posted on IMDB).

Crash features stories which are vastly different from the stories in the society I grew up in. In my paper, I will highlight the different beliefs, values and norms and strengthen my point with examples which I believe will help you paint a better picture.

“It’s the sense of touch. In any real city, you walk, you know? You brush past people, people bump into you. In L.A, nobody touches you. We’re always behind metal and glass. I think we miss that touch so much, that we crash into each other, just so we can feel something.” The film starts off with this short description and I think that this is what is carried out throughout the movie.

Comparison & Contrasts of Beliefs, Values & Norms:

In the film, the **belief** that I noted was when the prevalence of racial inequality that I saw in the film. The most glaring one was when Sandra Bullock (Euro-American culture) immediately clung onto her husband when they were walking past the two black guys on the street. Although that scene played in the beginning of the show, it was still imprinted in the back of my mind when the show ended. I think that many in the white community and even Asians in the United States have been taught that the black community has a large number of criminals. Also, from a young age, many American students have been taught to stay out of black neighborhoods as they're most crime prevalent. In Singapore, I was always taught that we were a multi-racial society and that racism was not meant to be tolerated. Singaporeans were taught to be racially tolerant and racially harmonious, and we would all celebrate Racial Harmony Day once a year. In schools, students were made to mix with students from other races, and do projects together. We were also taught periodically about the other racial groups in Singapore. The wide disparity in races was fundamentally not meant to happen. That scene also showed me a second but not so obvious belief, that men were seen as protectors. Sandra Bullock clung onto her husband because she viewed him as being able to protect her and shield her if anything happened. In Singapore, it is pretty much the same belief. Men are seen as protectors and until recently the sole breadwinners. In my own belief, women are encouraged to speak up and to take higher flying jobs. I was also taught that the sky is the limit, and we can rely on ourselves for most of our needs.

The **value** that I had selected was the preservation of family. This was most apparent when the Persian shopkeeper bought a gun so as to protect himself and his family. Putting the scene in the shop aside, the main concern of the Persian was to get the gun solely for protecting his wife. He had no knowledge of how to use a gun, but he knew that he had to do something drastic to prevent other people from stepping all over his family. We have the same value in my culture, family is always most important, and we should protect them no matter what. In this aspect of values, the Chinese culture has greatly influenced what I think about preservation of family. In the Chinese realm, the concept of face is the most important, and the elders in a family believe that someone of the family should never ruin their face. An experience when I was eight years old taught me this very grave lesson.

When I was eight, my Mandarin tutor quit teaching me and she told my grandmother that she could not handle my sisters or me because we refused to listen to her and she left. During dinner that day, my sisters and I were seated around the dining table and getting a huge scolding as well as a caning. It was apparently wrong of us for not giving my tutor the due respect she deserved, as well as making my Grandmother "lose face" in front of her friends. (Because none of her friends had grandkids who had their tutors quit

on them.) Preservation of family became not only a concept of life or death, but it became a concept about "*face*".

The **norm** that I picked out was the freedom of having sex even when the couple was not married. Halfway through the movie, we witness Jennifer Esposito & Don Cheadle having sex. In the U.S. American culture, it seems that sex is a norm for many, there are no strings attached, and everyone is free to do as he/she pleases. I read many teen magazines and fashion magazines, and not one has explicitly mentioned that abstinence is key. Sex is seen by many as a trivial happening and could occur even when no love is involved in U.S. American society. In the Asian society that I come from, sex is seen as negative before a girl is married and not even positive when the girl is married. Sex is never explicitly talked about, and most families would not want to know or discuss a girl's sex life. In Singapore, most couples wait until they are married before they consummate their love. The government, schools and health community also always make sure to encourage safe sex and abstinence.

Conclusion:

Crash was a great movie that highlighted racial inequality and segregation in the United States. I learnt that life is what you make it out to be; one can either change his course of life, or let it go on the way it is going. For example, in the movie, Ludacris eventually let go of his thieving ways and even gave up earning some money to let the Asian illegal aliens in his van go. On the other hand, Ryan Phillippe was so caught up in his idea of "*following the right path*" that he ended up murdering another black man out of fear. This is what the writer meant by "*crash into each other*".

Life has tons of twists and turns, it is just how we ride the journey of life.