

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I.1. Background

Culture is a complex term widely used in many subject areas. There is no fixed definition that generalizes the meaning of this word because the term varies depending on what context it is being talked about. According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, as a way of life, for instance, culture is defined as the customs and beliefs, art, way of life and social organization of a particular country or group. Meanwhile, in a more specific sense such as beliefs/attitudes, it means the beliefs and attitudes about something that people in a particular group or organization share. Based on that statement, it is safe to say that people and ideas, among many other entities, play the most important role in the construction of a culture.

The cultural background of a particular society does not always indicate that everybody who inhabits it live under one particular belief and value system. In a country like the United States, the citizens comprise a variety of people with different cultural background from around the globe. It is common that in this mosaic-styled society, where everybody with differing cultural background live together while preserving their unique cultural identity, conflicts of interest occasionally occur. America was built and then proclaimed a country since the European explorer first colonized the Native American, which is the Indian. Since then, more European came to America and became permanent settlers in the

country. Quite the contrary, historically, people from Africa were taken there as slaves. Later on, America became the home to a variety of people from all over the world. If there are places where harmony and conflicts may collide every now and then, America is one of them.

As for the topic of this paper, the researcher has made an analysis on one of the examples of how conflicting interests in a multicultural society elicit controversies between social groups represented in a text. The research subject of this analysis is a screenplay written by Paul Haggis and Bobby Moresco for a Hollywood movie entitled *Crash* released in 2004. The researcher decided to use a source of analysis of which the after-product is a movie because, in the context of Cultural Studies, the idea of a text not only includes written language, but also films, photographs, fashion or even hairstyles because the texts of cultural studies comprise all the meaningful artifacts of culture.

Crash raises the issue of racism in modern America. It tells the story of several people who live in Los Angeles, their social interaction, and the tensions that occur between them in the aftermath of the devastating World Trade Center bombing tragedy. In a deeper level, this story also describes the effect of white supremacy in a multicultural country like the USA. The term white supremacy denotes the domination and repression of white people to those of the non-white groups. White supremacy is closely related to racism in that most racists think that people of color are inferior to them. White supremacy, as a system of belief, manifests itself in institutional forms of policies and regulation that, although not

entirely true, only benefit some members in a society while discriminate those in the subordinate groups.

In accordance to that notion, the researcher has analyzed this screenplay in the perspective of postcolonial theory. Post-colonialism, as it is briefly explained in *Wikipedia* on-line encyclopedia, is a term that refers to a set of theories in philosophy, Film, and literature that grapple with the legacy of colonial rule. Postcolonial theory deals with either how people respond to colonization or how knowledge of the colonized benefits the colonizer or how the knowledge of the subordinate people is constructed by the colonizer. Thus, by analyzing *Crash* in the perspective of postcolonial theory, supported by other theories concerning white supremacy, it is expected that the reasoning behind the racial discrimination and the embodiment of white supremacy in this story can be comprehended.

1.2 Reason for Choosing the Topic

The researcher has decided to focus on the term “white supremacy” implied in the screenplay of *Crash* because he believes that there is something more to racism in modern America than meets the eye. In a deeper level, no matter how racial prejudice sees no color in its beneficiaries, it is rooted from the very basic concept of white people domination over other cultural groups. This positioning of the case indicate the hypothesis of this paper, hence it may be very subjective. However, the researcher has adopted some basic theories regarding cultural studies and those which correspond to the topic to corroborate his analysis.

I.3 Statement of Problem

In this paper, the researcher discussed the descriptive analysis of a movie script for a movie entitled *Crash* by Paul Haggis and Bobby Moresco and focus on several aspects of racism and white supremacy, guided with the following research questions:

1. What forms of action in externalizing racism are evidenced in the text?
2. What labels are given to the oppressed characters in the story?
3. How do the characters resolve and cope with the racially-inflicted conflicts?
4. In postcolonial perspective, what do the resolutions imply about white supremacy?

I.4 Aims of the Study

This paper is entitled *The Representation of White Supremacy in Crash: A Narrative Analysis of a Screenplay for a Movie Entitled Crash by Paul Haggis and Bobby Moresco in the Framework of Postcolonial Theory*. It is made to investigate the way racial discrimination is constructed through the bipolar system of the oppressed and the oppressor represented by white supremacy. By analyzing it in the framework of postcolonial theory, the reasoning to racially-inflicted conflicts apparent in the story will be explained. Furthermore, this study is also aimed at finding out what sort-of degrading labels are given to each race involved in the story, the reasons to why the characters materialize their prejudice against people and finally the resisting strategies they have to compensate the conflicts.

By the end of the analysis, it will be concluded how each race is positioned along with its portion compared to one another.

I.5 Research Method

The elaboration of this paper is constructed with qualitative research design and is guided by several research questions. According to Creswell (1994: 148), the idea of qualitative research is to purposefully select informants (or documents or visual material) that will best answer the research question. Furthermore, by applying this type of research design in analyzing the source text, the implied message that underlies the story can be revealed. As cited in Stokes (2003: 3), *Qualitative research* is the name given to a range of research paradigms that are primarily concerned with *meaning* and *interpretation*. This design is also suitable for descriptive analysis as it is aimed at giving sufficient explanations to the data collected from a research.

The text that is used as the source of analysis is a movie script used in a Hollywood-released movie entitled *Crash*. The main elements of this form of text are dialogue and screenplay, from which action and traits of the characters can be read. The dialogues and screenplays which indicate racial discrimination, as the central concern of this paper, will be extracted out of the text to be analyzed further. The first thing done in the descriptive analysis is listing down all the characters in the text, followed by the conflicts apparent in the screenplay to identify the ways in which racism is acted upon. Furthermore, the text is also analyzed for its resistance from the oppressed characters. The combination of

those two sections will be used in determining the turning point from conflicts to resolutions. Those categories then will be analyzed in postcolonial perspective, to see how the characters, the system and the social interaction are constructed in accordance to the notion of white supremacy.

I.6 Organization of the Paper

This paper is organized into five chapters as follows:

Chapter I (Introduction)

This chapter provides the background of study and a brief explanation of the issues and various aspects related to the realization of this paper.

Chapter II (Review of Related Literature)

This chapter covers the analysis of the theories and previous researches relevant to the study.

Chapter III (Research Procedure and Data Presentation)

This chapter includes an explicit description of the research methodology that has been briefly introduced in chapter I.

Chapter IV (Data Analysis and Discussion)

This chapter describes the data collected, data analysis and interpretation of research findings based on the data collected.

Chapter V (Suggestions and Conclusions)

This chapter is divided into two parts:

Conclusions as a general interpretation of all research findings, and

Suggestions as an implication that is drawn from the process of the research and the research findings that will give space for other relating research on the same issues.

