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Blinded

As an American society we love diversity, but do we use this love of diversity to ignore other inequalities that have developed in America? Walter Benn Michaels’ persuades his audience in an excerpt of his book, The Trouble with Diversity: How We Learned to Love Identity and Ignore Inequality, through the use of rhetorical strategies. Michaels references The Great Gatsby to connect to almost every American who has taken an English class, and he carefully picks his tone and word choice to make sure he is connecting and sending the right message to his audience. By using reputable evidence and sources to back up his arguments, Michaels’ also establishes credibility with his readers, which helps make his argument even stronger. Through the use of these rhetorical strategies Michael’s attempts to make his audience see diversity through his perspective—a cover up for inequality in the distribution of money in America.

In the opening paragraphs of Michaels’ book he connects to anyone who has taken English in America, by referencing a famous conversation between two well-known literary authors, F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemmingway (725). He references these two authors to convey the point that Fitzgerald, like himself, believed that the rich were “a special and glamorous race” (726). Along with using Fitzgerald’s quote to support his claim, Michaels also uses Fitzgerald’s fictional book, *The Great Gatsby,* to support his claim that people with money are really of a different class.According to Michaels, the real reason Daisy doesn’t end up with Gatsby is because “Fitzgerald treats them as if they really do belong to different races” (726). Through the use of Hemmingway and both Fitzgerald’s quote and his book/movie *The Great Gatsby,* Michaels connects to almost every American by referencing literary icons that are woven into the English curriculum of almost every high school in America.

However, I strongly disagree with Michaels logical appeal about *The Great Gatsby.* His logos fail here because the conclusion drawn—why Daisy does not end up with Gatsby—is biased and is concluded only in favor of his point of view. I have both read and watched *The Great Gatsby*, and never once came to the conclusion that Daisy left Gatsby because he wasn’t of the same “race” (Michaels, 727) or social status. He approaches this conclusion with a blind eye and fails to consider that maybe Daisy didn’t end up with Gatsby because her and Tom were essentially perfect for each other, or because Gatsby was asking way too much of her, or finally because Daisy is really a heartless, selfish woman that really doesn’t care about anyone else at all. He merely ignores all other possibilities and draws a very far-fetched inference from *The Great Gatsby,* in order to suit his particular interests.

Although Michael’s makes an exaggerated claim in the first few paragraphs of his excerpt, he connects and establishes himself to his audience through his word choice and tone. To connect to his audience, he consistently uses “we” as if he and his readers are like-minded, coming to the same conclusion as he is, as they read the excerpt. This strategy of using “we” is effective, because he draws the readers in, as if they’re having a conversation with him. Along with Michaels’ conversational tone, he uses passionate words such as “love”, “hate”, and “appreciate” to touch the emotions of the readers. Everyone relates to the feelings of love and hate, allowing Michaels not only to connect to his audience, but to also persuade the readers to feel the same way he does about the inequality of wealth. Michaels’ passionate and conversational tone also allows readers to feel, not as if they’re being lectured at, but as if both the reader and the author are one, coming to the same conclusion when presented with the evidence laid out in front of them.

Along with Michael’s use of tone and word choice, Michaels he makes a good ethical appeal with the audience when he uses the case of *Bakke v. Board of Regents.* He uses the *Bakke v. Board of Reagents* case to back up and support his claim that diversity didn’t really have a meaning until this influential court case ruled that considering race is an acceptable thing if it promotes diversity (727). This case also establishes credibility with the audience, because people tend to take the court/law seriously, and it proves that Michaels did his research on the topic. This ethical appeal also sets Michaels up to introduce his main point—the love we have for identity and the hate we have for class (728).

As Michaels finally gets to the end of his excerpt he uses an article from *The Economist* to further provide evidence for his claim. This last use of logos targets the rich Americans to whom he refers to as a different class/race of people (Michaels, 726). He aims this part of the excerpt at the rich and affluent because he is trying to evoke a response and a change in the inequality of wealth. He establishes that the poor really have no power to change this, but instead the power relies in the wealth. By using a magazine that mainly the rich read, Michaels is able to catch the eyes of affluent and resonate a connection with the wealthy, as well as provide a reputable argument that goes in tandem with his argument.

Through the use of *The Great Gatsby,* word choice and tone, and reputable evidence to back up his claim, Michaels makes a convincing argument that as Americans we ignore the one piece of diversity that can be changed, while we praise racial and cultural diversity in our country. Michaels’ rhetoric in the excerpt from his book *The Trouble with Diversity: How We Learned to Love Identity and Ignore Inequality* worked very well as individual parts, however, when put together I often found myself confused and unsure of the relationship from one point to the other.

Works Cited

Michaels, Walter Benn. "The Trouble with Diversity: How We Learn to Love Identity and Ignore Inequality". *Everything's an Argument.* Andrea A. Lunsford. Boston: Bedford, 2016. 725- 730. Print.