

THE "WHITE MALE BACKLASH"
TO DIVERSITY TRAINING:
RHETORICAL CRITICISM USING
FANTASY THEME ANALYSIS

KERY KNUTSON

**The “White Male Backlash” to Diversity Training:
Rhetorical Criticism Using Fantasy Theme Analysis**

By

Kery Knutson

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of
The Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

Florida Atlantic University

Boca Raton, Florida

May 2002

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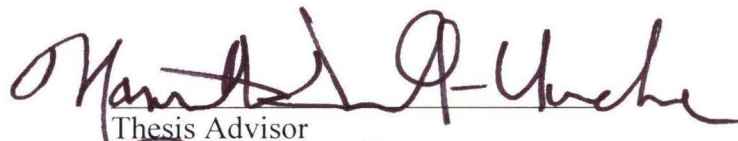
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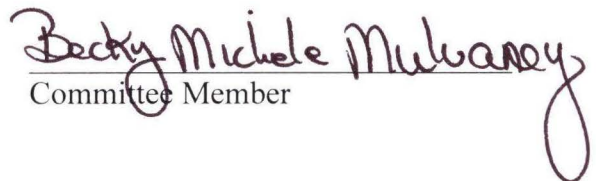
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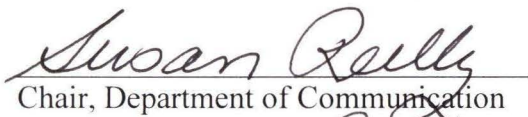
This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate’s thesis advisor, Dr. Nannetta Durnell-Uwechue, Department of Communication, and has been approved by the members of her supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

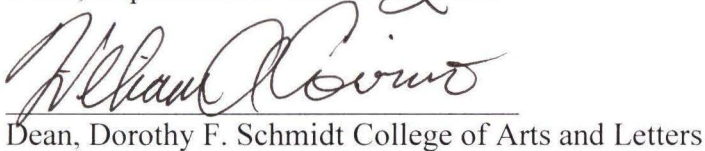
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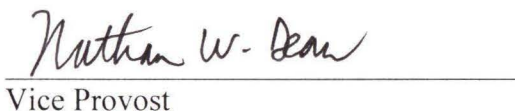

Thesis Advisor

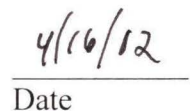

Committee Member


Committee Member


Chair, Department of Communication


Dean, Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters


Vice Provost


Date

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Dr. Nannetta Durnell-Uwechue, Dr. Patricia Darlington and Dr. Becky Mulvaney. They have inspired me a tremendous amount. Also, a special thank you to Dr. Durnell-Uwechue, who continually encouraged and supported me throughout this project.

Special thanks also go to my Mom, and to Tony. Thank you both for supporting and encouraging me throughout my college career. Mom, you have always been there for me and continue to help me in so many ways. Thank you so very much. I love you.

And to Anthony, who dealt with my many ups and downs throughout graduate school and tried to encourage me when I needed it most. Thank you.

ABSTRACT

Author: Kery Knutson
Title: The “White Male Backlash” to Diversity Training:
Rhetorical Criticism Using Fantasy Theme Analysis
Institution: Florida Atlantic University
Thesis Advisor: Dr. Nannetta Durnell-Uwechue
Degree: Master of Arts
Year: 2002

This study investigates the diversity training industry that developed throughout the 1990’s and continues to develop. Specifically, this analysis examines the resistance to diversity training that comes from the cultural group of white males. It seems that the way in which diversity training is communicated might cause part of this resistance. The present study seeks to determine why a “white male backlash” exists and what reasons are given to account for the resistance. Thus, a rhetorical criticism using fantasy theme analysis is used. The essays/articles that are examined are mainly from news publications and trade journals but also include white males and diversity trainers. In examining articles that address the subject of the “white male backlash” nine themes are discovered which suggests that some white men construct a rhetorical vision of victimization in reference to diversity training: “Negative Feelings,” “Targeted,” “Uninformed,” “Merit,” “Blamed,” “Stereotyped,” “Must Change,” “Uncertain Future” and “Other.”

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
Background and Justification	2
Issues To Be Addressed	6
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	13
A Brief History of Diversity Training	13
Diversity Training’s Mistakes	16
A Backlash	19
White Males As A Cultural Group/Communication	19
Connecting Intercultural Communication and DT	20
Rhetorical Criticism’s Link to Intercultural Communication	24
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	27
Fantasy Theme Analysis/Rhetorical Vision	28
Examples of Fantasy Theme Research	30
Research Procedure	32
CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS OF ANALYSIS	37
(1) Negative Feelings	38
(2) Targeted	39
(3) Uninformed	40
(4) Merit	41
(5) Blamed	43

(6) Feels Stereotyped	43
(7) Must Change	44
(8) Uncertain Future	45
(9) Other	45
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION	49
Summary	49
Conclusions	54
Culture	54
Communication	57
Polarization	59
An Intercultural Communication Approach	62
Limitations and Future Research	63
APPENDIX A	67
WORKS CITED	69

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1	37
Table 4.2	38
Table 4.3	47
Table 4.4	48

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

We all know we are unique individuals, but we tend to see others as representatives of groups. It's a natural tendency, since we see the world in patterns in order to make sense of it; we wouldn't be able to deal with the daily onslaught of people and objects if we couldn't predict a lot about them and feel that we know who and what they are. But this natural and useful ability to see patterns of similarity has unfortunate consequences. It is offensive to reduce an individual to a category, and it is also misleading. . . . generalizations, while capturing similarities, obscure differences. [However,] the risk of ignoring differences is greater than the danger of naming them. (Tannen 15-16)

The 1990's saw the invention, growth and development of an industry called "diversity training." Some call it "managing diversity" (R. Roosevelt Thomas), some call it the "diversity machine" (Frederick Lynch), but no matter how it is labeled it all entails some kind of training that deals with diversity issues. Because of this rapid growth of an entirely new industry it comes as no surprise that there is a need for some reevaluation of diversity training. In fact, much query now surrounds many aspects of the industry. White males are one cultural group that present some relevant questions. This cultural group is the focus of the present study. Specifically, this research focuses on the reactions of white males to diversity initiatives like diversity training. However, a pivotal point must be understood. As Adler explains, "Cultural definitions help us to make the best predictions about behavior given that we have no specific knowledge about the individual to be encountered" (128). Echoing the passage above, it must be recognized that individuals are just that, unique individuals, and individuality should not be ignored.

However, it is imperative to recognize patterns within cultural groups, which is what the current study aspires to accomplish.

The organization for this study consists of several elements. The first chapter includes background information on the diversity training industry, explaining the importance of such a study. This chapter also includes a section on what issues will be addressed in this work and a case for and against diversity training (DT). Second, there is a literature review of academic and popular sources. The academic sources include an important aspect to DT, the field of intercultural communication. Third, the methodology of rhetorical criticism using fantasy theme analysis along with rhetorical vision is explicated. A fourth chapter contains the findings of the investigation. This section includes the resulting fantasy themes and rhetorical vision held by white males, according to the essays researched. And finally, a fifth chapter adds a discussion of progress made by this study, recognizing its limitations and suggests further research.

BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

At one time, the workforce in the United States was quite homogenous. After all, this country was “founded by Euro-American men and their values and customs are still most dominant” (Carr-Ruffino 33). In fact, “Nearly all U.S. corporations and corporate cultures were founded by Euro-American men, and they are still 95 percent of the top managers who run the corporations” (Carr-Ruffino 33). This is evident by glancing at many CEOs of the past. Not to mention the fact that “Currently, straight, white, American males are, by far, the dominant group of managers in the greatest number of organizations” (Karp and Sammour 452). As Loden and Rosener reveal, there is a

“homogeneous ideal” in the United States workforce that includes people like Lee Iaccoca, Ross Perot and Henry Kravis (42-43). Loden and Rosener continue by noting, “although the homogeneous ideal varies among companies and industries, the important commonalities of race, gender, and many . . . culturally prized qualities and abilities . . . cannot be ignored” (44).

In addition, the institution of the United States’ workforce is going through much change. In recent years many authors concede that the workforce of the United States is becoming more diverse (Ting-Toomey 4; Henderson 3; Cox 3; Nelton 18). Because of this, governmental policies and programs started to develop and eventually moved into corporations to facilitate protection of equality between “majority” and “minority” members at work. One of those policies is diversity training (DT) or diversity management. Consequently, the “buzzword” of the 1990’s became “diversity management” (Foster et. al. 1). According to Carnevale and Stone, an objective of DT is, “a . . . way to enable organizations to begin raising awareness about diversity issues. . . . Managers and employees alike are being sensitized to diversity and are learning skills to deal with it” (104). However, this objective is most likely debatable because of the lack of consensus on the term “diversity” itself (Overmyer-Day 26). This type of training became a pervasive and lucrative industry in the 1990’s. As Daniels notes, “more than 75% of FORTUNE 1,000 companies boast some sort of diversity initiative” (1). Also, *Forbes* magazine reports, “workplace diversity training programs are now a \$10 billion dollar unregulated industry” (Lubove 1). Considering the number of companies involved and the amount of money being spent, it is evident that diversity training is an important issue for corporate America.

One of the reasons for the significance of DT is the amount of incidents that concern racism, sexism, ageism and other types of discrimination in the workplace. This is confirmed by the many lawsuits that are being reported. For example, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) claims that suits have skyrocketed from 10,000 in the 1980's to 50,000 in the 1990's (Trigaux 4). Their website also documents an increase of lawsuits filed from 1992-2000 under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (www.eeoc.gov). As of 2000, another author reported, "the number of civil rights cases filed in U.S. District Courts increased dramatically between 1990 . . . and in 1998" (Wellner 3).

Furthermore, in South Florida, with its culturally diverse population, there have been several reported incidents of lawsuits. In August of 2000, a local South Florida publication, *City Link*, featured a cover story entitled "Racism? What Racism?" (Di Paola 14). The story chronicled numerous cases of racism in the city employment facilities in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Several cases resulted in lawsuits brought against the city.

A few months later a newspaper reported that Florida ranked especially high in the incidents of nooses found in the workplace. The author even dubbed these incidents "a troubling national trend" (Trigaux 1). In fact, the use of the noose as a "tool of intimidation" has occurred in several workplaces across the country. A few of these include Detroit Metro Airport, St. Louis MetroLink, Lockheed Martin Plant in Georgia and numerous workplaces in Florida including such locales as Gainesville and Sanibel Island.

Accordingly, it is obvious that some thirty years after the first law (Civil Right's Act 1964) was enacted to ensure fairness in the workplace, prejudices and discrimination

against women and minorities still exist at work. Laws have not eliminated or even lessened these unjust occurrences. One reason for this failure may be attributed to the undeniable existence of the resistance to diversity initiatives from white males. This result is sometimes called the “white male backlash” (Lynch 13; Myers 1). This is not to say that white males are alone in resisting diversity initiatives like DT, but they are one important source of the resistance by which the backlash was named. One author notes, “the greatest resistance seems to come from . . . white men” (Kumagai 64). Carnevale and Stone also document that “white men, fearing exclusion, resist diversity programs . . . (113).” Also important is the fact that, “The Conference Board survey finds 61 percent of respondents feel that the fear of backlash from white males is among the three most serious barriers to implementing diversity initiatives” (Carnevale and Stone 115).

Several authors on the subject of diversity training document a backlash as significant. Haines, an author on the subject of DT, says, “There’s a large amount of backlash related to diversity training. It stirs up a lot of hostility, anguish and resentment but doesn’t give people tools to deal with [the backlash]” (Lubove 3). Some say that the biggest challenge to DT is the backlash itself (Smith 1). Still, others declare, “[the] backlash can’t be avoided altogether” (Nelton 22).

Because of this acknowledgement of the backlash, the question becomes, what is being done about it? Little research that studies the issue of the backlash to diversity training can be found. Many sources acknowledge that it exists; yet it is not being thoroughly examined. On the other hand, a plethora of information exists on advocating diversity training. Ivancevich and Gilbert also note this when they say, “prescriptive books have poured off the printing press” (77). Hemphill and Haines explain in their

book, entitled Discrimination, Harassment and the Failure of Diversity Training, “[DT has not] given us the workplace relationship skills necessary to work effectively with those who believe differently than we do” (57). They, as do others, propose a course of correction. Many writers on the subject of diversity training agree that there is a “right” and “wrong” way to go about conducting such training (R. Thomas; V. Thomas; Grossman; Karp and Sammour; Foster et. al). Hemphill and Haines also add that the current form of DT conducted by many trainers across the country is not the correct one.

As a result, there continues to be concern to ensure workplace fairness. Based on numerous reports, there continues to be injustices like racism, sexism and other “isms” in the workplace. Laws, policies (i.e., affirmative action) and programs (i.e., current DT) all seem to be failing. In fact, there continues to be lawsuit after lawsuit mostly from “minority” plaintiffs and “majority” defendants. For instance, several examples of million-dollar cases in the 1990’s included Coca-Cola (Loudin 1), Texaco (Bisom-Rapp 13), Georgia Power (Quinn 1), and Ford Motor Company (Bisom-Rapp 13). These companies have all paid tremendous amounts of money to their employees due to racial or sexual discrimination.

ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

This section states the research questions put forward by the present study and lists the goals of the researcher. Then, there is a summary of both anti-diversity training and pro-diversity training arguments. Subsequently, substantiation is given as to the importance of DT. Next, the question “Is DT positive or negative?” is addressed. Finally, the value of this thesis will be acknowledged.

So, why is there negativity coming, in particular, from white males regarding diversity training? This study hopes to answer that question. The research questions to be addressed are: Why is there a backlash from white males to diversity initiatives like DT? What is the reasoning that white males give for resisting diversity initiatives? And, is their reasoning valid? The researcher hopes to provide more insight as to why there is a “white male backlash” to diversity initiatives like diversity training. The researcher does this by looking at what white males are objecting to regarding diversity initiatives and diversity training. It should be noted that DT is one major type of a diversity initiative. For example, one study done by Gale Group Inc. says, “training was identified as a critical component of diversity initiatives” (1). Carnevale and Stone concur that diversity training is one of the most widely used diversity initiatives (104). This study is accomplished by examining the fantasy themes that occur in the rhetoric of the relevant articles by a diverse group of authors (including white males) that discuss the issue.

Making an argument for diversity training is no easy task in present society. Many people believe that diversity programs do not improve relations at work. In fact, some argue that DT programs are detrimental. As Capowski notes, “diversity efforts become counterproductive” (qtd. in Foster et. al. 7). D’Souza says that there is a “danger” to diversity management. He explains, “in its attempt to eliminate culturally biased standards, it may compromise standards that are essential to job performance” (47). He continues with, “despite all the rhetoric about competitiveness and the bottom line, the effect of these programs is to sacrifice performance and productivity” (47). Hornestay also remarks, “well-intended ventures in diversity training can have reverse effects” (73). Yet another author on the subject sums up the severity of the problems

with DT by noting, “Bad diversity programs do more than fail to achieve their goals. Some can actually be damaging” (i.e., unqualified trainers, failure to link diversity initiatives to organizational goals, etc.) (Overmyer-Day 24). Such “damage” often may be followed by lawsuits initiated by employees after they had gone through diversity training. For instance, some training sessions include watching repeated showings of a “movie depicting lynching in the Old South” (Lubove 122). This DT session also included questionnaires that had racist statements such as: “One of the main characteristics of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. is their sexual looseness and immorality” (122). Consequently, the company that provided this training, Chicago-based printing company R.R. Donnelley and Sons Co., is being sued by 3,500 of its African American employees (122). Obviously, there are some adverse affects.

However, when done carefully and completely it seems that diversity training is an important asset to the workplace. In fact, “practitioners are seeing more and more examples of diversity initiatives that have enhanced business practices, improved products and increased revenue” (Overmyer-Day 27). D’Souza cites many corporations that have “embraced” diversity initiatives including AT&T, Avon, General Motors, Gannett, Goodyear, Xerox, Digital Equipment Corp., DuPont, Motorola, Procter and Gamble and IBM. The author goes on to say, “Managing diversity advocates are probably right that in certain situations, an ethically diverse team can be good for business.” For example, after Avon cosmetics chose to take on a “more ethnically diverse team,” its sales increased in “minority and inner city neighborhoods” (45). Others notice that, “diversity training can spark new ways of thinking and working” (V. Thomas 60). Loudin reports, “diversity management is an issue every company must

face and one that is key to [success]” (30). Foster, VonBergen and Soper agree “undertaking a diversity management initiative can result in a win-win situation for both employer and employee” (15).

Increasingly, people will work with those culturally different from themselves. Ting-Toomey describes just how diverse the United States will be in coming years. One third of the total new entrants into the workforce will be women, minority group members and immigrants. Also, over the next 20 years Latino/a groups will account for 47% of population growth, while African Americans will make up 22%, Asian Americans will make up 18% and European Americans will account for 13% (5). It makes sense that there be some type of preparation for such a transformation.

In fact, research on “culture shock” supports this significantly. While “culture shock” used to have a specific meaning that might be synonymous with “homesickness,” it can and is “now commonly used to describe almost any physical or emotional discomfort experienced by those adjusting to a new environment” (Weaver 187). While this might be more specifically directed to cross-cultural training (i.e., an American worker moving to Spain to work) it can be applied to DT as well. For instance, Weaver states, “we still experience culture shock when entering a slightly different cultural environment” (188). In addition, he notes, “adaptation always produces some stress” and it is obvious that working in a culturally diverse environment necessitates an adaptation. Ting-Toomey adds, “each intercultural contact can bring about identity dissonance or stress . . .” (7). Adler writes, “managers report that culture does affect the day-to-day lives of employees within their organizations” (128). Weaver also sums up the work of Toffler and Slater by saying “. . . there is a direct correlation between the number of

major changes experienced in a given period and the likelihood of [a] person falling ill” (189). Also, Weaver says that understanding and learning about a new cultural environment are effective coping strategies. “A conscious understanding of the process of adaptation and the expectation that culture shock will occur eliminates a great deal of the pain caused by uncertainty . . .” (194). Galen and Palmer concur when they write “. . . if companies are to compete in the changing marketplace, and if they are to treat all employees with equal respect, diversity is essential. And so, too, is the proper training for all involved” (54).

Therefore, it is evident that there are positives and negatives to DT. Knowing this, a question posed by Hornestay comes to mind. “Is diversity training helping or hurting?” His answer is both (75). It is logical to see that there are some problems surrounding the industry of DT. There does, in fact, seem to be a “right” and “wrong” way to go about doing this training. Mauricio Velasquez, a diversity trainer based in Virginia, sums it up well when he says, “old school DT should be abandoned in favor of non-confrontational, practical, participant-centered, positive and future-oriented programs” (Hornestay 75). The present study might add “mindful communication,” to be discussed further in chapter two, to this list of a new and a correct course of action for DT.

The significance of this thesis is that it can draw attention to what is being called the “white male backlash” (Lynch 13). Specifically, Lynch’s book The Diversity Machine notes that in 1992 the “white male backlash” was beginning to be addressed in conference panel discussions and workshops. However, he soon found out that concerns like “political correctness blinded most diversity consultants to recognize any validity in

white men's complaints" (108-109). Since this issue has not been studied thoroughly by researchers, this investigation is a starting point to shed light on an important gap in the research. The present effort takes into consideration where one major source of the resistance is coming from. As one article reports, two leading consultants of diversity say, "the true message of diversity is not reaching the people who need to hear it most - - those privileged white males who most likely sit through diversity training with folded arms and closed minds" (Pine 1). By addressing that resistance, this analysis can help the movement towards diversity deal better with the backlash in order to move forward. As Bond and Pyle note, "any attempts to increase support for diversity must consider the variety of problems and backlashes that can result" (262).

This study will examine discourse to find fantasy themes that recur throughout. This discourse consists of how some white men describe their attitudes regarding diversity initiatives and DT. The sources of the discourse come, mainly, from news and trade publications. The themes discovered will be analyzed to find out if a common rhetorical vision exists among them. Following this, conclusions will be discussed about the findings of the analysis. However, this study will not include a look at actual diversity training sessions. This would not be of assistance in this particular analysis. It will also avoid looking at actual training manuals. The project could become quite cumbersome if expanded. Including information on "how-to" is another subject completely. There is much debate around the issue of how DT should be done. However, the goal in this thesis is to be focused on the "resistance" and "backlash" to diversity initiatives like diversity training coming from one cultural group, that of white males.

Accordingly, it can be noted that the new, lucrative and pervasive field of diversity training is an important area of inspection. The changing workforce is focusing more attention on addressing the fact that assimilating into the dominant culture is not the answer. There seems to be both positives and negatives to DT, although it remains an important endeavor in which to partake. In addition, aspects of this new field are failing to be examined (i.e., the white male backlash). Thus, this study continues with an examination of what literature is addressing issues that concern diversity training.

CHAPTER 2:

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter consists of a review of the literature that deals with diversity training as well as its link to intercultural communication. First, a look at the origins of diversity training is attended to, followed by a brief synopsis of the evident mistakes the industry of DT has made. Then, the nature of the backlash is given an overview. Finally, intercultural communication's link to diversity training and rhetorical criticism's value to intercultural communication are acknowledged.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF DIVERSITY TRAINING

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when the diversity industry was born. However, one can look into the past at some important dates for some indication of its origin. In 1964 the Civil Rights Act was passed. Specifically, Title VII of this act prohibited employment discrimination on the basis of "race, skin color, age, gender, religious belief, or national origin" (Hemphill and Haines 13). The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) was developed under this act and began operating on July 2, 1965 (www.eeoc.gov). In 1965 an order given by President Johnson "directed federal contractors to take 'affirmative action' to overcome the effects of past discrimination" (Lynch 25). Shortly after this, in 1967, President Johnson created the Kerner Commission (Franc 1). In the mid-1960's there were several racial riots in American cities ("Ohio Report" 37). This commission conducted a study that looked into the

causes of these urban riots. This report is “best known for its conclusion that the United States is moving toward two societies – one black, one white, separate and unequal” (Franc 2). To rectify this, for many years, affirmative action was used to various degrees of effectiveness and in the early 1990’s it was evident that there was some “anger against” it (31). Then came what Lynch calls, in at least two of his books, the “crisis of affirmative action” (36). Much opposition came out of this “revolution” not only from white males, but also women and minorities. For instance, women and minorities felt their achievements would go overlooked as many labeled them “affirmative action hires” (37).

In 1987, the Hudson’s Institute’s Workforce 2000 was released and many sources cite it as the beginning of diversity training (Nelton 19, Ivancevich and Gilbert 19, Bond and Pyle 254). Some say Workforce 2000 created a sense of “crisis, urgency and purpose” (Lynch 9). In addition, many interpreted the report as predicting that the white male would become a minority member entering the workforce (Karp and Sammour, Lynch 9, Foster et al 2). The follow-up to this work, Workforce 2020, even notes that the preceding work was “‘credited’ with creating the diversity craze” (Judy and D’Amico xiv). In fact, Judy and D’Amico clarify that Workforce 2000 was misinterpreted. Actually, Workforce 2000’s self-proclaimed purpose is “not to provide policy prescriptions, but to furnish the basic intelligence on the job market that we can use in evaluating the adequacy of our current public policies . . .” (viii). They include in their follow-up book that people thought that they predicted the scarcity of the white male into the workforce when, in fact, that was not the intent (Judy and D’Amico xiv).

Around the same time, the philosophy of the culture of the United States and the culture of many organizations was changing. As Griggs & Louw explain, the message that was sent to society about the United States in the 1960's and 1970's is much different than what it is now. The idea was that "differences are only skin deep" and "race doesn't matter." These ideas lead to the notion of similarity (i.e., we are all the same, human). This view has since changed. "In fact, differences matter a great deal" (79). Several authors (Lynch, Adler 120, Griggs and Louw, Bond and Pyle) also point out that the culture of the United States has been changing from the view of assimilation to one with more multicultural acceptance. It is at least beginning to be recognized, by some, that differences should be "honored and encouraged" versus simply "tolerated" (Griggs & Louw vii). Another way of saying this is by using metaphors. We have moved from the metaphor of a "melting pot" to a "salad bowl" or "multicultural society" (Lynch xi). In other words, in the *past* the belief was that many different ethnicities, races and religions melted into one new culture. The *present* belief seems to say that all different ethnicities, races and religions (i.e., cultural groups) keep their own identities, while forming something significant together.

It was only after these changes in attitudes toward the culture of the United States that diversity training really started to develop. However, an important question to pose is how far has the development gone? As a matter of fact, Ivancevich and Gilbert note that DT of the 90's seemed similar to sensitivity training of the 1960's (8). Weiss explains, "sensitivity training, or T-group training, was developed to help people to learn how others perceive their behavior." The main objective to this type of training was originally personal growth or self-insight. As described by Weiss, "a central problem

[with sensitivity training is it] is designed to change individuals, not necessarily to change the environment in which they work” (10).

Therefore, if Ivancevich and Gilbert’s assertion that recent diversity training is like the training of the 1960’s, then where is DT of the new millennium going? It is imperative to recognize the mistakes that the industry has made in the past, remedy them and move forward. Why? Simply put, as one author noted in 2000, “diversity offers more hope that anything that came before it” (Grossman 2).

DIVERSITY TRAINING’S MISTAKES

There are several reasons that are noted as to what has gone wrong with diversity training. It is useful to mention these instances to note their effect on the backlash and to use them to help work toward a solution and more advancement within the field.

Several authors on the subject of diversity training say that, frequently, trainers are unqualified (V. Thomas, Smith, Overmyer-Day, Lubove). Also, poorly planned and implemented programs could be reasons for a backlash (Kerka 1). Another author agrees that the apparent need for diversity training has spawned “moneymaking opportunities for armies of quacks.” He notes that qualifications for trainers range all over the place (Lubove 123-124). Overmyer-Day concurs and specifically notes that the lack of credentials, expertise and standard outcomes of training all are becoming “major issue[s]” (26).

Another criticism towards DT is that training does not make the link between stereotyping and organizational effectiveness (Smith 1; V. Thomas 62). An additional point stated by Kerka is similar to this position. She writes that some “flawed” DT

maintains an “attempt to change attitudes and personal opinions, not behavior” (1). Victor Thomas, an author on diversity training and presenter of DT, agrees, “we should not and cannot attempt to alter or eradicate deeply embedded perceptions . . .” (62). Yet another author concurs that things “go awry . . . when programs focus on changing people’s attitudes, rather than dealing primarily with their behaviors” (Karp and Sutton 32). Overmyer-Day summarizes this notion when she writes; “managers need to show the links between diversity and business goals” (27).

A further complaint that authors are reporting is that trainers use their own problems with discrimination as a basis for training (Smith 1, Mobley and Payne 53). As Haines, an author on the subject says, they appear to have an “ax to grind” (qtd. in Lubove 124). This may have something to do with the tendency to think that white males should not do diversity training because women and minorities probably have “firsthand experience with discrimination” (Karp and Sutton 31) or a “stake in the issues” (Mobley and Payne 48).

Training is also criticized for being too brief (Smith 1). Carol Kulik, a management professor at Arizona State University said “most workshops run two days at the most” (qtd. in Grossman 3). Obviously, this short time period only allows for a superficial exposure to diversity issues.

DT is also accused of pressuring one group to change, particularly white males (Karp and Sutton 31). As Mobley and Payne write, “Many people still believe that the point of diversity training is to change white men” (47). Karp and Sannour also note that some DT contains a focus on changing straight, white, American, males (452).

Another mistake, and possible cause for a backlash, is that many programs are “guilt-driven” (Karp and Sutton 33). For instance, many DT programs teach white males that they are “oppressors” and “recovering racists, sexist or homophobes.” “Some whites and males are tired of being made to feel guilty in every discussion of diversity. They’re tired of being cast as the oppressors” (Mobley and Payne 47). Some even report that DT often takes the form of “white-male bashing” (Overmyer-Day 26).

The emphasis on politically correct language can also be detrimental to DT (Karp and Sutton 35; Karp and Summour 453). In fact, some see political correctness as a “direct threat to first-amendment rights” (Mobley and Payne 46). Mobley and Payne add that political correctness can make people feel uncomfortable around those different than them and worry that if they make a mistake their “good intentions” will go unrecognized (47).

Finally, the last mistake addressed here is that DT programs involve the wrong “time orientation.” Karp and Sutton explain that the focus of DT should be on the present and it is not. Instead, many DT sessions focus on past events like historical movements (i.e., the Civil Rights Movement). The other misguided focus of current DT is the future. As the authors say, “this often becomes a fantasizing exercise in how things ought to be” (35). They continue to clarify with, “If the training program is going to succeed . . . there must be a focus on what is happening currently in the organization” (35).

A BACKLASH

Faludi describes the “backlash” in terms of the women’s movement as an “attempt to retract the handful of small and hard-won victories that the feminist did manage to win for women” (xviii). Her definition also applies to the backlash against diversity initiatives. In other words, the backlash to DT is reversing any amount of good that it and its predecessors (i.e., Affirmative Action, Equal Employment Opportunity) have accomplished. Miller writes, “backlashes occur when advances have been small, before changes are sufficient to help many people. It is almost as if the leaders of backlashes use the fear of change as a threat before major change has occurred” (qtd. in Faludi xx). Bond and Pyle add that a “backlash is like a homeostatic mechanism pulling against change-pulling back to a situation that is believed by those who benefit most from it (i.e., white males) to be stable” (260). With this in mind, it seems that the “negative feelings” (See Chapter 4, Theme 1) some white men report reflect a fear of change. Hence, before major changes have occurred in the workforce, we are experiencing the backlash to DT.

WHITE MALES AS A CULTURAL GROUP/COMMUNICATION

A person’s culture is closely affiliated with his or her communication. As Hall noted, “culture is communication and communication is culture” (qtd. in Gudykunst 41). What do these closely affiliated terms mean? First, what is a “culture”? The term “culture” has been defined by many scholars and in many different ways. A concise definition that is applicable to this study is, “our cultures provide us with a system of knowledge that allows us to know how to communicate with others and how to interpret

their behaviors” (Gudykunst 43). The subject of this thesis has been described as the “cultural group of white males.” Therefore, in this context we look at white males’ *system of knowledge* and aim to build skills that help us *communicate with and interpret the behavior of* white males. As for communication, this term can be described as “the exchange of messages and the creation of meaning” (Gudykunst 9). The two terms are bonded. Ting-Toomey notes, “it is through communication that culture is passed down, created and modified . . .” (14). Using these two terms together results in intercultural communication.

CONNECTING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION AND DT

“Intercultural communication is described as the form of interaction that takes place when speaker and listener come from different cultures. It often involves racial and ethnic differences . . .” (Saral 77-78). Carnevale and Stone articulate the connection between the field of intercultural communication and diversity training. They note that the two types of DT, Awareness-Based DT and Skill-Based DT, both have goals to “improve effective intercultural communication” and to “improve morale, productivity and creativity” (105-106). This is an obvious connection between the two fields. Carnevale and Stone further articulate that diversity trainers themselves note intercultural communication’s importance to DT. The authors comment, “intercultural communication” is said to be “critical for creating a collaborative environment” (106). After all, this “collaborative environment” is one of the goals that DT attempts to accomplish.

Intercultural communication also deals with many of the crucial issues that DT must address. Both DT and intercultural communication, topics for training and education alike, deal with verbal and nonverbal skills. For instance, with verbal skills, the field of intercultural communication studies the ways in which language has power to hurt people. For example, some language is racist and/or sexist. Being able to understand the strength and severity that words can have is part of DT, as well. Knowledge about the use of this language is necessary to educate and increase awareness among employees who must get along in order to communicate/work effectively. As for nonverbal communication, it also applies to DT. Nonverbal communication is just as important as verbal and can communicate a great deal of information. For instance, as Gudykunst points out, “distance, smell and touch” are just a few forms of nonverbal communication that are culturally bound (189). The position of status is also interconnected with such nonverbal communication, and thus nonverbal communication becomes important for diversity training. Accordingly, DT necessitates the use of aspects of intercultural communication.

Other elements taken from intercultural communication that apply to DT are enculturation and acculturation. The term “enculturation” deals with socialization. This term refers to when

. . . we learn the ways of our own class of origin (race, sexual orientation, and gender), the ways of other classes and the social value or lack thereof attached to them. . . [this] is integral to our sense of who we are, how the world works, and our place within that social world (Moon 216).

This concept is important in DT so people can recognize their own cultural group, as well as the cultural groups of others. It is also important to be able to recognize the value, or

lack of value, that one's cultural group holds in society. Additionally important to realize is the value that one's group holds in comparison to another cultural group.

Intercultural communication also examines the ways in which people are acculturated into a new environment. Acculturation is defined as "the individual-level change process due to prolonged first-hand contact with a new culture" (Ting-Toomey 254). The definition of this term usually concentrates on an immigrant moving to a new country and an entirely different culture, but it can also be applied to race, class and gender. Moon articulates this idea when she writes, "Although later in life we might acculturate to other class realities, the effects of enculturation into our social class of origin are not obliterated" (216). So, with DT, we recognize that even though groups of people may acculturate themselves into the "dominant culture," their own culture never disappears.

One important work entitled, "Cultural Diversity in the Workplace: The State of the Field" by Marlene Fine, chronicles the development of intercultural communication. Diversity issues, like those concerned with organizations grew out of intercultural communication. Fine states, "Early work in intercultural communication grew out of the increasing business and government interest in training diplomats and business people for overseas assignments" (490). Thus, intercultural and organizational communication are closely linked. In the 1960's and 1970's intercultural communication "gained cachet" and ranged from "comparative studies of worker's cultural orientations in different countries to more focused studies of particular organizational behavior within other national cultures" (Fine 491). The later "more focused" example directly relates to DT.

In essence, diversity training is using the same fundamental conceptions of different “others” interacting/communicating in a workplace environment. The well-intentioned goal of DT is to make sure that the interaction/communication is successful. Taking an intercultural communication approach to DT may be an effective solution to deal with the current state of DT (i.e., the backlash). Specifically, mindful intercultural communication just may be a key that DT has overlooked. Mindfulness is defined as “being aware of our own and others’ behavior in the situation and paying focused attention to the process of communication taking place between us and dissimilar others” (Ting-Toomey 16). Like diversity training, mindfulness takes “patience, commitment and practice” (Ting-Toomey 8).

Although Fine does not state that intercultural has looked at DT specifically, she does mention intercultural communication approaching the topics of the “effectiveness of cross-cultural training” and “managing diversity” (493). Her work also demonstrates the need to expand the perspectives in which the intercultural communication field addresses. Fine calls for more research from different backgrounds, such as “critical theories” (i.e., rhetorical criticism). She says:

Researchers of cultural diversity in organizations must look to alternative theoretical perspectives, such as feminist theories, critical theories, and sociological paradigms to identify the problematics and methodologies appropriate to future diversity studies (485).

Therefore, a critical perspective like that in rhetorical criticism may offer new insight into this issue. Fine elaborates on the need for a diversification of perspectives necessary in the field when she explains that most studies on diversity focus on “differences across national cultures” instead of “diversity within the United States” (490). She cites both “political and pragmatic” reasons. Pragmatically, the United States has developed a

global economy that necessitates such a study. However, politically it is “safer” than the study of racial and ethnic differences in the United States (490). The present investigation has opted for the less explored and less “safe” route. It is an important, albeit somewhat controversial topic that is not being fully studied.

Methodologies employed by intercultural communication have nearly always had a connection to rhetoric. As Asante, Newmark and Blake note, what “early communicationists wrote” came from “a rhetorical base” (18). “Their work emerged not from concentrated study of the phenomenon of humans interacting across cultures, but rather from the application of rhetorical . . . categories to intercultural behavior” (18). Moreover, interpersonal theories have held a place within intercultural communication. This is mostly due to the fundamental idea that without interpersonal communication there is no intercultural communication.

Much of what is discussed in intercultural communication relates and parallels DT. In fact, the “general goal of effective intercultural communication is to create shared meanings between dissimilar individuals in an interactive situation” (Ting-Toomey 21). Clearly, a productive goal for diversity training would be to mirror this goal of intercultural communication.

RHETORICAL CRITICISM’S LINK TO INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

First, it is important to define rhetoric. Benson observes that rhetoric is “the study of techniques for fashioning discourses and more generally as an element of all symbolic, social actions -- since all human action depends on meaning-making, and all making of meanings is contingent and persuasive” (xii-xiii). He goes on to explain, “In this sense,

rhetoric is central to the crafting of and communication of human knowledge, to the construction of self, the other and society . . .” (Benson xiii). So, rhetoric has an effect on how we assemble the image we have of ourselves, others and society in general.

Second, what is criticism? A definition of criticism is “the systematic process of illuminating and evaluating products of human activity” (Andrews, Leff and Terrill 6). “At its best, criticism leads us to a fuller and richer understanding of a particular work as it exists within the context of human endeavor” (Andrews, Leff and Terrill 6). This critical perspective is important to shed light on what information we are receiving and the message we construct from it.

Third, what are the subjects of rhetorical criticism? Andrews, Leff and Terrill agree, “The critic of rhetoric focuses his or her attention on human efforts to influence human thought and action” (6). In addition, “The primary purposes of rhetorical criticism are to describe, to interpret, and to evaluate” (Scott and Brock 9). The intent of this rhetorical criticism then is to describe discourse about the white male backlash and interpret it by formulating fantasy themes and evaluating the themes to see what message (i.e., rhetorical vision) is created.

Last, how does rhetorical criticism aid intercultural communication? One answer is that, “Interpreting and judging rhetorical acts will heighten . . . awareness of the ways in which rhetoric interacts with the values and cultural standards of society” (Andrews, Leff and Terrill 10). In other words, looking to rhetoric can inform a person about their culture. Andrews, Leff and Terrill describe the importance of social and cultural values in rhetoric when they state, “we are talking about matters that have an active and direct impact on the very nature of the message itself” (27). Thus, the cultural group one

belongs to will effect the message that is produced. Other authors concur with the connection between rhetoric and intercultural communication. For example Asante, Newmark and Blake state that it is “correct” to “[assume] a relationship between argument, rhetoric and culture” (17).

As for the role of the rhetorical critic, it is a role that is also associated with culture. “As the critic functions, he or she may be searching for the potential effects of messages, investigating messages to discover the light they shed on events that have occurred or the society that gave rise to the messages . . .” (Andrews, Leff and Terrill 22). In this case, the event is the DT phenomenon that is occurring in corporate America. The critic of the present investigation is looking at the messages that seem to create the white male as a victim of DT.

In sum, research methods such as rhetorical criticism are helpful to intercultural studies because of the strong connection between culture and communication. The rhetoric that people encounter everyday is what teaches them their culture. On the most fundamental of levels, language and culture are inseparable and language is a vehicle of rhetoric. Henderson notes, “Each of us learns and uses language as we do because of our individual and cultural backgrounds” (153). It is through communication (i.e., language/rhetoric) that we learn culture and our culture affects how we communicate.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Because of the important relationship between communication and culture, the analytic tool of rhetorical criticism is useful in this study. Hart states that “rhetoric is about the art of using language to help people narrow their choices among specified, policy options” (4). He goes on to define “policy options” as what the audience is supposed to *do* in response to hearing [or, in this case reading] the rhetoric (6). In other words, in this study the researcher will be looking at the rhetoric of what white males are saying and what it is reported they say about diversity initiatives or DT.

Specifically, the researcher will use fantasy theme analysis to observe how the themes in white male discourse on the subject of DT can explain why a backlash exists. The researcher will examine two types of information. The first type consists of comments made by white males regarding DT, in other words, published, direct quotes from white males. The second type consists of author’s summaries on what white males’ say about DT. In other words, both “primary” and “secondary” sources are utilized (Rubin, Rubin and Piele 198). This is completed in order to identify the rhetorical strategies and themes that some white men use to resist DT. Thomas Endres used a similar method in his study of rhetorical visions of unmarried mothers. He notes that his “fantasy theme analysis was used to identify and examine the recurrent and shared storylines that exist *by* and *about* single women with children” [emphasis added] (135). Thus, the discourse he analyzed came from secondary sources as well.

Secondary sources may not be preferred, but they also have substantial value. Paralleling the work of Endres, secondary data can be important in shaping the way society defines white males regarding diversity issues. How white males see themselves positioned by mediated messages (i.e., articles in newspapers, and magazines) can affect how they view themselves, thus contributing to the rhetorical vision.

The excerpts used for the present study include information from several sources (See Appendix A). These sources include articles in newspapers like the Wall Street Journal along with business magazines such as Business Week and News Week and trade journals directed at those in the business world. Finally, two of the sources were obtained via the Internet. One was a diversity trainer that was contacted via e-mail and the other was a scholarly article that was published on the web. This variety of sources allow for analysis of those who have conducted DT, been through DT sessions (or interviewed those who have), and by those who have studied the DT industry.

FANTASY THEME ANALYSIS / RHETORICAL VISION

Fantasy theme analysis is an effective tool for illuminating the sentiments a group may hold concerning an issue. As Foss states, “[fantasy themes] are designed to create the most credible interpretation of experience or the most comprehensible forms for making sense out of experience.” She goes on to explain, “shared fantasies are a necessary and prior condition for arguments” (124). It is assumed that many white men may share these “fantasies” or ideas about DT. It is also assumed many members of this cultural group seem to agree on the several ideas that are creating an argument, which is a premise to the backlash. In fact, Foss makes this connection clearer when she says,

“Argumentation requires a common set of assumptions” and “fantasy themes provide these assumptions” (124).

This study considers a fantasy type, that is, a “rhetorical vision that repeatedly appears in the rhetoric of a group” (Foss 124). In this case, that group is white males. If there is a rhetorical vision, then a rhetorical community has been formed which consists of people who share the vision and/or fantasy themes (Foss 125). These people then make up a rhetorical community. They share common symbolic ground and respond to messages in ways that are in tune with their rhetorical vision (Foss 125). In this case, their common response is the backlash to diversity training.

Ernest G. Bormann, a pioneer of fantasy theme research, notes in his work “Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: The Rhetorical Criticism of Social Reality,” that Bales, a small-group researcher, observed “the dynamic process of group fantasizing” (396). He goes on to explain how Bales’ provides the critic with an “account of how dramatizing communication creates social reality for groups of people . . .” (396). Bormann took this concept further, applying it to public communication and mass mediated rhetoric. This provides a method for us “to examine messages for insights into the group’s culture, motivation, emotional style and cohesion” (396). This is the goal of this thesis. By utilizing the fantasy theme method this study hopes to understand how some white males reason and feel about diversity training, thus creating the “white male backlash.”

So, what constitutes a fantasy theme? According to Bormann, “a recollection of something that happened to the group in the past or a dream of what the group might do in the future could be considered a fantasy theme” (Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision, 397). In this analysis, both the past and the future are elements that factor into what concerns

white males on the subject of DT. For instance, the dichotomy of the *history* of white males and white males *today* seems to be an issue. The *future* also becomes a question for white males in that as the workforce diversifies they are unsure of their place.

As for the rhetorical vision, Bormann defines it as “composite dramas which catch up large groups of people in symbolic reality” (Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision 398).

He continues with a more detailed explanation:

A rhetorical vision is constructed from fantasy themes that chain out in . . . all the diverse settings for public and intimate communication in a given society. Once such a rhetorical vision emerges it contains dramatis personae and typical plot lines that can be alluded to in all communication contexts and spark a response reminiscent of the original emotional chain. (Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision 398)

Cragan and Shields tie the two (fantasies and rhetorical vision) together. They reveal,

As people seek to make sense out of their environment and events around them they chain-out fantasies that eventually swirl together to provide a credible interpretation of reality. This total dramatic explanation of reality Bormann called a rhetorical vision. (3)

Thus, by reviewing the fantasy themes that the data contains the researcher can hope to find the rhetorical vision of the white male backlash to diversity training.

EXAMPLES OF FANTASY THEME RESEARCH

In her book, Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice, Sonja Foss gives a few examples of studies that use fantasy themes. In one of the examples, she examines the “Equal Rights Amendment Controversy” (133-150). In this analysis she examines the rhetoric used by both proponents and opponents to the controversy and finds that their fantasy themes or rhetorical visions focus on different things, namely the scene (proponents) and the agent (opponents). The two groups focus on different elements of the argument that end up keeping the participants of each group from being influenced by

the arguments and themes of the other group (147). This parallels the opponents and proponents to diversity training in that they do not seem to agree on the issue of diversity training. As one opponent says,

Diversity programs perpetuate stereotypes. They're bad for society and bad for business. There's a school of thought that says diversity at least moves us in the right direction, but I've taken a look at that and I reject it. I think it makes [things] worse (Flynn 52).

A proponent says,

How do we acknowledge and value our differences so that all of us can be included in a way that helps us accomplish the organizations goals? No company can do it without dealing with the realities of racial, ethnic, gender and age differences . . . (Wellner 38).

In yet another study, "Inclusiveness in Rhetorical Visions" by Sheridan, fantasy themes and rhetorical visions are also examined (Foss 151-156). In this work Sheridan examines rhetorical devices used to unite diverse audiences by analyzing the Pentagon's "Unity Statement." This statement was formed by Women's Pentagon Action and served as an "organizing tool" for the protests in 1980 at the Pentagon held by women against America's militarism. Sheridan finds two rhetorical visions that focus on men's issues and women's issues. She suggests that the way in which the Pentagon's statement is written unifies diverse women (155). This, too, is similar in that the backlash to DT unifies the various differences among white males.

Thus, there are many different topics that can be addressed by fantasy theme research. The next section of this chapter delineates the inspiration for the current study and discusses the specific steps taken during the research procedure.

RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The conception for this work originated from reading Voices of Diversity by Blank and Slipp. The authors articulate fourteen themes that their research generated on what white males think of diversity initiatives. These themes are as follows:

1. White men **resent** having others assume they are all racists or sexists and being seen uniformly as the “enemy.”
2. Many white men say that because others assume they’re racists and sexists, they’re afraid to say anything for **fear** of being misinterpreted.
3. Some white men say they are concerned that African-American and Latinos automatically consider white male supervision to be **patronizing**.
4. Many white men, especially blue-collar workers in traditional occupations, infer that their **manhood** is being taken away when women enter the workplace and perform the same job.
5. Many white men say that others assume they have **power** in the organization, but in actuality they often feel powerless and vulnerable.
6. Many white men say they are unsure of the proper **etiquette** in working with women; yet they are attacked for being paternalistic or sexist if they do or say the wrong thing.
7. Many white men say that others don’t understand their **inability** to show lack of knowledge.
8. Many white men in senior positions say that they are dissuaded from **mentoring** women because it is sometimes perceived as sexual harassment or sexual involvement.
9. Many white men say they are **conflicted** about the problems in accommodating women on family and work issues.
10. Some white men say they feel they have to fight a **battle** of mixed loyalties in the changing workplace.
11. Many white men say that their jobs are made much harder because they have to learn a new management style to **accommodate** the new groups in the workplace.
12. Many white men say they **do not understand** the definition of sexual harassment.
13. Many white men say they are **uncomfortable** giving feedback to women.
14. Many white men say that the laws that help women and other protected groups may be justified but are **difficult** to accept. [emphasis added] (172-178)

The research done by Blank and Slipp addressed several cultural groups including:

African Americans, Asian Americans, Latinos, Recent Immigrants, Workers with

Disabilities, Younger and Older Workers, Gays and Lesbians, Women and White Males. After writing “more than fifty [diversity] training manuals for corporations” they took on the challenge of writing Voices of Diversity. The goal of this book, they say, is to answer the “urgent managerial appeal ‘What should I know about the experience of the diverse groups?’ and ‘What should I do about it?’”(xi). The two authors have worked as diversity trainers for many years, they have trained “thousands of managers and supervisors” and interviewed “hundreds” of trainees for their book, Voices of Diversity (ix).

There are several differences between the work done by Blank and Slipp and the present analysis. First, their book looks at several different cultural groups. Second, they seem to particularly address managers, as is clear in when they state the goal for the book. Third, they interviewed trainees to examine what cultural groups are saying about managing diversity and DT. On the other hand, the current examination narrows the focus to one cultural group. Here, the focus is on one group, white males. This allows for a more in-depth examination on one source of resistance. Also, the present study does not only target managers. Additionally, the present study does not use interviews but rather the discourses mostly from news and trade publications on the issue at hand. Thus, the focus of the current examination provides a different and critical perspective to inspect how professional discourse is composing how white males view DT.

It is also important to note that the current analysis uses Voices of Diversity as inspiration only. In no way do the fantasy themes of the present analysis purposefully mirror the themes created by Blank and Slipp. For the current investigation it is useful to note Blank and Slipp’s themes in order to reveal any similarities or differences between

their findings and those of this investigation. These results will be addressed in the final chapter of this thesis.

The first step of this study was to carefully examine the essays to determine that, in total, all addressed the subject of the “white male backlash.” Several readings of the essays occurred with particular attention paid to quotes from white males and specific information stated about white males regarding DT. Then, when quotes dealt specifically with white males, diversity and/or the backlash they were extracted from the essays. The only quotes that qualified as information for analysis were in at least three independent sources and mentioned at least five times (with the exception of the “Other” category). In the end, there were 85 excerpts that were used for analysis.

Second, the attention focused on a meticulous consideration of the excerpts. This careful inspection consisted of rereading the 85 entries to check for any repetition in what was being noted by white males themselves or about white males. Following this, the information was consolidated into groups based on a theme. This formulated the fantasy themes. It is also important to note that the themes emerged from the information studied.

The time period from which essays were selected was from 1991-2000. A broad time span was chosen because of the evolutionary rather than revolutionary nature of change in the diversity training business.

The research resulted in eight fantasy themes, including a ninth category entitled “Other.” First, the theme of “Negative Feelings” was discovered. This theme shows that many white males have negative feelings such as fear, anxiety and pressure when it comes to DT. Second, several white males feel “Targeted” by the DT sessions. They are

made to feel that they are a problem that must be remedied. Third is the theme of being “Uninformed.” A defense for several white males against DT is to say they “just did not know.” Fourth is the theme of “Merit.” This theme results in white males feeling like the most qualified people are not being hired or promoted because of diversity initiatives. The fifth theme is being “Blamed.” Several white males disclose the fact that they feel blamed for past discriminatory injustices. The sixth theme reveals that various white males feel that diversity training does not account for any differences among the cultural group of white males. In other words, they “Feel Stereotyped.” Seventh is the theme that shows that many white males feel that they “Must Change” due to diversity initiatives. The eighth theme conveys that white males have an “Uncertain Future.” It seems that numerous white males see their future as so diverse that they are unsure where they will fit in. The ninth and final category is labeled “Other.” This section contained the remaining excerpts that did not relate to any of the aforementioned eight themes.

The final step that occurred was an examination of the fantasy themes. The researcher examined the themes that were found to see if a rhetorical vision occurred. As Foss explains, in Bales’ theory of “symbolic convergence” which was the foundation for fantasy theme criticism, “communication creates reality” (122). She continues to clearly explain part of this process as follows:

The chaotic and disorderly sensory world is organized and made manageable by the symbols that are devised to dominate it Language or rhetoric is a force through which the essence of a substance or an idea becomes known or ‘real’ to us because it halts the constant flux of the contents of consciousness by fixing a substance with a linguistic symbol (122).

This explanation articulates how the comments and sentiments of white males - - organized as fantasy themes - - reveal possible reasons for the backlash against DT.

These themes are their “fantasy.” In other words, it is how some white males see their reality concerning DT.

CHAPTER 4:
FINDINGS OF ANALYSIS

The findings of the current study resulted in eight fantasy themes. A ninth category titled “other” consists of ideas that concerned none of the themed sections. The fantasy themes are based on the repetitive discovery of them in the 85 entries of information extracted from the articles used for analysis (Appendix A). These themes are revealed as follows:

Table 4.1

1.	Negative FEELINGS
2.	TARGETED
3.	UNINFORMED
4.	MERIT
5.	BLAMED
6.	STEREOTYPED
7.	Must CHANGE
8.	Uncertain FUTURE
9.	OTHER

The rhetorical vision that encompasses all the themes is victimization. The themes together all point out the position of the white male as a victim. This becomes clear when comparing the themes with synonyms for the word victim. These synonyms

provide different nuances of meaning of each theme. For instance, the words casualty, target, sufferer, injured party, and dupe are all synonyms for victim. In addition, these synonyms can be matched to the fantasy themes that have been discovered. For clarification, this information is organized in the following table.

Table 4.2

1.	Negative FEELINGS	Injured party
2.	TARGETED	Target
3.	UNINFORMED	Dupe
4.	MERIT	Sufferer
5.	BLAMED	Target
6.	STEREOTYPED	Sufferer
7.	Must CHANGE	Casualty
8.	Uncertain FUTURE	Casualty
9.	OTHER	-----

To further explain the position of the white male as a victim and how the synonyms match the themes, excerpts are provided as supporting evidence in each of the following sections.

1. Negative FEELINGS:

There are several incidents in the essays examined that indicate that white males have negative feelings in regard to the recent multicultural movement, of which diversity training is included. One source reports, “white men are feeling threatened because of racial and gender tensions that have been intensifying in recent years” (Galen and Palmer 51). A white male expresses himself by saying, “I’m worried.” He goes on to explain

that if there is a person competing for a job he wants that is equally qualified they will get it if they are minority or female. It seems as though he feels helpless when he says, “There’s nothing I can do” (Galen and Palmer 50). Another author states, “white men are feeling frustrated, resentful, most of all afraid” (50). Still another informs, “white men are feeling pressure” (51). Then, there are the white males that say, as does Michael Kimmel, a sociologist and men’s activist, “they feel like they are getting it from all sides” (Gates 49). Hence, the feeling of being attacked is noticeable. Yet another white male shared his feelings by saying that he already feels like a minority at his company (Duke 3-90). One white male commented on DT as “just talk over the water cooler . . . but when it impacts you directly, you become kind of angry” (Galen and Palmer 51). When asked “what did you like most about the DT you have gone through?” one white male replied with the single word “Nothing!” (Kaufman A1). Thus, this reveals evidence to suggest that some white males have negative feelings regarding DT.

In this example, the synonym of an “injured party” parallels their negative feelings on the topic. Feeling afraid, attacked, frustrated, etc. are all feelings that a victim or one who is injured may feel. Bormann points out that “when group members respond emotionally to the dramatic situation they publicly proclaim some commitment to an attitude” (Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision 397).

2. *TARGETED*

The second theme that is evidently shared by many is the sense of being targeted in diversity training sessions. One white male says that “he and other white males were offended by training he attended . . . He felt that the trainer came in with an agenda to send a message of zero tolerance to white males . . . when white males feel targeted the

problem is compounded” (Flynn 54). Other sources report that “some diversity trainers . . . use hostile confrontational tactics that approach a form of white male bashing” (Foster, Von Bergen and Sopher 8). Yet another set of authors agree, “diversity training focuses on how the SWAM [straight, white, Anglo, male] has -at the worst- oppressed the female and minority organization members” (Karp and Sammour 454). “White males also say that diversity programs often make them feel threatened or attacked” (Galen and Palmer 51). “A double standard, they [white males] think, is now applied to both their speech and their behavior” (Gates 49). According to this information, it seems white males believe that they are the ones being targeted and others do not have to abide by the same rules.

A clear connection is made with this theme, in that a “target” is one example of a synonym used for “victim.” Perhaps it is not just white males that would “act out” distaste for DT, but any group that feels targeted, accused or blamed. As Cragan and Shields say when discussing fantasy themes, “meaning, emotion and motive are contained in the rhetorical vision, and people caught up in the vision will act it out as their sense or understanding of social reality dictates” (3). In other words, if white males are “caught up” in the vision (i.e., as a victim) then they will “act out” against DT and reject it. Just as any person/group, which feels they do not have a problem and are being forced to “reform,” would do.

3. *UNINFORMED*

The third theme is a defense that seems to claim, “I didn’t know.” For example, one author reports, “a lot of white guys out there didn’t quite get it . . .” when referring to recent occurrences concerning race and gender (Gates 49). One white male says, “I

would imagine that a lot of us white males are social klutzes when it comes to race and gender issues, but just because we are offensive or just because we act in a way which is perceived as discriminatory does not mean that we are racist” (Duke 3-90). Then, there are those who feel that there is a secret language to which they are unaware. “There are some code words out there that I don’t always feel like I’m in control of or aware of” (Duke 3-90). A Harvard psychologist backs this sentiment up when he notes, “A lot of these men are freaking because they don’t know the rules, the male-dominated system has failed and the men haven’t processed it yet. There’s been attitudinal compliance but you’re not getting attitudinal acceptance” (Gates 50). Perhaps it is because the dominant cultural ideology is that of white males (U.S. American culture), thus it makes it difficult to accept that those who are part of the more powerful group also may have to learn new and improved ways of working with others. This defense appears to lack demonstrating ownership of one’s responsibilities for one’s actions.

In other words, the defense of being “uninformed” can be associated to one as a “dupe” (victim). The use of this synonym is used to point out another nuance of the word victim. This theme appears to illuminate an uninformed position, which seems to be a recurrent response from this set of white men. As some of the aforementioned quotes state, some white males feel a lack of control and feel as if there is a “code” language that exists to which they are unaware. This gives the implication of being tricked or simply being uninformed, as the theme states.

4. *MERIT*

Then there is the question of merit. This is an argument given against affirmative action and seems to be moving on to other diversity initiatives. This is not surprising

since many people incorrectly equate affirmative action and diversity training. One source states, “*Business Week* reports that many white males feel they will lose out on hiring and promotions to less qualified workers because of the rush to diversify the workplace” (Foster, Von Bergen and Sopher 6). While “diversifying the workplace” is not equal to DT it still regards the same issues and DT will carry the stigma because – as mentioned above – people frequently and mistakenly equate affirmative action and DT. In another example, a white male employee of Pacific Gas and Electric Co. says he lost his job while “others (Black and Indian descent) were kept even though he was more qualified.” He says, “I feel like I’m losing out” (Galen and Palmer 50). A reader that responded to an article published in *Business Week* writes, “Diversity is simply this decade’s fashionable term for affirmative action, and both are really inferior action; promoting the less qualified, the less competent and the less able” (White Male Worried and Hotly Debated 2). This attitude seems to assume that white males are the most qualified, competent and able persons for the job. Finally, another white male adds, “How am I going to get a job with the airlines? Wrong pigment, wrong plumbing” (Galen and Palmer 50). It seems, then, holding this mentality reveals an underlying assumption that white males are the most qualified and are being unjustly overlooked for jobs. Clearly it is unreasonable to make such an assumption.

Therefore, the synonym for victim for the theme of “merit” is the “sufferer.” According to the quotes from these essays, the white male is suffering because he is the most qualified and the one that is losing out on jobs and career stability.

5. *BLAMED*

A theme developed describing the point of view of being blamed, especially for history. For instance, one white male said that he and four other white males had been through a diversity training session where he felt “blamed for everything from slavery to the glass ceiling.” He also felt that instructors seemed to “feed into the white male bashing.” He continues with “I became bitter and remain so” (Galen and Palmer 53). Another report states that “one white male says that he often gets the sense that members of minority groups are too quick to blame the white men of today for the sins of their forefathers” (Duke 3-90). Knowing that this mood of blame exists, one author sums up why it is so important to change it. “Causing individuals to feel that they have been unfairly accused or blamed for inequalities serves only to increase divisiveness and increase animosity” (Foster, Von Bergen and Sopher 7). If this is true, the feeling of being blamed which some white males experience may be one of the factors explaining why the backlash exists.

The synonym for victim that matches this theme of being “blamed” is “target.” Again, the excerpts seem to point out the feeling of the white male being the target for the problems of discrimination.

6. *Feels STEREOTYPED*

One author maintains, [diversity] “training can be offensive to white males because it lumps them all together” (Flynn 53-54). Flynn goes on to say, “worst case scenario is when DT is done for the wrong reason (i.e., largely to buffer lawsuits) it creates a backlash from white males because it assumes that because one white male had

a problem, all white males in the company have a problem” (53). Yet another white male seems to agree when he writes,

[The] diversity crowd’s most important ally has always been the up-and-coming generation of enlightened white males who are as repulsed by racism and sexism as they are. Why, then, to the proponents of diversity insist on bashing, oppressing, hamstringing, and tarring us all with the same misguided brush? (White, Male Worried – and Hotly Debated 2).

The synonym that correlates here is “sufferer.” The message that one comes away with after reading such comments is that of unfair treatment. In other words, the white male is suffering the consequences of discrimination. This parallels the claim of reverse discrimination.

7. *Must CHANGE*

Apparently some white men are feeling that they need to change, or rather must change because of the diversity movement. For instance, one author on the subject says “white men face serious challenges to their sense of security and comfort” (Gindes 1). She continues by explaining that “for them [white males] accepting and supporting diversity initiatives means giving up what they have always had – power, predominance and preference” (Gindes 1). Another source concurs: “As managing cultural diversity takes shape, white males are being challenged to confront their own notions, which are often negative stereotypes about those different than them” (Duke 3-90).

The word “casualty” is how the theme of “must change” is best described. The white male of yesterday is a casualty to diversity training. Like a casualty of war giving up his or her life, today’s white male must give up his power.

8. *Uncertain FUTURE*

Finally, another theme that expresses this vision of victimization is anxiety for what is yet to come. Galen and Palmer say that for the first time in the lives of white men they are “worrying about their future opportunities” (51). Another source documents a psychologist faculty member at Executive Program in Management of Cultural Diversity revealing that the overwhelming mood among white men is “anxiety [and] uncertainty about the future” (Duke 3-90). Duke goes on to include some comments from white males themselves. One white male wonders where white men will be in the future, especially when he sees an increasing amount of women and minority faces at staff meetings. Another white male states, “What happens when I’m the only one?” (Duke 3-90). Clearly, he feels his future is an uncertain one.

The “uncertain future” of the white male might be compared to prey. In this case, it seems DT is the hunter and white males are the prey. Just as any prey becomes victim to a hunter, white males have become a victim to diversity initiatives. Thus, this theme relates to the synonym “casualty.”

9. *OTHER*

The ninth theme listed is entitled “Other.” This category accounts for the excerpts that did not fit into any of the other themes. It is important to note that in some of this evidence the comments were clearly pro-DT (proponents). A white male author writes that “white males are not a monolith or otherwise united in opposition to the idea of embracing diversity” (Ferris 28). He continues and interjects his own position, “As a member of the white male community who believes deeply in the need for this change,”

he argues for a change in the diversity industry, which includes a “more intrusive strategy” (28).

In a further example, an author reports that “other white men have come to accept diversity, and competition for jobs is inevitable” (Kaufman A1). He names one white male who says he now accepts “some of the people I will be competing against are women as well as men.”

At other times, excerpts from the essays were anti-diversity training (opponents). For instance, Ferris reports, “the problem they [white males] present is that their numbers do contain a core of the resisters who have the influence to slow down progress” (28). The second excerpt that is in opposition is a quote from a “middle-aged white male and HR [Human Resources] professional.” (Flynn 52). He says:

Diversity programs perpetuate stereotypes. They’re bad for society and bad for business. Diversity is ‘you need to treat women this way and blacks that way.’ That’s wrong; that’s the problem. There’s a school of thought that says diversity at least moves us in the right direction I think it makes things worse (Flynn 52).

And finally, there were some comments that did not fit into any of the categories (neutral), and they could not be clearly determined as pro-DT or anti-DT. For instance, one author says that they [white males] “are in a push-pull conflict” when it comes to diversity issues (Gindes 1). Another author reported a white male saying, “we still have the power, but nobody likes us” (Gates 49). Another source reports that “anger among white males has dwindled in part because the company is no longer putting a spot light on diversity” (Kaufman A1).

Below, Table 4.3 lists the results of this fantasy theme analysis, along with the number of entries for each category.

Table 4.3

No.	Fantasy Theme	“Victim” Synonym	Number of Entries
1.	Negative FEELINGS	Injured party	13
2.	TARGETED	Target	9
3.	UNINFORMED	Dupe	13
4.	MERIT	Sufferer	13
5.	BLAMED	Target	9
6.	STEREOTYPED	Sufferer	6
7.	Must CHANGE	Casualty	6
8.	Uncertain FUTURE	Casualty	6
9.	<i>OTHER</i>	<i>Proponent</i> <i>Opponent</i> <i>Neutral or N/A</i>	3 2 5

The next table, Table 4.4, takes the information a step further. Here, the complete results are shown. This includes the frequency of the fantasy theme results, starting from the theme most frequently mentioned to the theme least frequently noted.

Table 4.4

No.	Fantasy Theme	“Victim” Synonym	Number of Entries	Percentage Frequency
1.	UNINFORMED	Dupe	13	15%
2.	MERIT	Sufferer	13	15%
3.	Negative FEELINGS	Injured party	13	15%
4.	TARGETED	Target	9	11%
5.	BLAMED	Target	9	11%
6.	STEREOTYPED	Sufferer	6	7%
7.	Must CHANGE	Casualty	6	7%
8.	FUTURE	Casualty	6	7%
9.	<i>OTHER</i>	<i>Neutral</i> <i>Proponent</i> <i>Opponent</i>	5 3 2	6% 4% 2%
TOTAL:			85	100%

CHAPTER 5:

DISCUSSION

This chapter begins with a summary of the findings of the research that contain the answers to the research questions posed earlier. Then, there is a section that discusses conclusions that can be drawn from this investigation. The conclusions involve the topics of culture, communication and polarization. The next section deals with an intercultural communication approach to the topic of DT. And finally, the remainder of this chapter addresses limitations of the study and makes suggestions for future research.

SUMMARY

All in all, this investigation has proved productive. The rhetorical vision from this set of excerpts concerning white males reveals that some consider themselves victims of the diversity training industry. However, it is important to note that a portion of these excerpts (i.e., listed as “proponents” in Tables 4.3 and 4.4) do suggest that there is some support for DT among white males. In fact, other sources document interest from this cultural group on the present topic. For instance, in the early 1990’s there was one author who made the observation that white males would present an important issue for diversity training. Lynch notes that in 1992 the “white male backlash emerged as the dominant concern in a survey of consultants” (109). He also elaborates by citing a few of the articles that are used in the present investigation (Mobley and Payne; Gates; Galen and Palmer).

Another example of support from white males can be found on the Internet. A company formed in 1997 and based in Portland, Oregon identifies itself as “White Men As Full Diversity Partners” (www.wmfdp.com). They note that there is a “long held [assumption] that diversity is not about white men, many white males don’t see this issue as their own.” They clearly try to debunk this conception, as their website goes on to explain:

In a world that is increasingly polarized and politically correct, it is critical that white men focus with other white men on their willingness to engage with each other and to create new and equitable organizational cultures that bring out the best in everyone. (<http://www.wmfdp.com/whywhite.html>)

This group conducts DT with white males in mind. As they state, they are “. . . working to increase white male involvement in organizational diversity efforts”

(<http://www.wmfdp.com/consulting.html>).

Another example of white male support for DT comes in the form of a 1998 study. It considered the conversational and organizational discourse of several cultural groups at a major financial institution. This study was conducted over a two-year period and examined the conversational patterns of several cultural groups (i.e., white men, white women, men of color, and women of color) while the company instilled diversity initiatives like DT (Zane 29). Regarding the cultural group of white males, it revealed that in the beginning many white men felt diversity initiatives “would be a distraction to the ‘real work’ of making money . . .” (Zane 32). However, after the diversity workshops white male participants changed their beliefs. The author’s results concluded, “these men’s vision and understanding of some aspect of the world had been permanently altered” (Zane 32). This described a diversity training session where the intended results did occur.

In another instance, some white males continue to work toward creating diverse work environments. A 1998 article from *Physicist Today* entitled “White Male Physicist Champions Workplace Diversity” tells one white male’s story. Dr. John E. Foley, a physicist and an “expert on diversity and ethics in the workplace” writes about how diversity has worked in his organization (Kumagai 64). He also uses his experience as evidence for his own DT sessions. Evident in his paper, “Working with Diversity: A White Male Engineer’s Inquiry into Merit, Justice, and Diversity in the Workplace” he aims to persuade other white men that diversity initiatives are necessary. He writes, “we must use our positions of power to dismantle the institutionalized systems that gave us the power in the first place” (13). Although Foley is a strong supporter of diversity initiatives, it is noted in an article written about him “he knows he’s an unlikely champion of such causes” (Kumagai 64). This, in turn, confirms the proposition that the present study has revealed. In other words, while white male support surely exists and is strong in some cases, fewer white men support diversity initiatives than do other groups.

As noted in the introduction to this thesis, it is important to acknowledge that in no way does this work pretend to speak for all white males. Rather, this study hoped to examine the evidence that is available by formulating it into themes in order to further understanding of the situation. Predominantly, this information was used to answer the research questions: Why is there a backlash from white males to diversity initiatives like DT? What is the reasoning that white males give for resisting diversity initiatives? And, is their reasoning valid?

With respect to the first question about the reasons for a backlash to DT from white males, the rhetorical vision that came out of the fantasy themes addresses this issue.

In this case, the rhetorical vision illustrated the idea of the white male as a victim. If there is a group that is feeling victimized, it logically follows that they would respond negatively to such issues. One leading diversity consultant says, “when we put down the white male and make him ‘the new victim’ that makes him ‘more defensive than he needs to be’” (Nelton 23).

For answers to the second research question, about the reasoning that white males give for resisting diversity initiatives, we can look to the fantasy themes illustrated by this study. The resulting themes include: “Negative Feelings,” “Targeted,” “Uninformed,” “Merit,” “Blamed,” “Stereotyped,” “Must Change,” “Future,” and “Other.” These themes revealed some of the major concerns white males hold regarding DT (i.e., Merit, Future). Some of the themes also addressed why some white males object to DT (i.e., Targeted, Blamed, Stereotyped). These themes provided some answers in discovering the reasons white males give for resisting diversity initiatives.

The third question dealt with the importance of the claims by white males. In essence, this question focuses on the value of the fantasy themes. This might be measured by whether or not the issues broached by the fantasy themes have been found in other sources. The present study demonstrates two cases in which the fantasy themes were previously declared. A more thorough investigation may find evidence of additional themes that are acknowledged. For specification of these two cases a review of the information listed under the “Diversity Training’s Mistakes” section (i.e., Chapter 2) of this work is useful. This section lists some documented reasons that authors on the subject have noted about possible errors made by DT.

The first example of further evidence echoing a fantasy theme found by this analysis comes from the theme “Must Change.” This theme supports viewpoints that argue that some DT does contain a focus on changing the beliefs of straight, white, American, males (Karp and Sammour 452). In the current analysis, the discourse confirmed this information. Another example of the soundness of white male’s reasoning is in the fantasy theme of white men feeling “Blamed.” Again, evidence from this analysis demonstrated this fantasy theme. As Mobley and Payne articulate, “they’re [white males] tired of being cast as the oppressors” (47). Similarly, the discourse gives an example of a white male “[feeling] blamed for everything from slavery to the glass ceiling” (Galen and Palmer 53). Clearly, then, some of the white males fantasy themes are evident in more sources than the discourse chosen for this study.

Another comparison to check for legitimacy of the fantasy themes can occur by revisiting the themes from Blank and Slipp’s book, Voices of Diversity. In some instances their themes are reflected in this study. For example, Blank and Slipp’s first theme is, “white men resent having others assume they are all racists or sexists and being seen uniformly as the ‘enemy.’” This theme corresponds to the fantasy theme of being “Stereotyped.” As discussed in Chapter four, the essays revealed that DT is putting white men into one group and their differences were not being considered, thus they felt stereotyped. The second theme Blank and Slipp reveal is, “many white men say that because others assume they’re racists and sexists, they’re afraid to say anything for fear of being misinterpreted.” This correlates to the fantasy theme of “Negative Feelings.” As the discourse shows, white men seem to have feelings of fear, anxiety, and pressure when it comes to issues dealing with diversity training. Third, Blank and Slipp articulate

theme numbers six, eleven and twelve. Theme six states that, “many white men say they are unsure of the proper etiquette in working with women; yet they are attacked for being paternalistic or sexist if they do or say the wrong thing.” Theme eleven states, “many white men say that their jobs are made much harder because they have to learn a new management style to accommodate the new groups in the workplace.” Theme twelve states that, “Many white men say they do not understand the definition of sexual harassment.” All three of these themes correspond to the fantasy theme of white men being “Uninformed.” As this analysis explained, some white men expressed thoughts of ignorance in regard to diversity issues. An example from this theme is expressed by one white male when he said, “There are some code words out there that I don’t always feel like I’m in control of or aware of” (Duke 3-90).

It is important to notice the overlap of themes between these studies. The interviews used for Blank and Slipp’s work was possibly taken from the late 1980’s and early 1990’s, given that their book was copy written in 1994. However, the work that has been done in this inquiry contains information that is more recent. This repetition of concerns reinforces the fact that these themed issues (specifically “Stereotyped,” “Negative Feelings” and “Uninformed”) have yet to be dealt with completely and effectively.

CONCLUSIONS

Culture

One of the many ideas pondered by the researcher throughout this study was the contrast between DT and U. S. American culture. It seems that diversity issues are just as

difficult a topic to discuss for diversity consultants as anyone. As Carnevale and Stone state, “Change is seldom easy And diversity initiatives spell change, for they challenge entrenched practices” (113). So, DT is difficult because it is a change process and resistance is natural when dealing with change. Add in the issue of culture and there are even more difficulties. So, why is DT, specifically, so difficult? One possible reason could be that the nature of DT stands in opposition to the United States’ dominant culture. Several examples help illustrate this idea.

First, the U.S. American dominant culture (i.e., that based on a white male ideology) sees “different as deficient.” At times difference is even seen as “wrong, unknown or scary” (Bond and Pyle 258). Carr-Ruffino concurs and sums up this ideology with, “The Euro-American male way of viewing things and doing things was the right way, the only way to achieve success. . . . minorities didn’t ‘fit in.’ Some who managed to fit in didn’t like the price they paid: giving up big chunks of who they were and selling out for corporate bucks” (45). However, DT’s philosophy is different. A main idea behind much diversity training is treating “different as better” (258). For instance, Bond and Pyle articulate that DT sometimes includes “celebrating diversity” which “has sometimes taken the form of placing a higher value on so-called women’s perspectives” (258). Clearly, the two positions, DT and U.S. American culture, are in direct opposition.

Secondly, a 1995 *U.S. News and World Report* article states, “two cherished American principals [are]: the belief that all Americans deserve equal opportunities and the idea that hard work and merit, not race or religion or gender or birthright, should determine who prospers and who does not” (Roberts 32). This quote reveals hard work

and merit are a part of U.S. American culture. In fact, this theme appeared in the fantasy themes (i.e., theme “Merit”). To understand the primary nature of culture, it can be compared to a pair of sunglasses (Ting-Toomey 14). Sunglasses block us from seeing clearly while offering some protection (14). Sometimes, it is easy to forget that you are wearing sunglasses at all. Culture is similar because people are generally unaware of how their culture affects their view of the world. So, culture is a deep-seated and salient part of a person’s being. When an essential notion comprises part of a person’s belief system (i.e., in this case, with “Merit”) it is difficult to identify that central notion (an aspect of a person’s culture) as a challenge to receiving diversity training. However, this may be the case.

Another example of this contrast between DT and U.S. American culture deals with the *Golden Rule*. While it is a rule that is “endorsed by all the great world religions,” it is also connected to U.S. American culture (Gensler 1). For example, President Kennedy applied it to diversity issues in the 1960’s. The President used it to appeal to white America in an anti-segregation speech (1). However, the *Golden Rule* does not apply to diversity initiatives. In fact, it is in direct opposition to goals of diversity. The *Golden Rule* states: “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.” However, “with cultural diversity it is more like ‘do unto others as they would like to be done to . . .’” (Adler 123, 125). Adler discusses the myth of similarity, which relates to this rule. She writes, “Similarity is the belief that other people are like you.” She goes on to report, “The *Golden Rule* is based on the assumption of similarity . . .” (123). Bond and Pyle make this connection clearer. They report, “adopting . . . a position based on the sameness of treatment is, in essence, rooted in an individualistic analysis.” Thus,

something that follows the U.S. American culture (i.e., the *Golden Rule*) is then in opposition to what DT involves. “This stance . . . de-emphasizes the importance of group membership and represents an individualizing of experience . . .” (258). Therefore, many people bond to the *Golden Rule*, which results in a connection between the rule and U.S. American culture. If the rule is in opposition to DT, so is a part of U.S. American culture.

Moreover, assumptions such as these that resulted from this work are verified by Bond and Pyle who write “to be effective, diversity efforts need to be anchored in both a value for interdependence and accountability for one’s impact on others, which are both notions rooted in an ethos contrary to the American ideology of independence and individualism” (265).

Communication

Another impression that has illuminated itself throughout this project is that DT is not threatening or unappealing to white males, but rather it is the way in which it has been communicated that poses the problem. In other words, one supposition is that the problem arises in the way in which subjects are discussed in DT.

One example of this is in the observation that various DT programs were taking the same approach to dealing with diversity as the “traditional approach.” The “traditional approach” is “treat[ing] cultural diversity as a problem” (Adler, 132). Adler continues by explaining that, “Organizations using a ‘traditional approach’ often attempt to superimpose the dominant culture’s ways of managing on all situations” Lane states, “action to secure assimilation and uniformity has sometimes been insensitive and coercive” (qtd. in Adler 132). Furthermore, diversity training’s early approach was

labeled “coercive, abusive, and controlling” and even described as having “cult-like methods” and “hostile, confrontational tactics” (Overmyer-Day 24, 26). If DT is being communicated in a way that is similar to the “traditional approach” and aggressive in its manner then it is understandably going to encounter a backlash. In other words, the “traditional approach” along with the “melting pot myth” have long been renounced as “incorrect” (Adler 123). It has been firmly established through the diversity movement that assimilation is not the key. If the way in which DT is communicated is similar to assimilation, how can it work? The current DT approach seems to be saying, “change your beliefs or you’re wrong, (i.e., a racist).” This is essentially the same approach as the assimilation view saying “change your ways –you’re wrong. You must fit into the ‘dominant culture.’” One author mentions this idea when he writes, “Compliance implies a mandate. And conformity is exactly the opposite of what diversity is all about” (V. Thomas 63). This evidence leads one to believe it is DT’s approach that is faulty.

Additionally, it seems possible that DT’s early approach was ethnocentric. Ethnocentrism means, “that we hold views and standards that are ‘own group/centric’ and make judgments about other groups based on our own groups values and beliefs” (Ting-Toomey 157). In this case the group that is holding their values to be “centric” are some diversity trainers. Some trainers approach DT as if they are the enlightened ones who hold superior values to those who remain prejudiced. They are simply changing the rhetoric from “assimilate into the melting pot” to “assimilate into the diversity position’s views.” This may be why some diversity advocates argue for a focus on changing behavior at work versus changing people’s beliefs (V. Thomas; Karp and Sammour). DT should not be used to say which view is right or wrong, but instead it should be about

creating a fair and equal work environment. It seems highly unlikely that anyone's deep-seated views are going to change through brief DT sessions they are required to attend through work. Attitudinal change does seem to be too ambitious a goal for DT to tackle. Again, it seems to be the communication approach that is faulty and must be changed.

Also, there is the nature of the subject to consider. For instance, one author quotes a white male as saying:

If you as a proponent for a position advantageous to the minority . . . are urging my support . . . and the basic reason that you give is that if I don't do it I am a racist, I believe objection and jaw-tightening and stone-walling [are] highly potential reactions. (Duke 3-90)

Additionally, if one supports a diversity initiative like training, it may pressure one to agree that women and minorities have been disadvantaged. This admission is "part and parcel" to admitting that white males have been advantaged. Understandably, for many white males who belong to the working class or who don't feel advantaged, those "whose careers are stalled because they aren't 'knowledge workers'" or for those who have gone through downsizing, this seems inequitable (Flynn 53).

Furthermore, since some say that 1990's DT resembles sensitivity training of the 1960's then there seems to be an urgent problem with today's DT (Ivancevich and Gilbert 8). There needs to be an approach that all trainers will follow in order to avoid any more damage. As Overmyer-Day states, "It takes only a few charlatans to sully the reputation of an entire profession. And it takes years to repair the damage they cause" (29).

Polarization

A term that resurfaced in diversity literature more than once was that of polarization. Ting-Toomey discusses polarized thinking in terms of language. She writes,

Our linguistic categories also start to create polarized boundaries between me and you, us and them Engaging in polarized thinking . . . can reduce our anxiety of dealing with gray areas between two polarities. It reduces interpretive and interaction complexities. It bolsters stability . . . especially if we are functioning in an unfamiliar environment. (149)

Some scholars point out the problems that occur with polarization (Bond and Pyle 257; Karp and Sutton 34). For instance, Bond and Pyle discuss the polarization of legal definitions of inequity. They articulate, “many laws and organizational policies essentially require one to set up a dichotomy between guilty and not guilty” (257-258). “In short, policy debates are often inappropriately framed as a choice between dualisms or dichotomies” (258). On the other hand, they point out that there are “subtle shades of harassment and discrimination.” In addition, in a court of law, conditional statements (i.e., “it depends”) would not endure. They sum up the problem with polarization by stating: “Ironically, a myopic focus on what is considered justice under the policies of organizations or laws of our nation can hinder the way we think about equality and the diversity dilemmas” (258).

A second instance where polarization is noted refers to groups of people in actual DT sessions. Karp and Sutton explain that one of the problems with DT is that the programs are often “guilt driven.” They report that many DT sessions put white males in the role of “oppressors.” They state that such programs utilize a “highly problematic” and “danger[ous]” focus on past injustices. This focus on “injustice and guilt tends to polarize the different groups into victims and oppressors” (33-34). The polarization then has the effect of increasing resentment among the groups, which is the opposite of DT goals.

Another point that stems from this idea of “polarization” is the confusion about whether to emphasize sameness or difference in diversity training. This is an issue that is crucial to understand in order to make an argument for diversity. On one hand, some training may focus on similarity. This occurs when people assume that others have more similar values to their own than they do in reality (Adler 123-125). If one follows this logic then we “expect people from other cultures to act as we do and we are surprised [angry or disappointed]” when they do not (Adler 125). This is also based on the idea that people gravitate toward others who are like them (125). Another problem with this is that it “denies individuality.” A focus on “sameness” also “ignores the fact that the meaning of an individual’s behavior can vary with race, gender and power” (Bond and Pyle 258). Furthermore, “if sameness is equated with equality, we reinforce . . . the problems associated with assuming a homogenous worker . . .” (258).

As for “difference,” it is also problematic if DT sessions make differences the focus. An example is that a “focus on differences between groups can reinforce stereotypes and assumptions of homogeneity within groups [of people]” (Bond and Pyle 259). Also, if one is to claim, “everyone is different,” it “implies that all differences are essentially equivalent.” This is not true, especially in respect to power. Not all differences are equal because “certain diverse groups are particularly devalued and delegitimized . . .” (259).

The narrow focus on only similarities or differences correlates with the focus on polarization. As Bond and Pyle state, “there are some complex side effects of adopting a singular focus on either similarities or differences effects that contradict the original intent . . .” (258). Ultimately, there needs to be a balance between pointing out both

sides of similarity and difference. Adler notes the difficulty of such an issue; “It is . . . the challenge of attempting to recognize both ‘similarities’ and ‘differences’ at the same time” (125).

AN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION APPROACH

There is an undeniable connection between communication and workforce diversity. As Gail Thomas states, “Our expertise in communication will allow us substantial opportunities for making contributions to issues related to diversity in the workplace” (371).

Several sources used in this study call for a “new approach” (Hemphill and Haines; V. Thomas; D’Souza). In other words, many agree that current DT is ineffective or that it is having adverse affects. This research project, approached from a communication perspective, suggests a mindful intercultural communication approach be taken to DT. Mindful communication is “being aware of our own and others’ behavior in the situation, and paying focused attention to the *process* of communication” (Ting-Toomey 16). The author goes on to explain, “to become an effective communicator in diverse cultural situations, we must first be mindful of the different characteristics that constitute the process itself. Effective intercultural communication starts with the practice of mindful intrapersonal communication” (23). In other words, this type of approach would pay careful attention to communication occurring in intercultural interactions. For instance, the listener may need to reiterate what the speaker has said in order to ensure understanding. If the listener’s impression is correct the process can move forward. However, if not, the speaker may need to clarify their position.

Another aspect of this approach is that, “Mindfulness means the readiness to shift one’s frame of reference, the motivation to use new categories to understand cultural and ethnic differences, and the preparedness to experiment with creative avenues of decision making and problem solving” (46). In this case, utilizing a different approach to problem-solving or generating ideas would be equally accepted and undertaken. Mindful communication seems an advantageous approach for trainers to adopt when faced with the challenge of DT. Since the topic of a “new” approach is another extensive subject this thesis only offers mindful communication as a suggestion. Hopefully, future research can take this stance and explore it further.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

It must also be noted that the present study does include some limitations. For instance, some of the discourse analyzed constituted secondary sources (Rubin, Rubin and Piele 189). In other words, some of the excerpts are a summary of what white males think or believe, as indicated by authors on the subject. These authors are mostly from news publications and trade journals but also include diversity trainers and white males (See Appendix A). However, as stated in Chapter three, secondary sources are also of considerable value. In the work of Endres, he looked at unwed mothers and explained his use of secondary sources by stating, “the way society must view [unwed mothers] . . . too, must impact the way that these mothers view themselves” (134). In regard to the current examination, the secondary sources are from researchers of DT, trainers, and authors who interviewed white males. It may be argued that these published accounts, too, contain white males’ visions about themselves. For instance, some white

males expressed themselves to the researchers; their words were published along with the investigator/researchers interpretations of the information. Thus, this influences other white males and adds to the image of their position within DT. Thus, looking into this discourse includes another piece of the puzzle to better understand the reasons behind the white male backlash.

As for discussing future research, it is first important to look at the current social and economical status in the United States. At present, the United States and the rest of the world are in a position of change unlike any other throughout history. The September 11, 2001, attacks of terrorism to New York's World Trade Center Towers, The Pentagon, and the crash of a hijacked commercial airline in Pennsylvania have changed the world forever and in many ways. One of the changes deals with the United States economy. This devastating tragedy catapulted the country into a state of recession. As Bond and Pyle note "backlashes tend to erupt more in periods of economic distress" (260). Regarding DT, one may wonder if the backlash will expand and push diversity training aside. On the other hand, some may argue that we need diversity training more than ever. An argument could be made that the "right" DT might have helped prevent terrorist acts. Perhaps if DT was utilized effectively within government agencies there may have been information that might have helped government officials to understand the severity of the terrorist's intentions. Still, DT's future remains uncertain. With this knowledge, one might wonder whether the backlash to DT will continue, or be addressed and allow for more growth within the field. This adds to the importance of studying the backlash to DT.

There is much to suggest for future research in the field of diversity training. After all, the field is still rather new. One proposal for further research is to study the white male backlash utilizing human subjects. In other words, gain feedback from white males (and other cultural groups) attending DT sessions to find out what views they hold in regard to DT. This might consist of an updated version of Blank and Slipp's work. However, a different element might be added by including the actual training materials that were used (i.e., training booklets, handouts, activities). It should be noted that this is not conducted in the present study because printed and published discourse is the subject for the current analysis.

To improve DT, it is also important to study diversity training session materials themselves. It would help to discover what themes the trainers use in their sessions. In other words, what cultural values are prevalent in the sessions? What type of persuasive rhetoric is being used? Is the focus on similarities or differences? What are the trainers asking of the participants? Do they want them to change their views and beliefs or do they focus on behaviors in the workplace?

It would also be important to examine the trainers' styles of communication. Some sources document the fact that women and minorities are the ones instructing most diversity training sessions (Flynn 54). One might consider comparing male and female approaches to DT. According to Deborah Tannen "talk between women and men is cross-cultural communication" (18). Following Tannen, if many women are conducting most of the diversity training, and many men are not relating to the training, it would be interesting to discover whether it is the communication style differences between women and men that are the reason for DT ineffectiveness. In other words, perhaps the

communication style differences between men and women create some of the resistance/problems in receiving the training.

Another interesting direction might be to examine a number of companies that were first to participate in diversity initiatives in order to determine their current status. Did they continue to utilize DT? Did they suffer any lawsuits after the DT was conducted? How do their employees feel about diversity training? Have values, beliefs or behaviors in the organization changed for those attending DT?

As one may surmise, more exploration is needed. It is an important, new field which demands more attention. As Ivancevich and Gilbert write, "Diversity management and its consequences are so important that a new agenda with an emphasis on civility, respect, compassion, theory building, research study and practical application is necessary" (87).

In conclusion, an important question was raised by Lynch as he observed in The Conference on Race and Ethnic Relations in Higher Education, in 1996, "... no one dared ask, at such politically correct gatherings 'Did the strategies for institutional change [i.e., diversity training] have anything to do with creating an era of backlash?'" (127). Briefly discussed in this investigation, diversity strategies used in DT may have resulted in creating some of the backlash. While in 1996, it was considered inappropriate to discuss the issue of DT creating a backlash; hopefully this work will add to the body of knowledge concerning the "white male backlash" relating to DT and can create an opportunity for more discussion in the future.

APPENDIX A

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