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Diversity Climate Assessment of the Communication Studies Department

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The diversity assessment of communication instruction and curriculum, to date, is yet to meaningfully incorporate student voices (Hashlahani, 2010). In fact, Hashlahani (2010) is the first comprehensive published study in the communication discipline that investigates diversity in communication studies department missions. According to Stasora (2010) and Hendrix and Wilson (2014), the White-washed curriculum in the communication discipline does not reflect the backgrounds of the scholars and the students it serves.

Accordingly, my research is meant to live up to the communication studies department’s mission—'We teach communication studies that nurture inclusive civil discourse, critical thinking, and compassionate solutions in a diverse global community' (WWU, Comm. Dept. Mission Statement). And to provide evidence of assessment and understanding of the diversity climate. While all instructors claim their support for diversity in their instruction and research, the amount of attention devoted to this subject, alone, is astoundingly still. The consequences of disregarding a diversity assessment are even more extreme, to lead to the perpetuation of dominance and normalization of Whiteness (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995).

According to Stasora (2010), empirical journals in the discipline refuse to publish perspectives of marginalized groups regarding racial and diversity issues. He evidenced higher published articles that further advanced studies of the diversity climate studies among communication students from the U.S. and Canada. According to Stasora, students’ voice, is, this rooted in bias and assumption that is not made transparent. His aim is to call attention to such norms in the department curriculum and to reveal how they silence students’ opportunity to engage in deep, meaningful racial dialogue that disrupts White normalization.

### Findings

**TENTATIVE ANALYSIS**

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**INTERVIEW DATA ANALYSIS**

Could you describe a positive experience you encountered that involved diversity in the classroom? Student Response: 1. Many students reported a particular course curriculum, as their positive experience. The most commonly mentioned courses were upper-division "intercultural Communication" and "Issues in International Communication" for several reasons.

1. Students reported a recognition of challenging coursework and exposure to diverse epistemologies.
2. They reported an appreciation of challenging coursework and exposure to diverse epistemologies.
3. Additionally, students reported that they felt their educational experience was more relevant, because they felt they were learning about issues that were relevant to them.

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**Implications**

The findings of the study allow the understanding of students’ perspectives on the diversity climate of the department. Student's voice, thus, can be used to encourage conversations and actions. Recommendations proposed by students may be used to enhance cultural, curricular, and administrative matters in the department and the wider campus community. In short, this diversity assessment indicates the need for the department curriculum to move toward racial equity.

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**References**


**Appendix**

Figure 1. Textbook usage: by department, by major.

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**Tables**

**Table 1.** Number of students enrolled in Communication Studies at Western Washington University.

**Table 2.** Comparison of student responses to the diversity climate assessment.

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**Legend**

**Figure 1.** Textbook usage: by department, by major.

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**Notes**

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**Abstract**

This study is a mixed-method assessment combining survey questionnaire, textual analysis, and qualitative interviews in assessing and understanding students’ experience in the communication classroom. The study explores students’ perceptions of the diversity climate of the Communication Studies at Western Washington University. The purpose of the study is to fulfill the following: (a) to examine students’ perception of the diversity climate in communication classes and the department in general; (b) to examine instructors’ perception of the diversity climate in their classes and how they manage marginalized voices in the classroom; Survey questions are administered to measure student perception of classroom climate permitting to examine how students perceive the communication climate; and (c) to provide evidence of assessment and understanding of the diversity climate. While all instructors claim their support for diversity in their instruction and research, the amount of attention devoted to this subject, alone, is astoundingly still. The consequences of disregarding a diversity assessment are even more extreme, to lead to the perpetuation of dominance and normalization of Whiteness (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995).

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