

# Assessing the Impact of a Social Justice-Based Course In Graduate Nursing Education

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# objectives

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1. Describe the impetus and creation of a social justice-based course in graduate nursing education.
2. Analyze qualitative and quantitative data collected in relation to the course.
3. Discuss outcomes and recommendations based on implementation of a social justice-based course in graduate nursing education.

# social justice in nursing

Social justice has long been a value of nursing.

- Many historical nurses have been active proponents of social justice.

Despite this, social justice has become poorly defined in nursing and unclear in many educational settings.

- The ANA has recommended that nurse educators integrate social justice as a “guiding principle” in nursing education (ANA, 2016).



*The Lady With the Lamp* by Henrietta Rae

# creating a social justice-based course

- Theory of Planned Behavior guided development (Ajzen, 1991).
  - Beyond knowledge; influencing attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behavioral control.
- Course content influenced by multiple disciplines.
- Course divided into four broad categories
  - Historical & theoretical foundations
  - Social determinants of health
  - Health effects of social determinants
  - Topics related to promoting health equity

# learning outcomes

- Compare and contrast theoretical foundations of social justice and health equity.
- Evaluate specific social determinants of health and their relationship to health outcomes.
- Demonstrate effective use of technology for the purpose of increasing awareness and influencing change with social injustices.
- Create an innovative plan to address social injustices and promote health equity.
- Develop individual values and attitudes related to social justice based upon historical and theoretical perspectives.
- Analyze factors that influence the development and success of interventions that target structural violence.
- Demonstrate how social justice can guide the graduate prepared nurse in the professional or practice setting.

# course assignments

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- Social justice surveys
- Microblogging
- Group discussions
- Theoretical foundations paper
- Innovative intervention project
- Course reflection

# methods

Institutional review board approval obtained

- No demographic information collected

Participants

- 40 graduate students enrolled in two consecutive semesters of a Social Justice course which is offered as a hybrid online 15 week DNP elective

Pre- and Post Test Design

- SPSS Version 25

Social Justice Attitudes Scale (Torres-Harding, S.R., Siers, B., & Olson, B. (2012))

- 4 subscales
- Total items
- Likert scale—1=Strongly disagree; 7=Strongly agree

# results

Subscales	T1 Mean (SD)	T2 Mean (SD)	t-test	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
Social Justice Attitudes	72.3(6.84)	75.39(2.91)	3.187	40	.003*
Perceived Behavioral Control Around Social Justice	29.97(3.76)	32.95(2.26)	6.855	40	.000*
Subjective Norms Around Social Justice	18.90(4.91)	20.36(5.09)	1.889	40	.066
Intentions to Engage in Social Justice	24.83 (3.03)	27.02(1.79)	5.216	40	.000*
Total Scale	146.07(13.43)	155.73(8.63)	5.971	40	.000*

# qualitative inquiry & findings

- Dimensional analysis (DA) method (Schatzman, 1986) was used to further evaluate the course's influence on students' attitudes, perceived behavioral control, subjective norms, and behavioral intentions regarding social justice.
- DA is an alternative approach to developing grounded theory as originally conceived by Glaser & Strauss (1967).
- Its product is a theory that depicts some shared social phenomenon.

# qualitative data

- Course Reflection Papers written by 41 graduate students enrolled in two consecutive semesters of a 15 week Social Justice course.
- Both cohorts of students received the same assignment instructions:
  - During the final week of the course, students will write a reflection about their experience in this course that should include discussion related to their values and attitudes toward social justice, perspectives on health equity, and their view of the graduate-prepared nurse's role in addressing social injustices. There is no length requirement or rubric criteria for this assignment as each student will have a different experience to share.
- No student demographic or other biographical data were collected.

# participants

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- First cohort
  - First time offered
  - Free elective
  - Ten 3<sup>rd</sup> year DNP graduate students
- Second cohort
  - Second time offered
  - Selective course
  - Thirty-one 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year DNP graduate students

# qualitative data analysis findings

- Support quantitative results indicating an increased endorsement of social justice values, goals and behaviors among students.
- Are consistent with quantitative findings, and demonstrate students' intentions to engage social action endeavors in the future.
- Surpass quantitative results indicating that students found the course to be transformational.
  - Personally
  - Academically
  - Professionally

# personally transforming

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- Life changing
  - Values
  - Views
  - Ambitions
- Expanding awareness, sensitivity, empathy
- Challenging previously held beliefs and convictions
- Correcting misperceptions
- Igniting passion
- Increasing confidence
- Eliciting strong emotional reactions - stress, anxiety, guilt

# academically transforming

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- View that Social Justice course should be foundational, required, and interdisciplinary
- Discovery of new theories and theorists to incorporate into future course work and learning.

# professionally transforming

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- Increased awareness, empathy, and sensitivity towards vulnerable populations.
- Increased collaboration with other health professionals to influence policy decisions.
- Convinced about the use of social media to advocate for vulnerable people and as a strategy to facilitate activism.
- Increased advocacy

# cohort comparisons

- Key perspective, that the course was transformational, collectively and commonly expressed by both cohorts.
- Noticeable differences observed between the cohort responses.
  - 1<sup>st</sup> Cohort members did not express any negative reflections. Unanimously used strong language to describe course influence and to make recommendations for future consideration.
    - Course chosen as elective
    - Placement in program of study – all were in 3rd year
    - Course conducted over a 15 week period during the Fall 2015 semester.
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Cohort members expressed cynicism, guilt, anger, denial, helplessness, depression, anxiety, and increased levels of stress. Were critical and sometimes wary of the use of social media.
    - Limited choice between two selectives
    - Placement in program of study – variable
    - Course taken over a 15 week period that coincided with the 2016 Presidential campaign and election.

# future recommendations

- Compare 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year students who completed the course to see if it had impact on DNP project, subsequent academic performance, employment.
- Identify concept threads, theorists, and authors that should be interwoven throughout all specialty didactic and clinical courses.
- Decide if course should be foundational, required, interdisciplinary, etc.
- Establish an academic trajectory focused on health equity.
- Consider adopting tenets of social justice as central and foundational to the vision and mission of the College of Nursing and Health Innovation.

# references

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**Thank you!**

**Questions?**

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