

NURSING DOCTORAL FACULTY PERCEPTIONS OF FACTORS THAT AFFECT THEIR CONTINUED SCHOLARSHIP



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This focus group study was undertaken as part of a larger investigation of how the demand for increased production of nurses with doctorates affects doctoral faculty's scholarly productivity. This study provided a basis for development of the national survey questionnaire. Two focus groups that included 29 faculty teaching in doctor of philosophy and/or doctor of nursing practice programs took place at one of two national conferences. The focus group interviews were transcribed and content analyzed for the identification of themes; all members of the research team reached consensus. The three major themes were the demands of teaching, the importance of institutional structure and climate, and the sustainability of one's self, the institution, and the discipline. Participants identified strategies for enhancing scholarly productivity. Findings are limited by the small sample size and the voluntary participation of conference attendees. The strength of emotion that participants revealed underscores the need for nursing leaders to address the increasing academic expectations for faculty. If the profession does not address the needs of its current and future faculty, goals explicated by the Institute of Medicine in *The Future of Nursing* cannot be achieved, and the health of the nation will suffer. (Index words: Doctoral nursing faculty; Scholarship; Research productivity; Work–Life balance) *J Prof Nurs* 30:493–501, 2014. © 2014 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

AN ANTICIPATED INCREASE in population needs for health care as the baby boomer generation ages will coincide with the implementation of federal policies and laws intended to transform the health care system to one that is increasingly attentive to disease prevention. These events ensure that the demand for registered nurses in the United States will continue into the 2020s. In order to provide delivery of safe and competent

nursing care in an increasingly complex and technologically mediated health care system, the 2010 Institute of Medicine (IOM) report, *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*, has called for changes in the labor force by 2020 including preparation of 80% of nurses at the bachelor of science in nursing (BSN) degree level, schools' increased production of nurses prepared for advanced clinical practice roles, and for doubling the population of nurses with doctorates, many of whom are needed to teach future generations of nurses and to conduct research (National Research Council, 2005). Implementation of the latter recommendation has led to an increase in the number of schools of nursing offering doctoral degrees, including both research doctorates, typically doctors of philosophy (PhDs) and doctors of nursing practice (DNPs) degrees. Implementation of all three recommendations places heightened demands on nursing faculty to be more productive in teaching nursing

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students at all levels because they simultaneously carry out the discipline's scientific mission.

The [Health Resources and Administration \(2007\)](#), the [U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics \(2008\)](#), and a number of experts in the area of workforce issues ([Buerhaus, Staiger, & Auerbach, 2009](#)) have projected a nationwide shortage of almost 1 million nurses by 2020. The need for increased numbers of BSN nurses and those with graduate degrees will require concerted efforts to prepare more nursing faculty who are qualified for faculty positions in colleges and universities. The challenge to achieve these goals in the face of a growing shortage of nursing faculty is the need for them to be tackled simultaneously. To be eligible for faculty employment, promotion, and tenure in today's academic environment, these faculty need to be prepared at the doctoral level ([Hinshaw, 2001](#)). Simultaneously, national organizations and agencies and nurse leaders have identified the urgent need for preparation of nurse scientists with doctorates to conduct research that increases the scientific base of nursing practice ([Hinshaw; IOM, 2010](#)).

The shortage of nursing faculty is very likely to result in heavier teaching loads for nursing faculty members and less time for them to devote to research and scholarship ([Brady, 2010; Hinshaw, 2001](#)). As part of a larger project in which faculty who teach in doctoral programs in nursing were surveyed to study how the demand for increased production of nurses with doctorates affects their scholarly productivity, a focus group study was conducted to identify the domains that need to be examined to address the question.

Background

The [IOM's 2010](#) report pointed out that the development of DNP programs is too recent to be able to discern how their emergence will affect the nursing shortage or the nursing faculty shortage. Described by the IOM as a promising opportunity, the introduction of the DNP into practice and the impact of the terminal evidence-based practice projects on the quality of patient care and the scientific base of nursing practice have also yet to be thoroughly evaluated. What is clear, however, is that DNP students will likely require instruction and mentoring as do students in research-focused doctoral programs.

Although there have been repeated calls in the past and recently for research training for nurses and nurse scientists to be conducted within schools of nursing situated in research-intensive universities with cadres of interdisciplinary researchers, the reality is that these programs (a) are relatively few in number, (b) admit and graduate a small number of students each year, and (c) focus heavily on the conduct of research with relatively little time devoted to other roles and expectations of nursing faculty ([AACN, 2005; National Research Council, 2005](#)). Because a relatively small proportion of schools are research intensive, graduates of their doctoral programs are likely to be employed by schools of nursing that are not research intensive and are likely to find themselves in academic positions that have very different expectations for them than the schools in which they were prepared ([Lewallen & Kohlenberg, 2011](#)). Further, the research and

scholarship productivity of such faculty members may suffer because of their inability to balance the expectations related to teaching, research, and service to the university or college, profession, and community.

Little research exists regarding factors associated with scholarly productivity among nursing faculty, and none has been found that addresses faculty research productivity in association with doctoral teaching responsibilities. [Hinshaw \(2001\)](#) observed that expectations related to scholarly productivity persist despite increasing demands associated with teaching responsibilities. A shrinking cadre of senior faculty who are often more likely to engage in doctoral education will be expected to provide leadership and mentorship to growing numbers of junior faculty. Factors that have been observed to enhance the scholarly productivity of nursing faculty include organizational climate, perceived support, job satisfaction, mentorship, and organizational efforts to facilitate research ([Cooke & Green, 2000; Greenwood & Gray, 1998; Gutierrez, Candela, & Carver, 2012; Li Gui, Barriball, & White, 2008; Roberts, 1997; Roberts & Turnbull, 2005; Turnbull & Roberts, 2005](#)). [McNeal \(2000\)](#) observed that research productivity among African American nursing faculty is greater at research-oriented doctoral degree-granting institutions, reflecting the likelihood that those schools have more resources with which to support faculty research. In 1995, Bailey observed that faculty who engaged in practice were more satisfied with their academic role and more likely to engage in research than those who did not; however, the generalizability of her findings to the present day may be limited due to marked change in nearly 20 years in the economics of higher education and role expectations that faculty experience.

The literature suggests that a strong determinant of overall success in the nurse faculty role is a positive work environment in which administrative support is evident and ongoing ([Candela, Gutierrez, & Keating, 2012; Gormley & Kennerly, 2010; Rudy, 2001](#)). Rudy discussed faculty and leadership factors that contribute to a positive academic work environment. Faculty factors included (a) a faculty structure that values those faculty who practice and those who conduct research; (b) communication by the administration with faculty and staff in multiple ways, which involves providing information when individuals are ready to hear and act on it; (c) the celebration and recognition of faculty accomplishments; (d) administrative support for faculty decisions ranging from curriculum revisions to student grades; and (e) the leadership role of the dean.

Studies that examined factors associated with research productivity among health professions' faculty outside of nursing revealed a gender gap, with women and particularly mothers, tending to be less productive in research ([Carr, Friedman, Moskowitz, Kazis, & Weed, 1992; Carr et al., 1998; Deshpande & Deshpande, 2011; Kaplan, Sullivan, Dukes, Phillips, Kelch, & Schaller, 1996; Kaufman & Chevan, 2011; Pagel & Hudetz, 2011; Palepu et al., 1998; Schroen, Brownstein, & Sheldon, 2004](#)). This gap in productivity was typically associated with gender differences in salary and rank. Faculty who experienced formal or informal mentorship were more

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