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Donovan, Edward, "Social Justice Attitudes and Health: A Cross Sectional Study" (2021). *Senior Honors Projects*. Paper 919.

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Social Justice Attitudes and Health: A Cross Sectional Study

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Introduction

- Increasingly, social justice is being considered as a key factor associated with health outcomes.
- This study explored perceptions of social justice, perceived discrimination in the health care (HC) setting, and utilization of HC.

Methods

- First, a survey was created based on a review of existing literature. The survey assessed attitudes toward social justice (Social Justice Scale, SJS), experiences of perceived discrimination in the HC setting, and socio-demographics.
- The study was approved by the University of Rhode Island's (URI) Institutional Review Board.
- URI students were recruited via email / word of mouth.
- Interested students provided informed consent online and then completed the survey via Qualtrics, an online survey tool.

Analysis

- Data were analyzed using SPSS.
- Frequencies and descriptive statistics were used to describe the sample.
- Correlations, ANOVA, and T-tests assessed the relationship between study variables, with significance set as $p < .05$.

Results

Participants

- n=31 provided informed consent; n=3 did not complete the survey. Therefore, the analytical sample = 28
- See Table 1 for sample demographics

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics (n = 28)

	N (%)
Race	
Black/African American	7 (17.9)
White	22 (78.6)
Other	1 (3.6)
Gender	
Male	7 (25.0)
Female	20 (64.5)
Year in school	
Freshman	4 (14.3)
Sophomore	5 (17.9)
Junior	0 (0.0)
Senior	15 (53.6)
Employment status	
Yes	15 (53.6)
No	12 (42.9)
First generation college student	
Yes	11 (39.3)
No	16 (57.1)
Household income	
Less than \$25,000	1 (3.6)
\$25,000 - < \$50,000	6 (21.4)
\$50,000 - - < \$100,000	10 (35.7)
\$100,000+	6 (21.4)
Don't know	4 (14.3)

Note: % totals may not = 100 due to missing values. Respondents could select more than one racial identity

Results (continued)

Perceived discrimination

- 6.4% (n=2) agreed they had been discriminated against due to race in a HC setting.
- 3.2% (n=1) strongly agreed that language barriers had been a problem for their HC.
- 12.8% (n=4) agreed that there was 1+ time that they felt they would have gotten better HC if they were another race/ethnicity.
- 53.6% (n=15) agreed that having staff trained to be sensitive to racial issues would improve their HC experience.

Social Justice Scale (SJS)

- Mean score = 68.5 (S.D. 13.7); Possible range from 11 to 77.
- The ANOVA determined there was no difference in SJS by:
 - time since last HC visit (<12, 12-36, 36+ months), and
 - income (Fig. 1).
- The T-test identified a significant difference in mean SJS score by 1st-generation college student status (Fig. 2).

Discussion

- In this exploratory study, several participant reported experiencing discrimination in a HC setting, which is notable.
- The study identified a significant difference in SJS by 1st-generation student status, with 1st generation students having a higher mean score than students who are not 1st generation students. It is possible that SJS scores are associated with race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status.
- A larger scale study and further analysis could investigate the HC experiences of first-generation students at URI.

Limitations

- Small sample
- Self-reported data
- Unknown where perceived discrimination in a HC setting occurred

Strengths

- One of the first studies to explore this topic among college students
- Large portions of first-generation college students.

Literature Referenced

Torres-Harding SR, Siers B, Olson BD. Development and psychometric evaluation of the Social Justice Scale (SJS). Am J Community Psychol. 2012 Sep;50(1-2):77-88.

Figure 1: SJS Score by Family Income Bracket

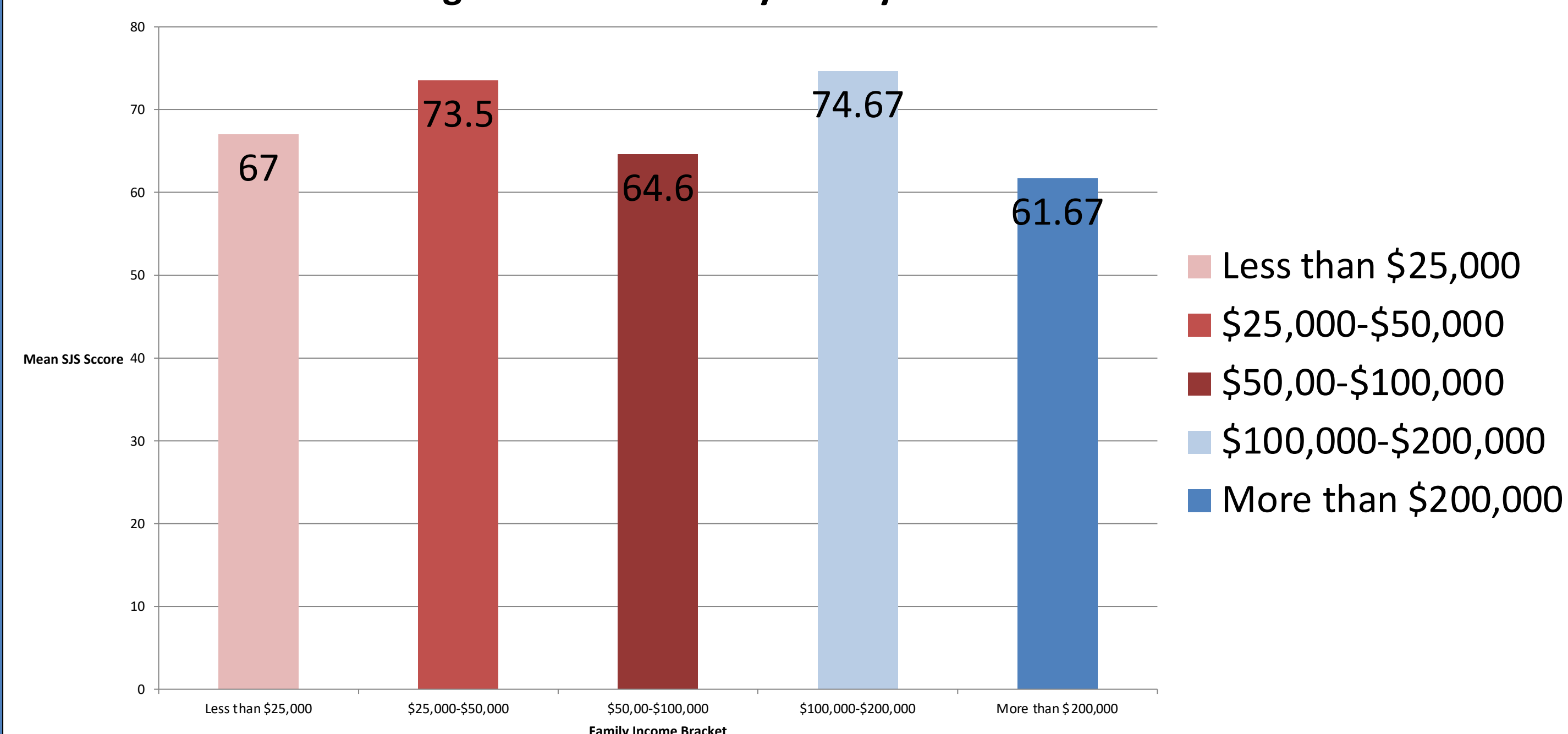


Figure 2: SJS by First-generation Student Status

