

POVERTY AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING: COMPARING THE ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES WITH THOSE OF SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS IN THE NETHERLANDS

Laura M. Parker-Barua

Dr. Colleen Galambos, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

This cross-national exploratory study examines the influence of social structure and educational level on the attitudes and beliefs of social work students. Respondents were students enrolled in a social work program in one of two countries, the United States and the Netherlands. A cross-sectional survey research design was used to elicit information regarding student attitudes and beliefs as they relate to poverty and affordable housing. Data was collected using three research instruments; these include a demographic survey, the Poverty and Housing Scale (PHS), and a second scale that was designed to measure beliefs regarding the causes of poverty (COP). The final sample consisted of 456 student responses. Three hypotheses were tested using independent samples t-tests and multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). Findings of this study indicate that while social work students from both countries had a more structural view of poverty and affordable housing, students from the Netherlands had a significantly more cultural/individualistic view when compared to students from the USA. These were not the anticipated results. There were no significant differences found when comparing the attitudes of graduate and undergraduate social work students. Structuration Theory (Giddens) is used as a conceptual foundation and in discussion of the results. Implications for social work education, policy, and practice are discussed. Future research is suggested.