

Universal Basic Income and Social Work: A Love-Hate Story

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Abstract

Do the proposal of a universal basic income (UBI) and social work have commonalities? How should we conceptualize their connections and divergences? UBI has been, among others, advocated for its presumed capacity to reduce administrative burden and adapt welfare states to structural challenges. However, previous research in the UBI field has rarely tackled its potential impact on social work or focused on street-level implementation matters. Conversely, social work scholars have not delved into the UBI proposal. Yet, if UBI is to be considered as a credible welfare reform, the links between this proposal and public policy at the local level should be further investigated. Is UBI fundamentally opposed to the social work *ethos*, or could it help rethink social work practices? The aim of this paper is to open avenues for dialogue between UBI and social work research. To do so, the author sketches the conceptual synergies and discords between the two poles through a literature review and then explores how the results of (quasi-)UBI experiments can be informative on social work. The contribution shows that there are still some profound incompatibilities between a 'pure' form of UBI and current practices in social work.