Brixen Studies in Social Policy and Social Science 5

Social Work Practice to the Benefit of Our Clients: Scholarly Legacy of Edward J. Mullen

Edited by Haluk Soydan
in collaboration with Walter Lorenz

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This book is dedicated to
Olof Soydan and Jonas Soydan, who admire Ed, and to
Jerry Hanley – Ed's lifelong companion and enabler.

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Preface

Bozen-Bolzano University Press is honored to present this volume dedicated to the life achievements of Dr. Edward Joseph Mullen, an outstanding international scholar in the field of social work. It celebrates his work through contributions by distinguished social work academics from six countries, each of whom present a different slant on Ed Mullen's lifelong concern for developing a scientific grounding for social work practice. This book culminates in Ed Mullen's own compendium of his approach to the profession of social work.

As a small university that came into existence in 1997 and situated on the geographical borders between Italy and Austria and the cultural intersection of Northern and Southern European traditions, the University of Bozen-Bolzano welcomes this opportunity to publicize our particular approach to social work research and education implicitly through the medium of this volume. When we hosted the Inter-Centre Network for Evaluation of Social Work Practice (INTSOCEVAL) seminar in 2014, we had the opportunity to measure our approach against contributions by the finest international researchers in the discipline of social work, among them Ed Mullen himself. This confirmed our conviction that, first of all, social work has earned its place in academia, although this is still not yet accepted in all countries; it merits this position not because it emulates other disciplines but because it is developing its own characteristic discourse. Such a discourse combines dedication to the immediacy of social issues arising especially at the local level, the critical reception of empirical studies, and rigorous theories and science-based methods of international and universal relevance. Social work is a discipline and profession situated on the frontlines, in positions in which differences matter and their meaning and significance need to be constantly negotiated. In many countries our belonging to the

world of academia and the community of recognized professions is still a matter of contention, but as this volume demonstrates, emanating from contributions to the INTSOCEVAL seminar, this constitutes a challenge that produces excellent scholarship and reflects this very specialty of social work.

Academics like Haluk Soydan, whose skilled editorship and international erudition steered this publication to its impressive conclusion, are themselves examples of the stimulating and integrating effects of scholarly exchange across borders, as he describes in his introduction. I myself shared similar experiences, having traversed several European borders. My background of undergraduate studies in theology in Germany was always a much appreciated basis for a deeper understanding of and respect for the irresolvable questions arising in social work practice, whereas following this up with studies in social policy and social work at postgraduate level at the London School of Economics added to this analytic competence concerning structural social questions and methodological options in social work. Together with several years of practice at the coal face in London's East End community, a laboratory of social diversity of every kind and a source of inspiration stemming from the resilience of my clients, this background equipped me to venture into teaching social work in the Republic of Ireland, where in the 1970s and 1980s much social pioneering work was to be done. Living and working in a country undergoing a dramatic transformation, I discovered the value of approaching social work from a historical perspective. Any attempt at imposing a methodology from the assumption that it was universally and timelessly valid would simply not have connected with the cultural and political specificities of Ireland, a country much more heterogeneous than common stereotypes suggest. This realization in turn shaped the engagement I was drawn into after 1989 in Central and Eastern Europe, where I was invited to participate in numerous resurrections of social work (and social pedagogy) courses after the demise of communism. Searching for the many traces of forms under which social work had been present, even under conditions that had denied its relevance, and combining them with the knowledge derived from studying how social work had originated in other historical contexts led me to discover the specificity of

social work theory. It helped me to promote the approach to social work research we now practice here in Italy at Bozen.

The deep political partition I experienced in divided postwar Germany; the divisions, superficially characterized as religious differences, I had experienced in Ireland; and the linguistic differences of the borderline Italian province of South Tyrol, which founded and finances our university as a multilingual project, added another dimension to my understanding of the role of social work. It *does* make a difference in which language you practice your profession, and the difference it makes cannot be learned from books but only from the people with whom you interact and to whom you dedicate your professional work. And so the exchanges between teachers and learners, theoreticians and practitioners, professionals and users of services are vital for the promotion of accountable forms of practice and, by the same token, for practice research in social work. The conference held by the European Social Work Research Association in conjunction with the INTSOCEVAL seminar in Bozen, which was also addressed by Ed Mullen, bore witness to the relevance of this approach to social work research.

Ed Mullen's presence and particularly the presentation of his particular understanding of what should count as evidence in pursuit of evidence-based practice (EBP) in social work, which he centrally helped to promote, gave credence to the validity of research approaches to social work that do not carry out research *on* users of social services but regard them as coproducers of knowledge. It was most inspiring to experience the vibrancy of this trans-Atlantic debate on our doorstep and to witness the confidence that is spreading among social work researchers on account of a vision of accountable practice that overcomes the stagnant controversies between positivists and constructivists that had long stymied fruitful exchanges between both camps.

Having led us to this fruitful stage of an inescapable debate is one of the latest contributions by Ed Mullen and his colleagues from the other side of the Atlantic. Through such exchanges we notice how insular our scientific

communities still are and how isolating linguistic boundaries continue to be, even within the academic communities of Europe where opportunities for linguistic encounters should be plentiful. My own observations are that within the academic discipline of social work we oscillate between a superficial type of universalism, often parading as scientific neutrality, on one side—an attitude that pretends that people are people and social work, despite its different titles and traditions, can claim a scientific basis for its interventions that transcends cultural barriers and political ideologies—and an overemphasis on the significance of historically grown differences in titles and schools of thought on the other. A prime example of this ambiguity in Europe is the duality between discourses of social work and social pedagogy, which is hard to explain to outsiders but which can nevertheless be used either to put up barriers to mutual understanding or level all differences to the point where the critical mutual questioning this implies is lost.

This volume was therefore deliberately designed as an experiment in border crossing in the best tradition of academic critique, which does not take any position for granted but seeks to obtain truth from the careful examination of the evidence provided to back up arguments. The wide range of national responses to EBP presented here do not converge but have nevertheless a common concern, which is to communicate the link between evidence and accountability in social work. Following the evidence orientation is therefore not a matter of joining a confessional community as it sometimes appears but an invitation to link research and practice in social work to promote more fruitful exchanges for the purpose of facing up to social work's deep social and ethical responsibility.

The experiment at the core of this volume is an attempt to connect the views and experiences of academic colleagues from different national backgrounds who are prepared to question their insights regarding intellectual border crossings. That this book could be produced by the publishing house of this young university is a sign of the confidence our international partners have in the quality of this university's overall work and in that of our colleagues

in social work at Brixen, who have launched this series and whose stimulating academic projects I am happy to share. It certainly constitutes a landmark in the series of Brixen Studies in Social Policy and Social Science, in which this volume appears, and underlines our dual commitment to regional research issues and international debates.

As rector of this university, I take courage in witnessing how my discipline of social work, which is certainly not prominently represented among heads of universities and which still has the reputation of being marginal in academia, can in a work such as this demonstrate not only its own international presence and high rank, but also the general role of a university as an educational and cultural institution that critically connects different positions on a global scale and sees therein its social commitment.

Walter Lorenz, Free University of Bozen-Bolzano

1. Introduction

Haluk Soydan – School of Social Work, University of Southern California

This book concerns the lifetime contributions of Dr. Edward Joseph Mullen, the Willma and Albert Musher Professor Emeritus of Columbia University and a fellow of the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare, to social work research and professional practice. The book integrates contributions from an Inter-Centre Network for Evaluation of Social Work Practice (INTSOCEVAL) seminar and postseminar invitational contributions.

INTSOCEVAL is an informal and invitational network of European and American social work research centers. The network was founded in 1998 following a 1997 conference on evaluation as a tool in the development of social work discourse, organized by the Center of Evaluation of Social Services at the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare. INTSOCEVAL is an international network whose members meet annually. It embraces an informal approach and has served throughout the years as a platform for discourses on scientific and epidemiological questions of social work with explicit reference and pertinence to social work practice. The 2014 annual seminar took place at the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano in Italy, April 13–14, 2014. This seminar was dedicated to the legacy of Dr. Edward J. Mullen. Here we are publishing contributions to this seminar. After the seminar, the editor of the book also invited other scholars who are not part of INTSOCEVAL to contribute to the book.

This collection of chapters transcends a single social work scholar's lifetime work and provides a window to historical events, milestones, and challenges of the science and practice of social work. This book has unique characteristics and attempts to capture unique historical components in the develop-

ment of social work, all inspired by Dr. Mullen's work as perceived by the contributors of this book. I would like to summarize my perspective on those unique characteristics of the book in four contexts of the science and practice of social work.

1.1 Social Work as Developed and Interpreted in the Old and New Worlds

This context is embedded in the nature of the structure of INTSOCEVAL and the background of several of the contributors, including the editor, of this book. Let me explain this context by briefly describing the scholarly history of the editor as an example. I wrote my doctoral thesis in sociology at the University of Uppsala, Sweden. Its mission was to interpret empirical data collected in 22 countries by an American psychologist, Charles E. Osgood, using the Osgood attitude measurement scale known as semantic differential, constructed to measure the subjective, affective meaning of words. The era, the early 1970s, was a time of advancement of the Marxist philosophy of science combined with and fueled by confrontations with functionalist, Weberian, and other schools of sociology. So I took the challenge of interpreting Osgoodian (positivist) empirical data from a Marxist conceptual and theoretical framework. Mission impossible, yes, but luckily I passed the exam! The point here is, however, not my doctor's title in sociology at a university older than 500 years, but the formation of a professional identity that mandated reading in all provinces of social science. Many years later I came to cofound the international Campbell Collaboration, a bastion of scientific evidence generated with experimental methods that has its roots in the philosophy of empirical sciences (some argue, positivist) and logical empiricism—emphasizing empiricism, verification of data, and rejection of metaphysics.

Similarly, the membership of INTSOCEVAL and the contributors of this book collectively represent a robust foundation on which diverse philosophies of science and methodological perspectives are fostered, confronted, and advanced. In a crudely generalized fashion, this book hosts perspectives that originated in the Old and New worlds, not always congruent and at

times at the odds with one another. This mix of perspectives colors the book, provides an attractive scholarly flavor, and invites further thinking in pursuit of developing a science of social work while concurrently making this science relevant to the needs of populations and communities.

1.2 Social Work's Trajectory toward Evidence-Based Practice (EBP)

A second characteristic of this book is triggered by the scholarly journey of Dr. Mullen and not necessarily that of the contributors. One of the main focuses of Dr. Mullen's career has been bringing rigorous science to service delivery organizations to promote better client outcomes. In other words, how should we measure outcomes of actions and interventions of social work practice to enrich and guide the profession to constantly improve its knowledge base and the tools of intervention? Similarly, how should we shield our professional actions from unverified information, arbitrary opinion, and simple ideology? In social work, it is not easy to find prominent examples of an entire scholarly career dedicated to bringing rigorous science to social work practice. However, Dr. Mullen's lifetime achievement is an excellent example.

The reader who comes to think of the controversy regarding social work as a science versus art might righteously raise the question, "What about social work as art? Does Dr. Mullen's work disregard, or even as some opponents of EBP would suggest, diminish or reject its value?" Not at all. As evidenced by some of the contributions to this book, Mullen's work is very sensitive to "nonscientific" dimensions of social work, such as the importance of relationships, mentorship, and personal closeness between researchers and others.

On the other hand, as some of the chapters in the book describe, it is not a coincidence that Dr. Mullen became a pioneer of evidence-based social work practice. In fact, he was well prepared at the onset of the EBP movement. By having first studied deficiencies in our professional knowledge base and concluded that our interventions were poorly or not at all supported by rigorous evidence, and then having worked intensively on outcome

measures, he was a natural forerunner in pursuit of strong evidence for effective social work interventions. In the constitutive years of the international Campbell Collaboration, Dr. Mullen was an important voice of social work that supported the early development of the collaboration.

In sum, this book transcends Dr. Mullen's work and provides a perspective on the development of EBP globally.

1.3 Evidence-Based Practice is not the "End of History"

In the wake of an article published in the journal *National Interest*, in 1992 Francis Fukuyama published a remarkable book called *The End of History and the Last Man*. Inspired by the conclusion of the Cold War conflict between communism and Western liberal democracy, Fukuyama proclaimed the end of history, meaning that in liberal democracy humankind had achieved its final form of government. No other conclusion would have been such a fallacy, as evidenced by the ensuing political context of the world!

The end of history perspective has its echoes in science. At times, we tend to see new theories and approaches as the ultimate stage of knowing; this conclusion is also a clear fallacy, as elegantly demonstrated by Thomas Kuhn in his model of scientific paradigms. Similarly, there have been examples of EBP advocates who mistakenly argued that the EBP movement sees itself as the ultimate response of social work to everything, a sort of end of history approach. Edward Mullen has been an early pioneer of warning us about multidimensionality and the diversity of social work and urging us to recognize that EBP is not always the ultimate response to everything in social work. His 2015 piece in the *European Journal of Social Work*[1] is a culmination and further clarification of this position, warning that we all should abstain from making EBP a dogma.

1 Mullen, E. J. (2015). Reconsidering the "idea" of evidence in evidence-based policy and practice. *European Journal of Social Work*. Advance online publication. doi:10.1080/13691457.2015.1022716

1.4 Bridging Evidence and Practice

This book has another distinct uniqueness in its emphasis on the research–practice gap. A classic Greek philosopher, Aristotle was one of the early thinkers who constructed a typology of knowledge in which different types of information are related to a specific purpose. His types were theoretical, productive, and practical. Theoretical knowledge is related to obtaining truth for the sake of the truth, productive knowledge is related to the creation of an artifact or system, and practical knowledge has the purpose of gaining knowledge and wisdom to guide our actions, particularly in the public sphere.

When defining the purpose of knowledge in social work, social workers (researchers and practitioners) have often oscillated between favoring theoretical knowledge versus practical knowledge (with an element of what Aristotle called productive knowledge). In real-life situations and globally, this divide tended to be a constraint between knowledge producers (university-based researchers) and knowledge users (social work professionals) for social work practice. Indeed, this cleavage has been and is a major deficit in social work. Some social workers have clearly seen the negative effects of the conflict between evidence production and professional practice. Edward Mullen is one of those individuals. He has been a champion of trying to bridge this gap using innovative research and infrastructural constructs. His innovative means of bridging the gap brings a unique dimension to the message of this book. What is reflected as uniqueness in this book is the consistence and persistence with which Edward Mullen has addressed this issue throughout the years.

1.5 Contributions

In Chapter 2, Walter Lorenz analyzes social work as a product of modernity. He points out the ambiguity generated by modernity, emphasizing individual autonomy and dependence on organic solidarity at the same time. He suggests that with this historical backdrop, social work in its role of promoting social solidarity has oscillated between positivist science and hermeneutic models to understand human interaction. Indeed a dilemma!

Lorenz interprets Mullen's work in an attempt to overcome this dilemma in which social work finds itself.

In Chapter 3, Inge Bryderup describes how the evidence-based social work movement has influenced the Danish social policy context and social work research. She points out that different stakeholders understand and define evidence-based practice and research in different ways. She concludes that the evidence-based approach has not had a significant effect on social work practice and research in Denmark. A main reason for this lack of impact seems to be the Danish rejection of the idea of an evidence hierarchy, and as a counterpoint Bryderup seeks support in Mullen's challenge to reconsider the epistemological foundations of EBP.

In Chapter 4, Mike Fisher and Peter Marsh consider Mullen's work on practitioner–researcher approaches over two decades. They suggest that despite the substantial contributions of Mullen on this topic, EBP advocates remain unconvinced of the need to engage directly with practitioners to develop evidence.

Chapter 5, written by Mikko Mäntysaari, provides a perspective on EBP as perceived in Finland. His contribution is associated with one of the oft-repeated objections to EBP, namely the shortage of evidence. Mäntysaari discusses the question of how to work with a research-based orientation while lacking empirical evidence of the outcomes of interventions.

In Chapter 6, Soydan connects Mullen's early contributions to mapping the lack of evidence in understanding and evaluating outcomes of social work interventions. He relates these early publications to Mullen's later work on developing EBP. He also draws parallels to the development of the foundations of evidence-based health care and evidence-based social work.

In Chapter 7, another international perspective is provided. Karen Tengvald describes Edward Mullen´s influence on the formation of the Swedish Centre for Evaluation of Social Services and its successor, the Institute for Evidence-Based Social Work Practice—two research and development institutions

established to compensate for the disengagement of university research institutions from producing knowledge with practice relevance.

In Chapter 8, Bruce Thyer characterizes Edward Mullen as a trailblazer by reviewing Mullen's half-century-long research career that justifies designating him as a visionary regarding the emergence of EBP as a major influence in contemporary human services and health care. In this pursuit, Thyer reviews the five steps of EBP and clarifies many misunderstandings related to EBP.

Chapter 9 is written by Dorian Traube, Jennifer Bellamy, and Sarah Bledsoe, former doctoral students of Edward Mullen and now highly regarded professors in their own right. In this chapter, they reflect on Edward Mullen's career as a mentor and apply a pragmatic controlled trial to examine this dimension of Mullen's contribution to the scholarly community. From a historical perspective, Edward Mullen's mentoring efforts and approach emerge as an exceptional dimension of his character.

In Chapter 10, Edward Mullen is given the opportunity to reflect and comment on what has been written about his lifetime work in the previous chapters. He does not always agree with what has been attributed to his work or EBP, and no opportunity is available in the context of this volume for the contributors to respond to his comments. If there is such a desire among any of the contributors, they will have to use other media to continue the debate.

Finally, this book contains a bibliographic summary of Dr. Edward Mullen's research and publications. To support the reader's access, the material it has been structured in topical areas that Edward Mullen has dedicated special attention to throughout the years.

Those who have contributed with specific chapters are colleagues and friends of Edward Joseph Mullen. Some of them have known him and his work over several decades. Many of them, including the editor of this book,

have very much benefited from his mentorship, skills, and wisdom. We all are thankful for the opportunity to reflect on his career.

The University of Southern California School of Social Work has been a favorable and supportive environment for the preparation of this book; special thanks go to the dean of the institution, Dr. Marilyn Flynn, the 2U Endowed Chair in Educational Innovation and Social Work.

Bozen-Bolzano University Press has kindly peer reviewed and accepted the publication of this book; the process has been facilitated by Professor Walter Lorenz, rector of the Free University of Bozen-Bolzano, and Professor Silvia Nicoletta Fargion. Thank you Walter and Silvia.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the tireless and careful efforts of Eric Lindberg of the Hamovitch Center for Science in the Human Services in improving the editorial quality of this book. He certainly is a master editor.

2. Social Work Expertise and the Crisis of Modernity

Walter Lorenz – Free University of Bozen-Bolzano

Abstract

Social work as a product of modernity shares in the fundamental ambiguity of the principles that gave rise to the development of modern societies: the emphasis on individual autonomy and freedom as a means of breaking free from imposed obligations and constraints on one hand and the demand for universal equality in recognition of the mutual dependence in *organic solidarity* on the other. The conflict between both contributed to the severity with which social problems manifested themselves in the epochal structural changes of society. In striving to find a scientifically grounded knowledge base for its task of promoting social solidarity under these conditions, social work oscillated between reference points in positivist science and hermeneutic approaches to understanding human interaction, thereby also striving to hold together notions of care and control. In the current political climate, resonating in popular culture, which privileges individual autonomy over principles of equality, the social work profession is in danger of becoming polarized between a predominance of control functions in interventions concerning the public sphere and the relegation of care functions to the private sphere, particularly in the form of the privatization of services and a leaning toward counseling, therapy, and coaching in that domain. This split is also affecting the production of knowledge for social work practice, in which on one hand positivist approaches to research are receiving heightened attention and seek to satisfy the demand for the achievement of predetermined goals of intervention within the framework of evidence-based practice, whereas on the other expert systems are being challenged by the articulation of knowledge based primarily on direct experience and hence expressed in self-help and user-led approaches to services. Ed Mullen's contribution to social work theory can be regarded as a proposal that seeks to overcome this split and hence confronts the crisis of modernity manifesting itself therein to allow social work to return to its essential

mandate under current political and cultural conditions, which is to contribute to the improvement of social conditions of human existence in modernity.

Central to the examination of social work's scientific and professional credibility is the notion of evidence, as Ed Mullen's reflections on the contemporary issue of evidence-based practice (EBP) continue to point out (Mullen, 2014, 2015). But in view of the controversies surrounding EBP in social work and the wider relationship of social work to science and its overall position in modernity, it is important to trace this concern back to the origins of social work and the way in which discourses on evidence were constructed.

Social work, in whatever epistemological and professional forms it emerged and under whatever titles, is a very particular social phenomenon. In contrast to other classical academic disciplines, it has its origins not in the academic world of theory formation and detached scientific enquiry, but represents a practical activity always in search of a theoretical basis. It was not so much the spontaneous human impulse to help less able members of society in difficult situations that gave rise to theoretical reflections regarding how the helping process could be made more effective, rather it was the experience of the limitations of spontaneous forms of helping that triggered a more profound quest for scientific explanations. Only with those theoretical and systematic insights could the complexity of helping be elucidated and promoted within the more coherent framework of a professional activity akin to the classical professions such as medicine or legal advocacy.

Even more so, the very nature and meaning of helping constitutes a progressively problematic subject historically. It is problematic because although helping appears to refer to a universal, timeless human gesture of people turning to others who are experiencing difficulties and require their assistance and given that over the life cycle everybody experiences periods of such dependence, a fundamental historical rupture occurred in the social meaning of dependence with the arrival of modernity, which revealed the

social complexity of that gesture. In the context of a fundamental transformation of social relationships, characterized by Durkheim (1893/1964) as the change from mechanical to organic solidarity, the helping process had to take account of the modern preoccupation with autonomy as constitutive of the dignity of a person while at the same time dealing with an increase in mutual dependence, as exemplified by the modern division of labor. Once the norms of social relations began to change from a deterministic to a voluntary orientation with emphasis on the free choice of the autonomous individual (Mill, 1859/2003), the very act of helping assumed a problematic social significance and required sanctioning through particular forms of social relationships. In the private sphere it remained largely an act that was integrated in traditional norms and rules of premodern social relations, but in the public domain it had to be safeguarded against representing an infringement of personal autonomy and therefore required particular sanctioning through a rationally legitimated professional approach.

This constitutes the fundamental ambiguity of all forms of social work—on one hand it represents an attempt to stabilize or recreate forms of social solidarity that belong to spheres of life that have not yet come under the regime of organic solidarity, in which contractual arrangements aimed at securing the freedom of choice and the equality of partnerships are the rule. These spheres retain their value through their informal nature; they have a lifeworld quality and characterize taken-for-granted family and kinship relations but also other social relations at the level of civil society, such as associations that become increasingly important in modern societies. However, there is always a risk that these helping relationships assume a nostalgic or conservative quality and bring with them implications of paternalism, inequality, and dependence. In the face of the massive disruption of social bonds that industrialization, urbanization, and the general process of *disembedding* (Giddens, 1991) brought to whole populations in the 19th century, it is understandable that spontaneous voluntary associations, but also the established guardians of the old rules of social relations such as the church, attempted to hold on to those traditional

forms of social solidarity. They were concerned with strengthening family life, with helping people individually or in groups to repair bonds and keep the established forms of solidarity functioning. One stream of charitable, preprofessional social work has its origins and found its initial role precisely in that context.

On the other hand, progressive social work initiatives in the wake of the industrial revolution recognized the signs of the time and sought to put into practice the new principles of social solidarity based on contractual arrangements between partners. They aimed to foster the capacities of people to find their own role and develop their capacities for a life under radically changed social, political, and above all economic conditions. To be able to achieve this goal, the nature of the emerging structures of society needed to be understood, as did the psychological implications of that fundamental shift in solidarity, to arrive at methods that recognized the altered context and gave the helping process a completely different and in that sense modern meaning (Payne, 2005). This type of search for methodological foundations starts with a concrete task, a situation of or a person in need, and seeks to understand that situation or person not from a given theoretical and hence necessarily reductive perspective, but with full attention to the complexity of that situation or individual. Methodology needs to combine the sets of rules that can be constructed from universal scientific insights on one hand (Soydan, 1999) and the historically unique and culturally embedded meanings that frame the situation on the other.

Therefore, the conceptual paradigms guiding the formal helping process must reach beyond the lifeworld, explicitly or by default, and become related to the wider political processes that shape modern societies. More specifically, emerging social services had a mandate to create social bonds that foster the integration and identity of modern societies and prevent them from disintegrating. Social work, whether as a private initiative or as part of the emerging public system of social support, became an instrument of the project of defining the rules that build modern societies. Its search for a knowledge base and a coherent, scientifically grounded professional

methodology became embedded into the cultural and political project of modernity to promote its characteristic forms of organic solidarity.

This project of modernity, however, contains many fundamental ambiguities. One with particular relevance for social work is the discord between personal freedom and universal equality. Both demands are contained in the motto of the French Revolution of "liberté, égalité, fraternité" and drove the cultural and political transformations of the period, which resulted in modern forms of democracy. The demand for self-determination in a political sense, a guiding idea since the Enlightenment, also had implications for the psychological constitution of the modern self, which was conceived as autonomous in its political and personal preferences, including the forming of personal bonds unfettered by traditions and conventions, yet it depended on the realization of the existence of civil and political rights (Rawls, 1996). Equality on the other hand became a counterfactual ideal that also required corresponding political arrangements and legal securities for its realization. The legitimation of the concepts of liberty and equality was based on rationality, and therein lies the origin of the ambiguity; as Nietzsche (1886/1966) recognized with unflinching directness, the logic of autonomous self-realization has an enormous liberating potential but leads inexorably to the use of power over others that scorns equality, whereas the latter, pursued systematically, counteracts the effects of power exercised by individuals over others but curtails personal freedom in the pursuit of collective interests.

Social work's contribution to the project of modernity and the ultimate basis of its social mandate reside in its attempt to mediate between both demands. Although social policies develop very unevenly in different political contexts, they all represent a recognition that without a degree of compensation, the inequities resulting from the unfettered effects of capitalism and its emphasis on individual efforts and self-interest would threaten the integration of modern societies, cause unrest through deviance and rebellion, and impede economic growth. But the equalizing effects of social policies always had to stop short of the notions of equality in the form

advocated by communism, which were regarded by bourgeois governments as a threat to personal liberty and a disincentive to work. Social work as a modern institution had the function of fine-tuning (and in that sense, making) social policies at the level of individualized interventions. Professional discretion, based on the scientific study of human behavior and the effects of methodical helping, became a necessary instrument not just for helping people resolve actual social problems but also for the symbolic representation of social justice in modern societies in situations of moral ambiguity (Humphreys, 1995). The premodern question of morality concerning the *deserving cases* had to be reinterpreted in terms of modern scientific criteria of the effective application of methods.

Despite this orientation toward modern science and the value neutrality thereby implied, social work's methodological mandate was and has had to take a position toward and remain embedded in a political agenda. Social work cannot become detached from those influences; rather, the tension between professional detachment and political engagement constitutes a central characteristic of this profession, distinct in its acuteness from that experienced in other helping professions. The search for a fitting theoretical underpinning of the professional activities of social workers in various social and political contexts always carries political connotations, and the various dominant theoretical frameworks that developed in the social professions always make reference to the sociopolitical context in which they arose (Lorenz, 2006).

The push toward systematization and scientific neutrality was strengthened by the concept of social diagnosis, promoted by the social work pioneers Mary Richmond and Alice Salomon on both sides of the Atlantic during the first decades of the 20th century. To quote Mary Richmond (1917):

> Social evidence, like that sought by the scientist or historian, includes all items which, however trifling or apparently irrelevant when regarded as isolated facts, may, when taken together, throw light upon the question at issue; namely, as regards social work, the question what course of procedure will place the client in his right relation to society? (p. 39)

This represented a decisive step beyond the previous moral and educational program based on personal example, "friendly visiting" (see Richmond's 1899 handbook), and often control and coercion. Individualized charity not only failed to tackle the structural issues of poverty (Ziliak, 2004), it was also destined to fail for psychological reasons—people's behavior does not easily react positively to rational expositions of adverse or advantageous consequences but is shot through with irrationality, with defense mechanisms as they are called in the post-Freudian era. It was the work of Sigmund Freud, the scientist who had managed to explain the irrational side of human behavior with the paradigm of the unconscious and its defense mechanisms, that provided rational explanations for irrational forms of behavior and therefore widened the scope of scientifically grounded case observations, which in turn provided evidence for targeted interventions (Ginsburg, 1940). The psychoanalytic insight into the workings of the unconscious mind subsequently gave social work as casework its more solid scientific grounding and better prospects of success because it freed the notion of a relationship from its sentimental connotations and gave it a solid scientific base. Instead of issuing moral appeals, social workers could now seek to engage and strengthen a client's ego through the means of a professional relationship aimed at overcoming resistance not by persuasion or coercion but by shared insight into and understanding of internal, and external, emotional conflicts whose resolution could clear a path to better adjustment to the demands of reality in the form of prevailing social norms.

Psychoanalytic concepts are an interesting case of epistemological ambiguity. They can generally be applied either in the scheme of positivism, in which treatment is geared toward the successful resolution of internal psychological conflicts, or in a phenomenological sense, in which therapy becomes an intersubjective process of finding the meaning of certain behavior patterns in the lifeworld of the client (Bohleber, 2013). The reception of psychoanalytic concepts in the casework models developed particularly in the Anglo–Saxon context helped strengthen the scientific profile of the social work profession, particularly on account of the positivism emphasized in that tradition. This implied a leaning toward the

treatment of individuals based on objective criteria concerning deficits in coping and contained normative implications that upheld adjustment to the conditions of modern society as the goal to be achieved.

These developments indicate an affinity between methodological considerations and the political precepts of classical liberalism, which emphasize the following.

- In welfare matters, the state comes only into play as a last resort, and then in a largely punitive or controlling manner; individuals on their part seek to keep the state at arm's length because it appears as a threat to their personal freedom when it springs into action;
- the focus of attention and the locus of responsibility for the better functioning of society is the individual, and society is conceived basically as an aggregation of individuals; ideally, if all individuals act rationally and do their duty, society functions automatically and the state needs to intervene only on the margins, probably with the assistance of civil society organizations; and
- social work is basically relegated to situations in which deficits already became manifest; the profession develops its expertise in the direction of repair, rehabilitation, and prevention but this arises from the strength gained by people having coped with a crisis successfully.

This development contrasts in certain important respects with a phenomenological understanding of society found on the European continent and particularly in Germany. This corresponded more with a political culture in which promoting community processes was regarded as a public responsibility and a balance between individual and collective efforts was regarded as constitutive under the formula of subsidiarity. In this climate the paradigm of social pedagogy could find its particular role with notable differences in the approach to solving social problems and hence to the validation of evidence (Lorenz, 2008).

With a delay in the onset of industrialization in Germany, poverty and other social problems were, at least at the level of scientific debate, not treated

primarily as individual failings but articulated under the title of *the social question*. The social question concerns the specific modern conditions that weaken traditional social bonds so that those bonds had to be made the subject of organized efforts in collaboration between organizations of civil society and, once removed, of the state. Only with these concerted efforts could a sense of community be preserved, as was the objective of conservative policies such as those pursued by Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, interpreting thereby the project of modernity with its promise of a better quality of life with emphasis on preserving old bonds. It is therefore of great significance that von Bismarck, although having excluded the Social Democrats from the first parliament of the newly founded German Reich, became the first political promoter of public social policies, a political step that liberal politicians eschewed for much longer (Kaufmann, 2013).

The term social question gained prominence in the political debates leading up to the 1848 revolutions and produced a dual but closely interconnected understanding of the term *social* (Steinmetz, 1993). It could either emphasize the aspect of human beings living in communities as a result of their anthropological condition of being dependent on others; social arrangements were therefore a precondition of human existence. Or it could highlight more specifically the means of assistance needed to provide safety nets with which to ensure the integration of strata and classes of people threatened with exclusion from society. The founding of political parties that used *social* in their title, such as the numerous social democratic parties of the second half of the 19th century, emphasized the latter aspect, leading to the particular orientation of socialist politics, whereas communist parties deliberately avoided the term on account of its ambiguity. Socialist political demands, and proposals for remedies, centered specifically on removing the inequalities created by capitalism and therefore promoted structural changes of a radical kind. The social question more generally became an issue for members of the middle classes in Germany in the sense that it declared a concern for the plight of the neediest and most disadvantaged members of society to be a public matter. Solving it affected the stability and hence the quality of life of the entire society, and the social question was a central issue

for the German School of Political Economy. To quote a leading economist of 1872, Gustav von Schmoller: The state must care "to raise, educate and reconcile the lower classes to such an extent that they integrate themselves in peace and harmony into the organism of state and society" (as quoted by Nau, 2000, p. 509).

Parallel to these developments in social legislation, the project of education, or rather of *Bildung*, also had different connotations and a different value in German modern culture than in the United Kingdom. Inspired by the principles and ideals of the Enlightenment movement, education in the continental cultural context meant a social civilizing process that engaged the whole society in efforts of renewal and progress based partly on references to nature (a line of thinking in the tradition of Rousseau) and partly on humanistic ideals as best exemplified by Wilhelm von Humboldt, the educational reformer and founder of the modern university ideal (Sorkin, 1983). The quest for Bildung went beyond the pragmatic, functional intentions behind the introduction of compulsory schooling as preparation for the needs of industrial society and upheld instead the value of education for its own sake or even of education for a better world, and not only at the level of the newly founded universities with which Germany set an example in Europe (Siljander, Kivelä, & Sutinen, 2012). Pedagogy became recognized as a means of cultural and to some extent spiritual renewal and thereby the precondition for economic and technological progress. The formation of humans and the formation of society, the unlocking of their respective potentials, went hand in hand.

Hence there was an intricate link between the pedagogical movement and the social reform movement in 19th and 20th century Germany, with many of the key figures in pedagogy, theology, and philosophy such as Pestalozzi, Schleiermacher, Herbart, Natorp, and Nohl also becoming key theoreticians of social pedagogy (Reyer, 2002). This is not to say that all pedagogical approaches in that period converged on the goal of promoting personal autonomy in a context of progressive, equality-oriented social solidarity. A more restrictive notion of school pedagogy was frequently subsumed under

the alternative title of *individual pedagogy* (Lorenz, 2008). But social pedagogy in the cultural and political context of the emergent modern German nation, which fostered the social policy principle of subsidiarity, meant a comprehensive concept for the renewal of society and hence did not primarily focus on remedying deficits, as was the tendency of the social work approach in correspondence with liberal political principles. To quote Natorp (1899/1968):

> The concept of social pedagogy thus involves the fundamental recognition that an individuals' education is socially defined in every significant aspect, just as the human formation of social life depends fundamentally on a corresponding education of the individuals who share this social life. This needs to be taken into account in defining the ultimate and most comprehensive function of education for the individual and for all individuals. The subject matter of this scientific discipline are, therefore, the social conditions of education and the conditions for the formation of social life. We consider these to constitute one single rather than two independent tasks. Society exists only as a union of individuals, and this union in turn exists only in the consciousness of its individual members. The final law is thus necessarily one and the same for both individual and society. (p. 9)

It is important to remember that these educational principles were not confined to Germany and that their equivalents are also found in the 19th century United Kingdom. Or rather, as Mark Smith (2012) noted, these equivalents are found very specifically in the Scottish approach to education and welfare in contrast to the principles on which English education was founded. This can be traced back to the Scottish Enlightenment, which promoted a much more comprehensive, community-oriented understanding of education in general and a greater appreciation of the value of science for the improvement of society (Soydan, 2012), reflected for instance in the considerably greater number of universities that existed at that time in Scotland than in England. This tradition also sustained the particular importance that community education gained in Scotland from the 1960s, explicitly in the Alexander Report (Scottish Education Department, 1975), which triggered a restructuring of youth and adult education services under

the heading of community education, and more implicitly in the Kilbrandon Report (Scottish Education Department, 1964), which recommended a community pedagogical approach to juvenile delinquents in need of care and guidance. Particularly the latter's emphasis on bringing the educational needs of delinquent youngsters under the same pedagogical umbrella as those of "normal" young people expressed perfectly the core message of continental social pedagogical concepts in their effort to start from universal educational needs rather than the behavioral deficits of particular groups of young (and older) people. It demonstrated that only correspondence between methodological traditions and a particular social policy agenda can inform the respective practice initiative.

Endorsement of this observation is also provided by the fate of the equivalent of social pedagogy that germinated even under conditions of liberalism in England and the United States. The methodological tenets of the settlement movement can rightly be related to social pedagogy because the aim was not to teach people living in poverty an individual lesson regarding how to make the most of their situation, but to develop collective learning processes to understand the nature of impoverishing processes and to explore in groups ways of overcoming such debilitating conditions. It is interesting to note that although the movement directly inspired leading pedagogues, chief among them John Dewey, who had been in direct contact with Jane Addams and Hull House in Chicago, the movement itself did not produce a coherent theoretical basis. The theory formation that did take place in the ambit of the settlement movement emphasized more the importance of understanding the interchange between individuals and society from a sociological perspective and the use of this knowledge, in the positivist tradition of Durkheim, for functional improvements in terms of social policy demands (Koengeter & Schroeer, 2013), building on the demands of the Fabian Society in the United Kingdom.

In this regard, the strongest political impetus in social pedagogy developed in the oppressive Latin American political context, epitomized in the work of Paulo Freire and his iconic text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970). It advocated

pedagogical principles as a means of engaging in a political transformation process. Its reception in North America and Europe in the 1970s gave a decisive impulse not only for a renewed interest in community work and particularly community action as a model of social work but also a coherent theoretical grounding of community work through the link it established with the pedagogical tradition. But also in this case the reception of an inspiring methodological framework took place in the context of fundamental political changes exemplified by the civil rights movements and demands for political participation and the expansion of social rights to the marginalized groups of society.

This is not to say that the pedagogical paradigm, with its reference to the social sphere, is solely associated with progressive, emancipatory political movements and that it operates necessarily with a democratic notion of a political community as its goal. Here the case of Germany also provides an example of the fundamental ambiguity of theoretical concepts based on the assumed neutrality of science and the oppressive potential contained in the project of modernity, which was the subject of the analysis of authoritarian tendencies in German politics by scholars of the Frankfurt School (e.g., Horkheimer & Adorno, 1944/1994). This further underlines the importance of political context for all methodological proposals, which influences their use in one or the other direction.

Social pedagogy in particular makes reference to community, which can constitute the social sphere in very different ways, basing it on essentialism or democratic, constructivist processes. In this respect, German social pedagogy in the 1920s showed a leaning toward a folkish conception of community. This meant that community was taken as a quasi-natural entity, an organism whose higher principles of functioning determined the role and destiny of its members. Whereas Natorp's social pedagogy concepts some time earlier had conceived of community both as the medium of pedagogy and as its goal, emphasizing therefore the need to base notions of community on an inclusive and creative coming together of the interests and aspirations of its individual members (Keck, 1971), community in the

writings of Nohl, who decisively influenced the development of youth and family social services in Germany in the 1920s, already assumed a high degree of essentialism. Writing in the hermeneutic tradition, Nohl stressed the primacy of practice over theory and postulated that overcoming the deep cultural crisis of Germany, exemplified by the end of the monarchy and the conflict between different political factions, required a collective effort from below toward cultural and therefore educational renewal, which to him reflected a collective aspiration of the people (Bollnow, 1980). Although Nohl's role in promoting the nationalist Nazi pedagogical ideology that followed the Weimar years is contentious, the fascist idea of a healthy organic body of the people certainly picked up on the enthusiasm for a communal cultural renewal, signaling a return to principles of nature and an idealization of the collective will of the nation to which individual interests had to be subordinated. In the context of Nazi ideology, the notion of community in all its practical applications was subjected to the control of the party in its effort to coordinate all efforts of formal and informal community building with party politics of indoctrination (Sünker & Otto, 1997).

It is politically significant, therefore, that we perceive today a renewed interest in the contribution that social work methodology can make to society, at a time in which the conditions of social solidarity are being once more radically reworked and redefined. However, the preceding historical reflections indicate very clearly that in dedicating themselves to a particular methodological orientation in social work research and practice, social workers cannot remain neutral but have to consider the relationship between their scientific and political responsibilities.

The effect of post-1989 neoliberalism on societies globally has been profound. Neoliberal principles influenced not just certain political party programs but also became the basis of a cultural project that, starting with similar premises as early capitalism and driven by technological transformations comparable to the industrial revolution, penetrates every aspect of life and hence changes the nature of human social bonds once more. What is at stake is the very balance between the two principles that are

constitutive of the project of modernity: the emphasis on personal liberty and the concern for justice as equality. With the confrontation between capitalism and communism ending apparently in favor of the former, a one-sided emphasis on individual freedom and autonomy has come to enter economic, political, and popular cultures, which makes the promotion of collective processes toward equality always suspect of being a throwback to communism.

This one-sided emphasis on individual efforts, combined with the politics of privatizing public services and the importance given to measures of economic efficiency in services, confronts social services with issues and dilemmas reminiscent of the pioneering era of social policies (Rodger, 2013). Finding solutions to social problems under those conditions is not merely a matter of scientific detachment but must also involve considering and addressing the wider political context, which becomes thereby defined in one direction or the other at the level of individual interventions. In this sense, the issue of evidence has to be dealt with not just in a technical sense but in consideration of the wider value structure that inevitably forms part of the complex set of criteria that constitutes valid indicators of the appropriateness of a line of intervention. Taking a position toward the nature of evidence is therefore in itself a policy-making decision, as Ed Mullen (2014, 2015) rightly pointed out. Therefore, although the current interest in evidence-based social work methodology is perfectly justified, responses to this interest must not be guided merely by technical and instrumental criteria, as is often the case in medicine, but need to take account of the wider social responsibility that the social work profession has come to occupy in modern societies.

In this context, the duality between the methodological traditions of social work and social pedagogy in Europe assume renewed relevance, and not in the sense that one would serve as an ideal model with which to confront the current dilemmas. Rather, this duality of approaches draws attention to the intricate connections between methodological and political considerations in the field of social work precisely because the methodological traditions

demonstrate such context dependence in their historical development. For instance, the current interest in social pedagogical approaches, which is particularly noticeable in the United Kingdom (Petrie, 2013), appears to be related to three general factors, which turn on the phenomenon of individualization as exemplified in the ideology of neoliberalism: (a) the emphasis on individual efforts as the key to coping with life tasks and challenges in general; (b) the inadequacy of the pedagogical reach of the school system in terms of solving behavioral and relationship problems that threaten the stability of school and society; and (c) the growing demand for skilled and licensed care providers to fill the void caused by the further decline of informal social support networks within and beyond the family (Penna & O'Brien, 2009).

Hence this interest reflects a demand for delivering effective substitutes for diminishing social solidarity structures in society. There is a real danger of care services, based on the methodology of social pedagogy, being enlisted in the task of making the project of individualization work in areas in which economic pressures alone cannot reach. Indicative of this pervasive agenda is the emphasis on the concept of activation as a key element in the delivery of social services in a multiplicity of contexts, be they in *workfare* projects with unemployed people, with people in rehabilitation, with single parents, or with people with disabilities. Activation is being promoted as a key educational tool in social services to stimulate self-help in people portrayed as being otherwise in danger of becoming dependent (Wright, 2001).

Seen from a detached methodological viewpoint, the reference to social pedagogy as a method for influencing people's behavior through learning processes geared toward achieving set goals could appear as a considerable advance over a reemergence of what could be called naïve or moralistic and instrumental educational operations that, in the absence of a deeper theoretical understanding of change processes, are aimed at shaming or coercing people into compliance with expected norms of behavior.

But by boosting the effectiveness of interventions, an instrumental use of pedagogy could also easily legitimate a particular political agenda. It can

divert attention away from the collective responsibility of society and politics for structural causes of a whole range of social problems such as poverty or unemployment onto the behavioral functioning of individuals, thereby shifting responsibility for solutions to the individual in question. This danger is even greater in a political context in which, with regard to social services, the more care-oriented parts tend to be privatized while the state retains or even intensifies control-oriented services, as evidenced in higher spending on policing and prisons. Whereas professional approaches to social work refer to an effort to bring care and control together, this split tends to subject both approaches to regulations more than to professional judgment.

The same danger of being instrumentalized applies also to the social work paradigm, and even more so on account of its basically individual, problem-oriented slant. In this regard, reflections on the relevance of the sociological tradition of phenomenology for all types of social work methods are apposite (Lorenz, 2012). In this tradition, processes of understanding and initiating change are closely connected in the awareness that the meaning of actions is a product of collective creative exchanges that can be replicated in specific interventions. Whereas the positivist tradition, to which much of social work is linked, tends to proceed in a linear fashion, phenomenological approaches center on reality as always interpreted. This places reflexivity at the center of social interventions and promotes a sharing of responsibility for achieving changes among all actors involved. It reflects a more comprehensive understanding of the nature of social relations and at the same time of the nature of personhood as expressed in meaning-creating activities (Lorenz, 2012).

Relating social work methods to human capabilities in the line of the capability approach developed by Sen (2009) and Nussbaum (2003) offers the possibility of relating psychological needs to basic material conditions and human rights that must be secured for the concept of coping to have any real practice significance in social work. Treating coping (and hence activation) in an exclusively psychological sense without reference to a particular political

context bears the risk of making entitlements to social support conditional on individuals in need proving themselves worthy of support by first coming to terms without or only with a reduced level of such support. If caring as a reference point for enhancing social solidarity in highly differentiated societies is not to lead to a return to charity and philanthropy, it needs to be integrated into structural supports and guarantees such as they were part of the project of establishing social citizenship in modern welfare states. 'Taking care of a child, an older person, or an immigrant is always an act that has highly political implications in as much as it is embedded in a wider value structure that either implies maintaining or even increasing the dependence of a person in need and hence leads to an erosion of human dignity or seeks to redress such imbalances and leads to inclusion. Furthering capabilities relies on an arrangement of material, legal, and normative conditions that are necessary to allow the flourishing of individual well-being (Otto & Schäfer, 2014). Bringing together those conditions and connecting them to the individual problem situation is indeed the task of experts and requires the careful, comprehensive, and scientific study of change processes that characterize human communities under the conditions of modernity. Whenever such a methodological approach succeeds, the two divergent aspirations of modernity, of individual autonomy and of social and legal equality, are being held together quite practically instead of appearing as oppositional alternatives as neoliberal dogma affirms.

The necessity to arrive at a comprehensive assessment of people's needs and of resources and methods needed to satisfy them is also reflected in Ed Mullen's insistence on an interdisciplinary approach to evidence-based practice, or constructing evidence from the following considerations for corresponding decision-making processes:

> With decision-making at the center, consideration is to be given to the best available evidence: (1) about benefits, harms, and costs of alternative interventions; (2) client system characteristics, needs, state, preferences, and values; (3) resources required and available including practitioner expertise and

> experience as well as team and organizational resources; and (4) relevant environmental and organizational variables. For informed decision-making then, evidence is required about variables in each of these information domains. (Mullen, 2015, p. 3)

All these dimensions are held together by ethical considerations that subject criteria of effectiveness to a critical examination of the wider implications of interventions, which might adversely impinge on the dignity of individuals and their rights. The end must never justify the means—a fascination with technical means of achieving results in modernity has all too often led to Kant's categorical imperative being ignored and people being treated against their will and their best interest. The debate on evidence in social work is an opportunity to affirm this profession's ethical commitment, professional competence, and critical political competence.

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3. Reflections on the Impact of the Evidence-Based Practice Approach in Denmark on Politics, Research, the Trade Union, and Social Work Practice

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Abstract

This article provides insight into how evidence-based thinking has influenced the social policy context and social work research in Denmark and the debate about evidence-based practice in the trade union for Danish social pedagogues and practitioners. The article examines how these different agents understand and define evidence-based practice and research. One of the main conclusions is that the evidence-based approach has not had a significant impact on social work practice and research in Denmark, and the article reflects on different reasons for this phenomenon.

3.1 Introduction

Evidence-based research and practice in Denmark has been the subject of discussions among policy makers, researchers, and practitioners since the passing of the millennium. At this point in time, discussions about methods have moved beyond academic circles and become a topic of discussion in politics and unions as well (Rieper & Hansen, 2007). The discussions reflect increasing societal demands that social interventions should be based on systematic, outcome-oriented, and evidence-based methods.

Evidence-based practice and research on intervention effects represent a new paradigm (Sommerfeld, 2005; Ziegler, 2005), which also has implications for social work in the Danish public sector. Evidence-based effect research is, among other things, a part of the "what works" agenda, which aims to create a

new form of knowledge about what works in practice (Moos, Krejsler, Hjort, Laursen, & Braad, 2006; Sommerfeld, 2005; Ziegler, 2005).

The aim of this article is to provide insight into the Danish conditions in this area by exploring evidence-based thinking in a social policy context, in a Danish social work research context, and in the debate in the trade union for Danish social pedagogues and practitioners. How do the various agents understand and define evidence-based practice and research? I will focus on child and youth issues and the segment of social work in Denmark characterized as social pedagogy.

3.2 Policy: The National Board of Social Services

Since 2004, the National Board of Social Services (Socialstyrelsen) has tried to introduce evidence-based practice programs in the social arena by contributing special state grants (*Satspuljemidler*) to municipalities and public and private institutions for the implementation of special programs. This mainly concerns the following six programs:

- The Incredible Years, which consists of programs for parents and children and one program for social workers in schools and kindergartens. The programs are group based and the methods are video modeling, role-play, practical activities, and group conversations.
- Parent Management Training–Oregon (PMTO), which is a parent-focused program with the purpose of providing tools to families to generate more positive interactions. The treatment method is focused on children from the ages of 4 to 12 who have behavioral problems. PMTO is evidence based and research has shown that both children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and parents with similar problems benefit highly from the program.
- Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC), which is a holistic treatment program focused on children and adolescents between the ages of 12 and 18 with behavioral problems. MTFC is designed to improve outcomes among young people in foster care who exhibit challenging behavior. MTFC includes temporary placement in a training family, where

the treatment and training take place. The treatment includes a MTFC team, the training family, the biological family, and the child or adolescent.

- Multisystematic Therapy (MST), which is a treatment offered to young people between 12 and 17 years old with severe behavioral problems. MST includes both the parents and the social network of the young person. Therefore, the parents have a central role in the treatment, which takes place in the young person's home.
- MultifunC, which is a treatment program in Norway offered to young people between the ages of 14 and 18 with severe behavioral problems. The program includes a temporary institutional placement combined with inclusion of the family in the treatment process. It also features an aftercare program for young people. The first Danish MultifunC institution opened in 2011.
- Aggression Replacement Training (ART), which is a method designed for children and young people between the ages of 4 and 20. The purpose is to help the child or young person develop new attitudes, better social skills, and alternative behavioral patterns. ART focuses on enhancing social skills and abilities for moral reflection and empathy.

These programs are characterized by being partly parent oriented and partly focusing on treatment of inappropriate behavior. Socialstyrelsen has defined evidence-based programs as methods that have a documented effect (Worregård, 2012). The implementation of these evidence-based programs is the subject of top-down control.

3.3 Research

Since 2002, the Nordic Campbell Centre has been the leading provider of evidence-based research reviews in political welfare, and researchers who support the evidence-based approach to social work research are mainly involved with this institution. There is an extreme shortage of research in this area in Denmark. The only example is a research center on children established in 2013 by a private foundation. Nevertheless, there has been a heated debate about evidence in Danish research. This discussion about

research methods will be further described, but first the Nordic Campbell Centre and the TrygFondens Centre for Child Research are described.

3.3.1 Nordic Campbell Centre

Created in 2002 as a part of the international Campbell Cooperation, the Nordic Campbell Centre collects all research-based knowledge about the effects of social programs. The purpose is to communicate this knowledge to social workers, consultants, and decision makers in the social arena throughout Scandinavia. The center is financed by the Danish state budget and was initially supported through 2005.

According to Hansen and Rieper (2010), various Nordic scientists were involved in the creation of both Cochrane and Campbell centers in Scandinavia, and the Nordic Campbell Centre established a base in Denmark very fast. The center, now called SFI Campbell, is located at the Danish National Centre for Social Research. Evidence-based thinking quickly traveled to the Nordic countries, which according to Hansen and Rieper (2010) was made possible because of an existing international research network. From the beginning, researchers from the Nordic countries were involved in discussions about the development of the international partnership and were successful in securing support and gathering resources for the establishment of the Nordic centers in Denmark.

At that time, as a professor of social work at Columbia University, Edward J. Mullen played a crucial role in the establishment of the Nordic Campbell Centre and was in dialog with Nordic scientists. Furthermore, he was a member of the Nordic Campbell Centre Methods Network from 2004 to 2010. Since 2000, Mullen had been a member of Campbell Collaboration's Social Welfare Executive and Advisory Committee. Mullen's many publications have been an inspiration to the Nordic scientists and appeared in Nordic journals (e.g., Mullen, 2002), and he also wrote articles with Nordic scientists (Cheetham, Mullen, Soydan, & Tengvald, 1998).

The hierarchy of evidence was employed during the initial phase of the Nordic Campbell Centre's existence to categorize knowledge and research methods according to validity and reliability. Evidence-based knowledge has the highest validity. It presupposes research methods, which can produce knowledge about effects and what works that is isolated from other aspects or factors that can affect both process and outcome. An example of this is the randomized controlled trial (RCT). Involvement and participation of users in research is considered lowest in the hierarchy. This appears in the following overview (Rieper & Hansen, 2007), which will be further discussed in relation to the debate about evidence among scientists.

Level	Type of Study
1	Systematic reviews of RCTs Single RCTs of good quality Controlled but not randomized trails
2	Systematic reviews of controlled trails Single controlled trails Bad RCTs
3	Systematic reviews of case-control studies Single case-control studies
4	Case series Cohort studies Case-control studies of bad quality
5	Expert evaluations, consensus conferences, qualitative designs, etc.

For several years, the hierarchy of evidence was available on the Nordic Campbell Centre's homepage, but it disappeared after a period, probably due to its transformation to SFI Campbell. Mette Deding, the head of SFI Campbell, described the foundation of the center as follows, translated from Danish:

> In SFI Campbell, we work to gather knowledge about the effects of interventions in the area of welfare policy. In these years, there is a strong focus on effects and evidence-based policies and practices, and in doing so, we contribute to gathering knowledge from international research. Our goal with this is to contribute to the Danish debate on interventions that have proven to be powerful internationally, so that this experience can be used in Danish decision making. More specifically, we do this by developing systematic reviews using the Campbell method in the broad area of welfare policy. A Campbell review is a systematic review that summarizes the results of all studies that measure the effects of interventions on welfare policy. The Campbell research review seeks to answer the question of the effect in relation to a specific type of effort; Does the effort work as intended, how much, and for whom? These are very specific questions that are methodologically difficult to answer, and therefore it is a laborious process to prepare a research review. We emphasize that professionalism and systematics must be top notch before one can afford to draw generalized conclusions about the effect of a given action. (Deding, 2011, p. 16)

The focus of SFI Campbell is on the effects of interventions, and systematic reviews represent the means to gain knowledge about these effects. As subsequently described, the Nordic Campbell Centre and SFI Campbell have not had an extensive influence on the way of thinking and practices of Danish social workers. In the social policy debate in Denmark, the Campbell Centre's systematic reviews have been highlighted by Socialstyrelsen to introduce evidence-based programs, but this strategy has been criticized by both social work researchers and practitioners (Høybye-Mortensen, 2013). Thus, systematic reviews from the Campbell Collaboration have not influenced the development or debate among practitioners on a large scale.

In cooperation with the Danish National Centre for Social Research, SFI Campbell has started developing RCTs in connection with the measurement of social initiatives, but to date there are no published results from these efforts and there are no other research projects in Denmark based on controlled trials. However, in 2013 a center was established in Denmark that generates so-called "systematic evaluations" of social initiatives.

3.3.2 TrygFondens Centre for Child Research

Along with a wide range of other scientists and coworkers, Michael Rosholm, a professor at Aarhus University, is now implementing research on different ages, stages of development, and skills of very young children in daycare centers in secondary education and early adulthood. The TrygFondens Center for Child Research was preliminarily established with a grant of 60 million Danish Krone (DKK) for the years 2013 to 2018, and there are further indications of additional funding of 40 million DKK. The research center focuses on the systematic measurement of the effect of social interventions.

The research center aims to contribute to breaking the cycle of disadvantage for groups of children in Denmark. According to Gurli Martinussen, the director of the TrygFondens center, researchers are seeking to improve the well-being of a large group of children and young people in the Danish society:

> By strengthening effect research on children and young people, we can make a difference for vulnerable children by giving them a better chance to break the cycle of disadvantage. This gives them a better life, and it will benefit the entire community. (TrygFonden, n.d., para. 12).

This Danish research project also prefers so-called "systematic evaluations of social interventions" and can be characterized as evidence-based research in the area of children and young people, but this is a rather isolated case.

3.3.3 The Debate about Evidence-Based Research among Scientists

The debate in Denmark has primarily concerned the tendency in the evidence-based tradition to focus on the relationship between intervention and effect, leaving the processes or mechanisms that connect them unclarified (Bryderup, 2005b; Frørup, 2011; Kristensen & Hybel, 2006; Olesen, 2007; Rieper & Hansen, 2007). Some of these discussions involved Shaw (2005), who outlined the construction of evaluation models and emphasized the shortcomings related to evidence-based thinking, which does not originate in daily social work

practices, experiences, and explanations. According to Shaw (2005), the abstract and context-independent evaluation framework loses its importance in the context of daily practice.

Rieper and Hansen (2007) and Olesen (2007) highlighted the limitations of what they called *narrow evidence*. Narrow evidence refers to methods that focus exclusively on effectiveness and efficiency, and not on why something works or does not work and how the user experiences an intervention. This evidence operates with given criteria of success, which can be assumed to be in opposition to individualized service. Rieper and Hansen (2007) and other Danish scientists have argued that there is a need for a broader understanding of evidence and a more comprehensive approach to investigating social work practice, involving not only quantitative research and RCTs.

In this regard, Rieper and Hansen (2007) criticized the hierarchy that evidence-based thinking imposes on various forms of knowledge. According to the Nordic Campbell Centre, this is described as an evidence hierarchy, which is a hierarchy of methods to measure the effect of an intervention. The evidence hierarchy can be considered as a vertical categorization of knowledge. Thus, effect studies are assumed to produce evidence-based knowledge of high validity, which can be used to clarify and describe the interventions and goals unambiguously and isolated from other aspects or factors that may have affected the process and outcome (for example, RCTs; see the evidence hierarchy in the previous table).

Such a hierarchy of knowledge represents a positivist orientation and a technical, instrumental view of professions. This criticism concerns the fact that the focus on effects of interventions simplifies the question of knowledge and excludes everyday activity. According to Rieper and Hansen (2007), Kristensen and Hybel (2006), Bryderup (2005b), Egelund (2011), and Høgsbro (2011), this can contribute to an inexpedient reduction of complexity in understanding social work practice.

Effect studies can provide insight into how a particular method works, but they only provide indirect knowledge about what is best and no insight into how interventions can be improved (Bryderup, 2005b). In this context, social work is described as a black box because of a lack of focus on processes and developing factors, including the complexity of social work (Kristensen & Hybel, 2006).

Thus, criticism of the evidence-based approach among social work researchers has focused partly on the evidence hierarchy and partly on the reduction it entails once social work research primarily focuses on the outcome of interventions. The debate among the social work trade union and practitioners has a wider focus and involves other agendas.

3.4 The Trade Union and Practice

From 2005 to 2006, there was a great debate about evidence in the Danish union's journal for social pedagogues in the form of articles and discussion papers with different opinions formulated by both the union and members and practitioners.[1] The debate referred to both concrete discussions about evidence-based knowledge and documentation, but also arguments and discrepancies in a more general matter.

The debate gained momentum after a social work manager contributed to a discussion paper on evidence and welfare in the magazine *Mandag Morgen* (Rasmussen, 2004). He expressed a positive opinion regarding evidence-based interventions in the work of social pedagogues, thus placing evidence-based knowledge on the agenda in the area of social pedagogy. Anna Kathrine Frørup (2011) analyzed this debate in her doctoral dissertation, in which she generally summarized it as a disagreement about how social pedagogy should document its interventions and be understood as a profession.

1 See http://www.socialpaedagogen.dk/Temaer.aspx

According to Frørup (2011), the debate shows that there is significant distance between the practitioner's perception of social pedagogy and the perception of the professional managers of the union, who consider the evidence-based approach as a way to gain professional status. There is a huge difference between evidence-based thinking and the thinking that underlies social pedagogical work. There is, according to Frørup (2011), an ongoing fight about the power to define what social pedagogical work should be. In this debate, practitioners are seeking to keep social pedagogy rooted in relational and care-oriented values. According to Frørup (2011), the gap between the parties for and against evidence-based practice and research can be understood as stagnated. On one side is the perception that social pedagogues should make visible and document the effects of their work and that evidence-based practice can have a positive impact on the development of the profession and its status. On the other side of the gap, social pedagogical work is understood as based on more traditional values associated with relationships with citizens or clients.

Based on a combination of her experiences as a social worker and her academic and research-based knowledge, Stefansen (2008) presented her perspective on some of the difficulties and resistance that methods of documentation, including the evidence-based approach, have been met with in the practice field. According to her, the requirements for documentation are considered to be far from practice and the so-called humanistic view of human nature on which the social pedagogical profession is based.

Thus, this discussion springs from different values, attitudes, or discourses. Hjort (2001) distinguished between a political neoliberal discourse and a conservative discourse. According to Hjort (2001), the conservative discourse contains a defense of "traditional academic and professional qualities and existing working conditions" (p. 73). The entire discussion about evidence-based practice seems to enter into this relationship between evidence supporters within a neoliberal discourse and evidence opponents who adhere to a conservative discourse.

Frørup's (2011) research has shown that from 2005 to 2008, the word *evidence* began slipping out of the language in the debate among practitioners. The concept of evidence has been replaced by the concept of knowledge, and in 2008 the concept of knowledge could clearly be observed as the ongoing reference term. According to Frørup (2011), knowledge in this context is described as something that exists and must be discovered through documentation. She stressed that the concept of knowledge carries with it a different meaning. Whereas evidence is about proving and producing results, which are regarded as new and solid knowledge about professional interventions and outcomes, the concept of knowledge focuses inward against the professional core, down toward the foundation of the profession, or both. According to Frørup (2011), this appeals more to a focus on the knowledge that social pedagogues already have and gives them a chance to gather their knowledge to share and accumulate it.

She concluded with a reference to research describing a Danish institutionalized introversion (Bryderup, 2005a) that social pedagogues are not influenced by national debates or international trends regarding evidence (Frørup, 2011).

Furthermore, she concluded that the concept of evidence and evidence-based practice, which was intended to attribute enhanced status to the profession, did not inwardly affect the profession and will not be verified as a matter of course in the social pedagogical way of thinking and practice. Although the supporters of evidence speak strongly and convincingly on the subject, she argued that social pedagogues will not be dominated by the evidence paradigm (Frørup, 2011).

Thus, the debate between the trade union and the practitioners can be seen as a struggle to define the social pedagogical profession and the extent to which evidence-based practice should be used in relation to social pedagogical practice. Evidence-based practice is understood as intrusive, whereas knowledge in a broader sense is seen as more appropriate for the development of social pedagogical work. There is also more indirect talk

about resistance against the evidence hierarchy of knowledge as a strategy to research outcomes and the effects of interventions.

3.5 Conclusions and Reflections

As mentioned, the hierarchy of evidence disappeared from the Nordic Campbell Centre and SFI Campbell's website during the 2000s. Together with the central focus on effects of interventions, this kind of science hierarchy of the evidence-based research approach has been the most central target of critiques by Danish social work researchers.

This criticism is, as previously explained, also part of an international discussion. It has led to the following formulation from one of the foremost supporters of the evidence-based research approach, Professor Edward J. Mullen, in one of his recent articles titled "Reconsidering the 'Idea' of Evidence in Evidence-Based Policy and Practice":

> Evidence-based policy and practice (EBP) has become an important social work conceptual framework. Yet, the core EBP concept, the concept of *evidence*, remains ill-defined. I propose a modification of the concept of *evidence* as applied to EBP effectiveness questions. As a basis for this reformulation ideas about *evidence* are examined from cross-disciplinary and multidisciplinary perspectives including epistemology, philosophy of science, evidence-science, and law. I propose that for EBP effectiveness questions: (1) to be considered 'relevant evidence' an explanatory connection between an intervention and an outcome must be established rather than a mere association; (2) the EBP definition of 'best available evidence' should include total available evidence (rather than a subset) about effectiveness, causal roles (i.e., mechanisms), and support factors and be inclusive of high-quality experimental and observational studies as well as high-quality mechanistic reasoning; (3) the familiar five-step EBP process should be expanded to include formulation of warranted, evidence-based arguments and that evidence appraisal be guided by three high level criteria of *relevance*, *credibility*, and *strength* rather than rigid evidence hierarchies; (4) comparative effectiveness research strategies, especially pragmatic controlled studies, hold promise for providing relevant and

> actionable evidence needed for policy and practice decision-making and successful implementation. (Mullen, 2015, p. 1)

Evidence-based practice and research, as previously explained, have not received significant acknowledgment in Denmark, and there may be many different reasons for this. The Danish discussion can also be characterized by a very broad conception of evidence-based practice and research with different agendas: effects, what works, economy, legitimacy, documentation, political ideology, research methods, etc.

The opposition to evidence-based practice and top-down management probably should be viewed in the light of a long Danish social pedagogical tradition of not following today's international currents or politics from the Ministry of Social Affairs (Bryderup, 2008). This is linked to a long Danish tradition of philanthropy—not allowing the state to interfere with methods or approaches (Bryderup, 2005a).

In Denmark and the other Nordic countries, there have been extensive and intense debates about research methods in relation to a critique of the positivistic tradition of the 1970s and 1980s. Part of this debate is repeated in the criticism of the hierarchy of knowledge, particularly regarding the notion of the superiority of quantitative methods.

One approach to resolve this debate could be, in the words of Edward J. Mullen (2015), a reformulation of the concept of evidence "examined from cross-disciplinary and multidisciplinary perspectives including epistemology, philosophy of science, evidence-science, and law" (p. 1).

This strategy of involving several different research methods would avoid reducing social work's complexity and be clearly in line with the Danish tradition of interdisciplinary social work research.

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4. The Research–Practice Relationship and the Work of Edward Mullen

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Abstract

The question of the relationship between research and practice is longstanding and central to our understanding of how to improve social work practice. Mullen's work on practitioner–researcher collaboration has contributed a key perspective by emphasizing the need for mutual respect and outlining how to overcome barriers such as communication (particularly stereotyping) and philosophy (explanation vs. prediction as a goal). This chapter will initially contrast Mullen's early work on this topic while at the University of Chicago with his later work at the Center for Social Work Research at Columbia University, which were separated by 19 years and substantial developments in social work research. We then explore this issue in relation to the now substantial body of work on family group conferences. This field is interesting because the research has originated in practice innovation (rather than arising from researchers), a process characterized as enquiring social work practice. Analysis has suggested that despite this process and the collaborative ethos that Mullen's work embodies, advocates of evidence-based practice remain unconvinced of the need to engage directly with practice to develop knowledge. In particular, these advocates misrepresent the work because they fail to understand the model, what makes it work, and why it matters. This leads to an analysis of structural issues related to practitioners developing greater research literacy and the need for researchers to become practice literate. Finally, we note that there remains an additional step to involve the third player in this debate: the people who use services.

4.1 Introduction

The theme of this chapter is Ed Mullen's contribution to the evolving relationship between research and practice. One of the advantages of a retrospective (particularly of a long academic life) is to examine how positions emerge and develop over long periods of time, rather than as responses to transient circumstances. If we chart the explosion of social work knowledge from the 1960s to the present day, Mullen's work spans this entire period, starting from his position in 1967 as a lecturer in the Graduate School of Social Work at Adelphi University and culminating in his position in 2015 as emeritus professor at Columbia University School of Social Work.

During this period, we saw the significant growth of scientific research in social work, including the development of task-centered practice as one of the first models emerging from practice itself and the evolution of empirically based practice to challenge assumptions that professional values are a sufficient basis for intervention. On either side of the millennium, we saw the rise and then the decline of evidence-based policy and practice (EBP) as the core framework for understanding the relationship between research and practice. As the 21st century enters its mid-teens, we are seeing a resurgence of practice research that emerges from and directly addresses social work practice.

This is therefore an old issue in social work, but one that requires constant negotiation. The use of research-based knowledge is intended to increase the likelihood that people will benefit from social work. Problems in the relationship between research and practice thus jeopardize the welfare of social work clients. These problems include the fact that in many developed countries, the production of research-based knowledge has been separated from practice: university-based scholars undertaking research are rarely directly involved in practice. One result is that research is rarely driven by questions arising from practice and rarely oriented toward developing practice models that work in day-to-day services. Instead, national research agendas are driven by policy makers or the interests of researchers and tend to focus more on understanding social issues than on practice that would

provide working solutions (Stevens, Liabo, Witherspoon, & Roberts, 2009). Conversely, practitioners tend not to focus on research as a way of improving services, relying instead on their professional values and practice wisdom.

The position has been made worse by some versions of EBP. In the United Kingdom and North America, some advocates of EBP have displayed a lack of empathy toward practice, sometimes to the point of alienating their audience. Although Sackett and Haynes (1996) insisted in their definition of evidence-based medicine on the "integration of individual clinical expertise with best available external evidence from systematic research" (p. 380), Macdonald and Sheldon's (1998) adaptation of the definition to evidence-based social work entirely omits the reference to professional expertise in interpreting evidence:

> Evidence based social care is the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions regarding the welfare of those in need. (p. 11)

Researchers may even blame practitioners for obstructing research:

> For example, practitioners have provided the experimental intervention to the control group. Some practitioners … just forget; others feel bad for the client and decide (without telling the researcher) that their concern for the client takes precedence over the research design. Still, others, despite saying that they understand the research design, really do not understand it—and thus do not even realize that they are violating it (Rubin, 2006, p. xiii).

In this landscape of distrust and blame, what lessons can we derive from Mullen's work on the relationship between research and practice?

4.1.1 An Early Framework: 1978

In 1978, Mullen published "The Construction of Personal Models for Effective Practice: A Method for Utilizing Research Findings to Guide Social Interventions." This was a complex attempt to describe a systematic

approach for practitioners to integrate research-based evidence into their working knowledge (personal practice models).

The paper has typical Mullenian touches. Rather than a purely theoretical piece, it drew on empirical experience of a research use project by the School of Social Service Administration at the University of Chicago. The reference to personal practice models demonstrates a commitment to recognizing and understanding the working knowledge possessed by practitioners. The research–practice task is to integrate new evidence into practice knowledge (and never to suggest that research evidence simply replaces practice knowledge). Mullen (1978) acknowledged that practitioners draw on a range of evidence, including "principles and guidelines derived from practice wisdom and a priori reasoning" (p. 46). At the same time, he recognized that research often demonstrates that many interventions are found to be "relatively ineffective" (p. 47), echoing the strand of skeptical empiricism that so strongly characterizes North American social work research and is to some degree the hallmark of a researcher committed to using research to improve practice. Also typical of Mullen's approach is the clearly laid out, five-step process of research use, including significant attention even at this stage to the question of the adequacy of the evidence of effectiveness. Research outcomes were described as "asserted," and practitioners were asked to judge "the nature of the research designs and the threats to validity of each study" (p. 55).

As Mullen (1978) himself noted, however, this approach to ensuring research use is dependent on high-quality "secondary reviews of research findings, which in turn are dependent on quality primary research studies" (p. 59). Although he was optimistic that these resources were becoming increasingly available to practitioners, at this stage there was no questioning of the origins of the research or whether the practitioners should be involved in undertaking it. The job of the academic is to build better systems for ensuring that practitioners make use of research.

4.1.2 A Focus on Building Partnerships: 1995 Onward

Mullen's move to Columbia University in 1987 and his subsequent directorship of the Center for the Study of Social Work Practice beginning in 1992 crystallized some changes in his perspective on the relationship between research and practice. Shirley Jenkins, the founder of the center, had long sought to overcome the gap between research and practice through a close partnership with practice, initially the Jewish Board of Family and Children's Services and subsequently a wide range of New York city and state agencies (Jenkins & Mattaini, 1992). These partnerships provided a different kind of dynamic between research and practice, one in which practice concerns became the reference point for research and development and the utility of research-based evidence was paramount.

This change in perspective is visible in a high-profile edited book published by Mullen in 1995 with Peg McCartt Hess: *Practitioner–Researcher Partnerships: Building Knowledge From, In, and for Practice*. Although the bulk of the book is a collection of 12 chapters from leading academics, it is the vision of the editors that provides a new perspective. After noting the "deepening rift between the research and practice communities" (p. 3), the editors called for "approaches that advance practitioner–researcher partnerships in generating knowledge" (p. 4). The authors detailed the issues in communication, power, autonomy, and epistemology that obstructed the development of partnerships.

Although partnership with practitioners has always been a theme in Mullen's work, the earlier approach was to ensure that knowledge created elsewhere was made available in a systematic and useful way to inform practice. The 1995 book signaled a new approach in which knowledge itself was to be jointly created, recognizing practitioners as informed colleagues in identifying research questions and collecting and analyzing data. Writing three years later in the *Scandinavian Journal of Social Welfare*, Mullen (1998) reinforced these themes. He noted that "university-based social work researchers have too often engaged in research that has proved of little relevance in practice" (p. 157) and that the key task was "to narrow the gap

between the practice and research communities that mitigates against development of relevant practice knowledge" (p. 152).

Evidencing a trend in his thinking that would ultimately prove influential in his approach to EBP, Mullen (1998) went to argue that "good practice must ultimately be judged by the utility and generalizability of the findings for social work practice. One way to increase the likelihood of utility and generalizability is to conduct the research in universities and social agency partnerships" (p. 158).

Thus, in the 20 years between 1978 and 1998, Mullen's work demonstrated a key change in the epistemology of social work knowledge. The application of social science methods to social work in the 1960s had been extremely damaging, despite (often) the best of intentions. Research had shown poor outcomes for social work interventions and worse still, had cemented the gap between practitioners and university-based researchers. Mullen's initial attempts focused on mitigating the alienation that practitioners felt from research by devising detailed processes for assimilating research-based evidence into practice. Later, the problem was seen much more clearly in terms of the process of knowledge generation, and Mullen's work from the 1990s onward signaled the key change toward a respectful partnership with practitioners and a recognition of the value of the "process of building knowledge from, in, and for social work practice" (Mullen, 1998, p. 157).

4.2 The Example of Family Group Conferences

The development of family group conferences, as a model emerging from practice and only subsequently explored by researchers, exemplifies many of the issues that are central to improving the research–practice relationship.

Family group conferences provide a model for making serious social work and social care decisions about the welfare of children, young people, and adults. Their major development has been in the children's sector, derived primarily from the work of practitioners in New Zealand in the 1980s (see Marsh & Crow, 1998). The conferences involve the extended family and in

essence ask the family to decide whether or not there is a welfare problem of a severity that needs action and if so, what action should be taken. To answer these questions, the professionals, typically social workers, provide information to the family about the problem or problems, resources that could help, and any legal issues that may dictate that some options are unacceptable. The conferences are convened by a coordinator who is independent of social services and who carefully contacts the extended family, prepares them and the professionals for the conference, and chairs the conference itself (in an active manner). At the heart of the conference, following a period of information giving and exchange between professionals and family, is a period of private family time during which the family debates the two key questions (concerning the nature and severity of the problem and what should be done). The resulting decisions are refined and recorded during the final part of the conference. The conferences rely on social services providers making a strong commitment to carry out the family plans unless there are serious legal reasons not to, in which case arguments against the plan should be made during the conference.

These conferences have shown an ability to involve many more extended family members when compared with other forms of decision-making practice and to generate significant additional family resources for children, with a strongly increased likelihood that that the family will decide to retain their care within the family network (Marsh & Crow, 1998).

Since the mid-1980s, there has been worldwide growth in family group conferences. By 2005 they were established in at least 17 countries, including Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States, Brazil, the Netherlands, and South Africa (Nixon, Burford, Quinn, & Edelbaum, 2005). It is clear that the conferences' focus on reflecting the culture of the family concerned, unique to each family's particular context, can allow them to be used in highly different cultural and national settings (e.g., Roby, Pennell, Rotabi, Bunkers, & de Ucles, 2014). On the other hand, the great majority of reported projects are from the United States (143 of the 225 respondents to the 2005 survey by Nixon and colleagues).

Although the spread of family group conferences has been substantial, the quantity in any one country has often been limited. Outside of New Zealand, where they are part of the law, they are nearly always carried out as projects rather than mainstream activities. In the United Kingdom, for example, it took approximately 15 years to build up to nearly 70 projects, with the majority performing small numbers of conferences each year, and another 10 years to add approximately 10 more projects to this total (Brown, 2015).

4.2.1 Practice Context

There are many reasons for the remarkable, albeit slow and patchy, spread of this decision-making model. We will highlight several with particular relevance to how research and practice interact in this area.

- Family group conferences are by any standard a radical change to past professional practice in decision-making conferences. For example, the family effectively invites the staff to the conference, not the other way round, and the family, not the staff, meets alone to consider what is to be done.
- As previously noted, they are still relatively small in scale (88 of 196 projects reviewed by Nixon and colleagues in 2005 had involved fewer than 10 conferences during the previous year). So the practice is relatively scarce.
- The practice is simple to describe but surprisingly complex in practice because of the very wide diversity of families and situations that are directly reflected in the process; for example, family members who attend often vary widely in number, advocates may be used in different ways, the conferences can take short or very long periods of time, and so on.

The practice is therefore difficult to understand and to engage with, providing an ideal example to consider in the context of practice–research relationships.

4.2.2 Research Context

There is now a substantial body of research regarding family group conferences (or in a few cases claiming to be about conferences, a point we

will return to later). A literature search for the term *family group conference* yields hundreds of references, but a more reliable review by Connolly, Morris, Pennell, and Burford in 2009 found approximately 70 research studies. By 2015, the number is certainly well more than 100.

Studies have covered the format of the conferences (timing, venues, cost, etc.), the people invited and attending and their responses, and key principles such as views on private family time, the work of coordinators, the welfare decisions that can be covered, and the implementation process. There is certainly a major body of research that has a strong connection with practice.

4.2.3 Practice–Research Relationship

So given a complex practice and a substantial body of research, what is the relationship between practice and research and how does this example relate to the work of Mullen?

A significant number of studies have been sponsored by practice agencies, and some have been undertaken by practitioners themselves. Practice has taken the lead in involving research, in contrast to some of Mullen's examples in which the research community initiated the relationship. For their part, researchers to some degree also think the practice is worth researching and there are some major research projects that have been undertaken. However, despite the positive evidence for the model that is conveyed by the studies, there is still difficulty in getting the practice beyond the project stage, as previously noted.

Despite an apparent joint approach to generating knowledge, practitioners are clearly not responding as fast, or as much, as would be expected to this substantial body of positive research. This may be due to the general lack of research in so many social work practice areas (Marsh & Fisher, 2005)—a context that could well generate a low level of interest, engagement, or knowledge about research on family group conferences. It may also be related to a lack of critical appraisal skills when reading the research and a feeling that they "do all that already"; in addition, practitioners may feel that

they lack the agency to act on the research due to constraints of the growing "rulebook culture" of much modern social work practice (Marsh, 1986, 2008). It may be due to the role of research as a practice driver. For example, Rauktis, McCarthy, Krackhardt, and Cahalane (2010) found that a major influence in the adoption of the conference model was having it introduced by a neighboring service agency. As in other professions, it is often practice colleagues who are the most influential in driving change.

This example also demonstrates the enduring concern identified by Mullen regarding whether or not researchers truly understand the practice. Some researchers seem to struggle to pay sufficient attention to understanding the model that they are researching. Family group conferences constitute a decision-making process. The decision itself can be studied and assessed, but in the months following this decision there will be many service, family, and contextual differences that affect postconference outcomes.

Welfare, health, and social outcomes will have a sophisticated relationship with the decision made at the conference. Yet some researchers fail to analyze this and focus on outcomes as if they are independent of the quality or quantity of service that a child actually receives following the conference decision (e.g., Berzin, 2006; Sundell & Vinnerljung, 2004). Others fail to recognize the problem, reporting the studies as important evidence (Little, 2011), whereas others include them in major systematic reviews designed to analyze "rigorous comparison group evaluations" (Lee, Aos, & Miller, 2008, p. 1) despite the substantial underlying mistake regarding the purpose of conferences. Confusing the conference purpose can be compounded by major problems regarding model fidelity. For example, Berzin (2006) and the 2008 systematic review by Lee et al. included projects involving conferences that had no private family time, despite this being a core part of the model (Merkel-Holguin & Marcynyszyn, 2015; Rauktis, Bishop-Fitzpatrick, Jung, & Pennell, 2013).

Despite a model of the research–practice relationship that should generate a greater commitment among practitioners and focus research more directly on practice issues, progress is slow. We have some practitioners seemingly

not responding, or at least responding very slowly, to the positive research messages about conferences, and we have some researchers carrying out major research studies that misunderstand the practice. Put differently, the good practice development does not seem to be making the most of the research and good research is hampered by some studies that profoundly mistake the nature of the model in terms of purpose and method.

What does this tell us about the research practice relationship and Mullen's call for a more equal partnership?

4.3 A Research-Competent Practice Community and a Practice-Competent Research Community

Mullen's work acts as a significant guidepost in the changing relationship between research and practice, demonstrating the need to build long-term knowledge production partnerships between universities and agencies and pay close attention to ways of building on the knowledge already held by practitioners. However, the evolution of EBP has recreated the very structural inequalities that Mullen identified as in need of review. Significant strands of EBP have demonstrated a disdain for and distance from practice that have no place in partnerships for knowledge production (Fisher, 2011, 2013). The example of family group conferences demonstrates the difficulty of "building knowledge from, in, and for social work practice" (Mullen, 1998, p. 157). In essence, structural weaknesses in practice hamper its ability to develop its own knowledge base and leave it unable to play an equal role in the relationship with research.

Building on Mullen's work, therefore, requires attention to structural aspects of the research–practice relationship designed to achieve a greater prominence for research in the practice world and a greater prominence for practice in the research world. This not the venue to develop detailed arguments, but we can identify the main issues that need to be addressed.

Starting with practice, we have argued for a research-competent practice (Marsh, 2007) in which practitioners start from the premise of needing,

having access to, and engaging strongly with the best research. The intention is to make science "genuinely intrinsic" (Marsh, 2007, p. 18) to social work—in terms of qualifying education, subsequent access to research training, and opportunities to receive research funding—and to engage on more equal terms with university-based colleagues. This echoes concerns in McCart Hess and Mullen's 1995 book to identify the conditions in which research partnerships can develop, with particular emphasis on differences in power and autonomy. Making science intrinsic to social work would also agree with Shaw, Lunt, and Mitchell's (2015) call for increased emphasis on practitioner research, in that research should increasingly spring from practice concerns and be underpinned by methods that are feasible in everyday services. However, we do not suggest that practitioner research should be regarded as a discrete form of research in its own right, nor that practitioner-led research has a distinctive contribution to knowledge that cannot be achieved through research with shared origins.

From a research perspective, we have argued for the development of problem-solving knowledge for practice (Marsh & Fisher, 2008) and practice-literate research (Fisher, 2011, 2013). This will require social work researchers to give as much emphasis to their practice literacy as they want practitioners to give to their research literacy. To achieve this, the research community needs different principles. For example, the starting point for research needs to be the concerns of practitioners, rather than the priorities of researchers or policy makers; the assumption should be that practitioners already possess relevant knowledge and the research objective is to build on it with the goal of not only generating understanding but also testing models that work in day-to-day practice.

The emergence of practice research (see Austin, Fisher, & Uggerhøj, 2014; Marthinsen, Julkunen, Uggerhøj, Rasmussen, & Karvinen-Niinikoski, 2012) offers a model for achieving this goal. Practice research is defined as research that "originates in the concerns of practice and develops practice-based solutions; and is based on a collaborative, developmental approach that respects the knowledge held by practitioners, and engages practitioners in

the research process" (Fisher, 2013, p. 25). The most developed model, in Finland, places university researchers in agency settings and engages practitioners in developing their research skills on projects that respond to their concerns (see Julkunen, 2011). Julkunen (2011) argues that the model changes the basis of knowledge production: "Social-work-practice research knowledge is tied to the need to develop practice. It promotes interaction and equal discussion among different actors in order to enable change" (p. 64).

These structural issues in the research–practice relationship can almost always be overcome through goodwill and mutual respect (as Mullen's work demonstrates), but their influence is so pervasive that they need to be addressed if joint knowledge production is to become the norm.

Two further factors must also be addressed to build on Mullen's work on the research–practice relationship. First, the research–practice relationship has three interested parties rather than just two; the third partner is people with experience of services, whose direct knowledge of the processes of receiving interventions and the outcomes they seek should be part of high-quality knowledge production. The original Salisbury Statement on practice research (Salisbury Forum Group, 2011), for example, emphasized that people who use services are partners in knowledge production, and the later update by Austin et al. (2014) called for practice research "to actively include service users and engage in inter-disciplinary dialogue about the connections to survivor research carried out primarily by service users" (p. 13).

The final issue is the strength of research findings and their influence on practice, an issue to which Mullen himself has recently returned (Mullen, 2015). In stressing how evidence should inform practice, EBP advocates have tended to rely on a hierarchy of research-based knowledge, emphasizing the superior knowledge claims of trials involving randomization. Such trials are relatively rare in social work (compared with health care), expensive and difficult to achieve successfully, and many organizations producing guidelines for practice (such as the Social Care Institute for Excellence and the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence in the United

Kingdom) embrace a more inclusive approach to what counts as evidence (see Fisher, 2014; Kelly et al., 2010). Critical to this approach is the concept of evidential relevance, or "the applicability of the evidence to outcomes of interventions in contexts which are typical of where policies, programs, and services will actually be provided in the complexity of service organizations" (Mullen, 2015, p. 4).

Mullen's call to incorporate relevance as a key criterion in evidence assessment is a profound challenge to the research community, and one that emphasizes the need to recognize the importance of the knowledge held by practitioners. Fundamental scientific principles about the quality of evidence that should influence practice must be set in the context of practitioners' knowledge of operational conditions that influence whether that evidence is actually useful in practice. Once again, we are returned to the key issue at the heart of social work research and of Mullen's work—the quality of the relationship between research and practice.

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5. Evidence-Based Practice and Domestic Violence

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Abstract

Edward Mullen, the Willma and Albert Musher Professor Emeritus of Columbia University and fellow of the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare, has been an active member of the evidence-based practice (EBP) movement in social work from its beginning. EBP has different challenges and possibilities in various countries because of the contextual nature of social work practice. Domestic violence is a serious problem almost everywhere, but the intervention strategies to alleviate it might not always be the same. A search among Cochrane and Campbell collaboration databases shows that many of the intervention strategies do not have a strong support system backed by research. This chapter addresses the question of how to work with a research-based orientation while lacking empirical evidence of the outcomes of interventions. Social workers cannot turn victims away from their services, although there might not be enough research support for the applied methodology. What kinds of solutions might be available for this ethical dilemma?

5.1 Introduction

Professor Edward Mullen has been an extremely important person in my professional growth, both in terms of being an excellent researcher and also a highly appreciated social work teacher. When we meet, we usually engage in discussions about different theories of evaluation, the philosophy of science, or sometimes differences in political practices of our respective countries, the United States and Finland. When talking with him, in chess terms I always have the feeling that he is anticipating several moves ahead of me. This is not a complaint; it is a most gratifying experience.

This feeling not only stems from my abilities but also the fact that research designed to promote evidence-based social work practice is more or less considered normal science in the United States, whereas in Finland it is still a rather marginal approach.

Moreover, the practice of social work is different in different parts of the world. For example, in Finland, social work practice is not as therapeutically oriented as it is in the United States. When books and articles about social work suggest cognitive behavioral therapeutic methods, they are not that easy to apply in Finland, where a master's degree does not give social workers the legal right to practice psychotherapy. It is possible to enter psychotherapeutic training, but most social workers do not, at least not yet.

On the other hand, U.S. social workers lack the support given to our countries by the Nordic welfare state. Although changes are coming, there is still a palette of supportive services that can be used to help social work service users.

So what might be the best approach in one developed Western society might not be the same at all in another society. Of course, this cultural context-bound nature of social work might be emphasized too much. As we all know, many of the target problems in social work are quite similar all over the world.

During one of our meetings, Ed Mullen asked if I (or Finnish social workers in general) really think that not using the methods supported by the best possible research evidence is an ethically sound way of working. This is by all means a good question, but it can also be turned around—How should one act if there is only a limited amount of support from research or if the support is contradictory?

5.2 Evidence-Based Practice

Mullen and Dumpson's (1972) book, *Evaluation of Social Intervention*, was "the first major call for a move toward evidence-based practice in social work" (Roberts, Yeager, & Regehr, 2006, p. 12).

Mullen and Steiner (2006) used Gibbs' definition of evidence-based practice (EBP) in social work:

> In the United States, social work EBP is described as follows: "Placing the client's benefits first, evidence-based practitioners adopt a process of lifelong learning that involves continually posing specific questions of direct practical importance to clients, searching objectively and efficiently for the current best evidence relative to each question, and taking appropriate action guided by evidence" (Gibbs, 2003, p. 6). (pp. 23-24)

Ed Mullen described EBP as "a policy and practice decision-making process with two complementary components, namely (1) the process of evidence-base [*sic*] practice and (2) the use of evidence-based, research-tested effective practices" (Mullen, 2015, p. 2).

Mullen and Steiner (2006) dealt with common criticisms of EBP. The first issue they raised was the shortage of evidence. The authors gave examples of cases in which approximately 55% of clinical decisions were based on research evidence from randomized controlled trials; in about 29% of cases, there was general agreement among professionals that good nonexperimental evidence existed.

Although this example might well describe the situation in medicine and U.S. social work, this amount of research evidence to back up a social worker's decision making is a rather optimistic description of the situation, at least in Finland.

How limited the EBP approach is in Finnish social work research can be demonstrated by Petteri Paasio's (2014) recent comparative research. He conducted a search of the Web of Science database to find all articles with

the words *evidence-based* or *evidence-informed* mentioned in the title, from 1992 to 2012. He found 15,332 articles (in many countries and numerous research fields, e.g., city planning, medicine, nursing, criminology, pedagogics, social work, and so on). He closely inspected all the articles from 2010 to 2012 (n = 5,728). Of those, 3,122 articles were published in the United States, which is more than half (54.5%), and 408 were classified as social work research. British scholar Paul Stepney, a visiting lecturer at the University of Tampere, was the only author from Finland; his article was about Australian social work (Paasio, 2014). Paasio (2014) stated that it is absolutely certain that there is not a single Finnish social worker who is using systematic reviews when making decisions about interventions in the helping process.

To summarize, we have not had a single randomized controlled trial in Finnish social work research and about 75% of the social work doctoral students are using only qualitative data and methods. Quite often researchers state that their research findings cannot be generalized to other research situations.

From the Finnish perspective, these very impressive results in the United States in terms of building up the research knowledge base for EBP in social work are, by all means, excellent. I think Edward Mullen and other supporters of evidence-based social work practice are right about the importance of solid research evidence as a foundation of decision making in the social work helping process. However, I have a feeling that Mullen and other U.S. supporters of EBP are rather optimistic about the pace of progress of social work interventions research. The situation looks a bit gloomier from the viewpoint of social work researchers from smaller countries and other types of social welfare services.

5.3 EBP and Domestic Violence

Although interventions might be culturally bound or constructed, the problems social workers are facing are quite often global. One of these is violence against women. Domestic violence or intimate partner violence (IPV) exists in all cultures, at least to my knowledge.

There are cultural differences, for example, about how to define IPV, but the phenomenon itself is global. But what is the current best possible evidence about interventions in IPV?

I will first deal with the problem of screening and then with research about interventions. What do the Cochrane and Campbell databases tell us about domestic violence and research-supported interventions?

In the Campbell Collaboration database, the results of my searches (on three occasions: July 29, 2013; April 16, 2014; and April 20, 2015) showed that although there are many publications about domestic violence, systematic reviews about intervention outcomes in domestic violence are still rather limited.

In the Cochrane Library, using the keywords *violence* and *domestic* to search titles, I found 81 documents, 23 of which were randomized controlled trials. There were two systematic reviews with the words *domestic violence* in the title and three documents with the keyword *domestic violence*.

There are two central types of questions connected to domestic violence. First, should all female service users be screened for domestic violence? Second, what kind of research evidence exists about interventions to help these women?

5.3.1 Screening

My interest in previous research about domestic violence is connected to a research and development project called Violence Intervention in Specialist Health Care (VISH). The European Union's Daphne III Programme funded the project in 2009 and 2010. The program aimed to prevent and combat

violence against children, young people, women, protected victims, and high-risk groups. The aim of VISH was to create a research-based, transnationally valid model for intervening in violence in close relationships in the context of specialist health care and to strengthen the channels for offering help to victims, perpetrators, and families who experience violence (Husso et al., 2012).

Our project started with the question of whether or not the screening of female patients in the Central Hospital of Central Finland would help identify IPV. Screening was connected to a procedure in which so-called VISH-positive women were directed to a special team of professionals that had been trained to work with domestic violence survivors. For the purposes of the project, we wanted to know about the outcomes of IPV screening.

There are recent studies about specific IPV screening tools (e.g., Kraanen, Vedel, Scholing, & Emmelkamp, 2013). The Cochrane database contains a very recent meta-analysis of research about screening (Taft et al., 2013). The objective of the analysis was to assess the effectiveness of screening for IPV conducted in health care settings for identification, referral to support agencies, and health outcomes for women. Of 6,506 abstracts, the researchers included 11 trials that recruited 13,027 women overall. Nine were randomized controlled trials; six were assessed as being at high risk of bias.

The authors of this meta-analysis concluded that there is not enough support for screening all patients. Although the screening procedure seems to increase the number of women who are recognized as IPV patients, this does not lead to more women accessing needed services. There was only one research report that dealt with possible negative outcomes of screening.

One year later, the same research group published an article in the *British Journal of Medicine* using their Cochrane systematic review and meta-analysis (O'Doherty et al., 2014). Although there was moderate evidence that screening in health care settings in high-income countries increases rates of identification of women subject to IPV compared with usual care, the conclusion was still rather reserved:

> When there was an increase in identification, it was modest compared with the prevalence of intimate partner violence among women attending healthcare settings. We found little evidence that screening increases referrals to support services. Furthermore, though not meta-analysed, the trials did not find an impact of screening on improved outcomes for women. … Thus, weighing up the limited evidence of benefit beyond identification and the fact that most studies do not measure the risks of screening, the current evidence does not support screening programmes for intimate partner violence in healthcare settings. (O'Doherty et al., 2014, p. 4)

Is screening for IPV victims then a waste of time? This is still a contested issue, at least in Finland. Although many health care professionals know about the lack of strong evidence regarding the benefits of screening, many continue to use screening tools.

5.3.2 Interventions

Screening for IPV victims is only the first step to offering help: After a health care service user tells the nurse, doctor, or social worker about the situation, the professional should find the best possible intervention supported by research. Although many generic helping methods might be useful to IPV victims, there might be more specific helping methods for these situations. Wathen and MacMillan (2003) conducted an extensive meta-analysis of research about IPV interventions. This article systematically reviewed the available evidence for strategies applicable in the primary care setting to identify and treat women who experience IPV.

The authors found 2,185 citations during their first search. The final pool of articles was 97, of which 22 described interventions meeting the criteria for critical appraisal. The authors ultimately concluded that there were very few high-quality evaluation studies about interventions to help IPV victims.

The Finnish parliament passed a new law regarding public funding for shelters for IPV victims in 2015. According to Wathen and MacMillan (2003), there was no high-quality evidence to evaluate the effectiveness of shelter stays to reduce violence.

Regarding women who have spent at least one night in a shelter, there is a fair amount of evidence that those who received a specific program of advocacy and counseling services reported a decreased rate of recurring abuse and improved quality of life. The benefits of several other intervention strategies for both women and men are unclear, primarily because of a lack of suitably designed research measuring appropriate outcomes. In most cases, the potential harm of interventions was not assessed in the studies reviewed.

Regardless of the lack of strong support for the benefits of the use of shelters, the Finnish parliament passed the law, which will open up more shelters and help IPV victims find support in crisis situations. I strongly agree that this was the correct decision, although from the viewpoint of the strictest EBP supporters, it was not the best possible evidence-based policy.

Although violence is not a health problem but a social problem and should be treated as such, even the Cochrane Collaboration offers information about IPV interventions. The Cochrane database provides a systematic review of using advocacy interventions with women who experienced IPV (Ramsay et al., 2009). Much has been learned in recent years about the epidemiology of violence against women, yet information about evidence-based approaches in the primary care setting for preventing IPV is seriously lacking. The evaluation of interventions to improve the health and well-being of abused women remains a key research priority.

Ramsay et al. (2009) reviewed 10 trials involving 1,527 participants. The evidence indicated that intensive advocacy may reduce IPV experiences during the 12-month follow-up period. However, the advocacy interventions did not have a clear effect on the quality of life and mental health of the victims.

The problem seems to be evident in the meta-analyses of screening and interventions. For screening, advocacy, and shelter use, there was no substantial support because there were not enough studies to make the conclusions strong enough. This is difficult to understand from the point of

view of a Finnish social work researcher, particularly because the aforementioned studies involved several thousand women. From the viewpoint of health care research, this might seem reasonable enough when the point of reference is studies about the effectiveness of medical care.

Is it possible that social work and social care studies should consider a much smaller number of studies to be conclusive evidence?

5.4 Evidence as the Aim of Science

Ed Mullen touched on the central question of the nature of evidence in his keynote speech at the European Social Work Research Conference in Bolzano in April 2014. The speech, published as an article in the *European Journal of Social Work* (Mullen, 2015), raised the important question of different interpretations of evidence. Although EBP is more or less an accepted framework in all human services, the core EBP concept of evidence remains ill-defined and controversial.

Mullen is not the first to deal with the question of evidence, however. Evidence is, for obvious reasons, a central question for researchers in law, history, and even the social sciences in general.

Even the founding figure of social sciences, Max Weber, stressed the importance of evidence. In *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Weber, 1922/2013), he stated that all sense-making endeavors and sciences are aimed at producing evidence. Understanding something as evidence can either be a rational process (e.g., based on logic or mathematical inference) or based on an emotional, emphatic understanding of the characteristics of the situation (Weber, 1922/2013). In social work there is always an interplay between rational, goal-oriented action (in Weberian terms, *Zweckrationale Handlung*) and emotional understanding, which can also generate evidential knowledge, although it is much more difficult to generalize and describe to others. The key word for Weber is *verstehen*, or understanding the meaning of action, and this is needed even when we use rational

inference to determine whether some piece of research knowledge can be considered as evidence.

5.5 Helping when Evidence is Lacking

According to Mullen (2015):

> Evidence-based practice can be considered a rational process for making decisions in the face of uncertainties, that is, in situations wherein certainty is not attainable. This process involves making uncertain inferences, usually using qualitative probabilistic reasoning about hypotheses based on available evidence. (p. 5)

I think this is a very important idea: EBP is a process of making decisions in an uncertain situation, in which both the social worker and the service user have many different ways of acting (Satterfield et al., 2009). To accept this is not to surrender to postmodern relativism; on the contrary, it is based on the clear-headed acceptance of the caprices of human behavior.

Even here, returning to Weber might be helpful. The ideas behind the evidence-based policy are not new—these thoughts have had supporters for a very long time. The idea of scientific policy making in particular has been discussed for at least a hundred years. There have also been opponents of the idea of linking research to policy making. Although Weber wanted to keep facts and values apart, he was also a strong supporter of politics against science throughout his career. According to Kari Palonen (2011), Weber was a fierce critic of apolitism. The tendency to seek scientific answers to clearly political questions was dangerous during his time in Germany. Weber tried to find ways of supporting political thinking and action. The growing tendency of apolitism was bureaucratization. This process has been occurring since Weber was active, and that makes his ideas worthwhile to consider, even in social work research. For Weber, freedom does not mean only tolerance and pluralism but also two more radical principles: freedom as openness to chance and freedom as conflict. Both sides stress that freedom is not so much connected to the results of action as it is to the situation of acting. According to Palonen (2011), Weber's theory of action was based on

two interrelated concepts, *Chancen* (chance) and *Nebenfolgen* (side effects). Using these, Weber transcends the merely normative and teleological approach of ends and means (Palonen, 2011).

Max Weber used the concept of Chancen to describe the central feature of social action: We can act in various ways, and to understand this process we have to combine causal explanations with an understanding of the meaning of the actions (Weber, 1922/2013). When social action is seen as the use of opportunities, it is normally seen as a positive phenomenon. But freedom of social action also has another meaning: Individuals can act in unpredictable ways. Violence in all of its forms is a somewhat problematic case for EBP. When somebody acts violently, it is often impossible to explain the behavior by referring to causal reasons. Not all husbands beat their wives but some do, and it is very difficult to predict who will be perpetrators based on social background factors.

Regardless, social workers are facing clients who need help. Mullen and other supporters of EBP are right when they say that if there is a lack of evidence to support interventions, the helpers should be extra careful and follow up on the outcomes of the helping process. Although this is true, I think that many of the actions of professional social workers are based on an understanding of the meaning of social actions, which is the only way to act in response to Chancen in the Weberian sense of the term—to act socially is to follow up on leads and hints that make it possible to understand social actions.

If Weber's idea about social action is valid, there may never be enough evidence to support airtight decision making about care. The professional cannot avoid taking chances. Evidence-based practice can never guarantee certainty, but it can limit the amount of uncertainty.

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6. Evaluation of Social Work Intervention: An Early Prelude to Evidence-Based Social Work Practice

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Abstract

This chapter reviews Edward Mullen's two early publications that in hindsight were a prelude to his later engagement in the emergence and development of contemporary evidence-based social work practice. Both books had national impact at the time of publication and later, via the development of evidence-based social work practice, gained transnational relevance. Despite some of the critics of evidence-based practice (EBP) who view EBP as a subsidiary of evidence-based medicine, this chapter explores social work's independent and parallel emergence during the last two decades and its assertion of its right to EBP. It credits Edward Mullen's publications on social work interventions as a major contribution to social work research and practice. It honors Edward Mullen's dedication, consistency, and persistence throughout his career.

In 1972, Edward Mullen, then a professor of social work at the University of Chicago, and James Dumpson published a book that to me served as a forerunner to evidence-based social work practice. The book, titled *Evaluation of Social Intervention*, is a collection of the contributions of 13 intervention studies presented at a national conference on the subject. The conference took place at Fordham University, located in Manhattan, NY. Mullen and Dumpson wrote the introduction and conclusion chapters; the former, a contextual piece that framed all empirical contributions, and the latter, a summary of lessons learned.

Ed Mullen later moved to Columbia University in New York City. James R. Dumpson, an adjunct professor at Fordham and past president of the Council on Social Work Education, served as senior consultant to New York

Community Trust. I had the pleasure of meeting James Dumpson before his passing. The last time I saw him was late one night, at the corner of 125th and Lexington in Manhattan, where Ed and I accompanied this lovely man to catch a cab. The question was whether he was going to take a yellow or black cab. He took a cab; however, I am not going to disclose the choice.

So how were these 13 contributions selected? The answer to this question indicates why this book was a forerunner to evidence-based social work practice. The selection criteria for inclusion of empirical contributions were: "the study is a relevant and major evaluation of the effects of social work intervention; the study used an experimental research design; and, the study has potential for contributing to the redesign of social work programs and curricula" (Mullen & Dumpson, 1972, p. vii). Effect measurement and experimental research design were essential components.

Let's put the publication of this book in a historical perspective relative to evidence-based medicine: Archie Cochrane's pivotal book, *Effectiveness and Efficiency: Random Reflections on Health Services*, was also published in 1972 and the first Cochrane Center (in Oxford) was established in October 1992 (two decades after Cochrane's book). *Evidence-Based Medicine: How to Practice and Teach EBM*, the publication in which David Sackett, W. Scott Richardson, William Rosenberg, and R. Brian Haynes introduced the concept of evidence-based medicine as a process, was published in 1997. So perhaps social work was not so much behind medicine in observing the need to base its practices on strong scientific evidence. In fact, these were two contemporary, parallel, and emerging insights and ideas—each on one side of the Atlantic, unknown or not organically connected to each other—that would later be associated with medicine and social work. Mullen and Dumpson were not aware of Cochrane's work (E. J. Mullen, personal communication, December 8, 2014), and Cochrane seems not to have been aware of the Mullen and Dumpson book. Interestingly, referring to Cochrane's work, Ed Mullen observed in 2014 in an initial version of his Bolzano conference keynote speech:

> We came to similar conclusions regarding the failure of these RCTs to demonstrate social work intervention effectiveness. It is of interest that Cochrane was not aware of either our review or of all but one of the 15 social work RCTs. In a section of his 1972 book dealing with social work he expresses concern that "the Social Services seem to be evolving in exactly the same unfortunate way as medicine by suggesting that wherever there is a social 'need' a social worker must be appointed whether or not there is any evidence that the social worker can alter the natural history of the social problem." He goes on to say that the situation with social work is even more distressing than in medicine because social workers seem to be "antagonistic to evaluation." (E. J. Mullen, personal communication, December 8, 2014)

Mullen and Dumpson's (1972) book and the Cochrane (1972) book would become beacons for the development of a new professional culture, a term coined by Soydan and Palinkas (2014).

In their introductory chapter, Mullen and Dumpson (1972) questioned whether social work was on the wrong track. This question was prompted by the debated issue of the era, namely observations of the lack of impact of social work interventions, and was substantiated by all 13 experiments reported in the book. The main focus of the Fordham conference and the book was the effectiveness of social work interventions.

At the time the book was published, again from a historical perspective, Mullen and Dumpson (1972) observed: "The effectiveness of professional social work interventions has been a matter of concern for at least forty years" (p. 2). This represents an 80-year perspective, given the book was published more than 40 years ago. Mullen and Dumpson continued: "As long ago as 1931 Richard C. Cabot, in his presidential address to the National Conference on Social Work, urged the profession to begin assessing the results of its programs" (p. 2).

Richard Clarke Cabot (1868–1939), an American physician, believed that economic, social, family, and psychological factors underpinned many of the conditions exhibited by patients. He advocated that social workers should

work together with doctors, the former taking care of social health and the latter physiological health. Later Cabot developed and financed perhaps one of the most famous field trials in the history of social work profession, the Cambridge–Somerville Youth Study, which also was one of first intervention studies of the effectiveness of therapeutic interventions. The intervention theory of the Cambridge–Somerville Youth Study was that delinquent and potentially delinquent youths would become productive citizens if supported by friendly and engaged adults who could help them receive appropriate community services (by assuming a kind of case-management role). A randomized controlled study design was constructed by randomly assigning 325 boys between 6 and 10 years old to a treatment group, and an equal number of boys, matched with the treatment group on a large number of variables, to a control group. The program continued for eight years (1937–1945). So what was the outcome of the treatment?

Powers and Witmer (1951) reported results of the study: During the course of the treatment period, 96 boys in the experiment group had court appearances for 264 offenses. In the control group, 92 boys had court appearances for 218 offences. The lack of statistically significant differences between experiment and control groups was consistent across other outcome measures. The researchers concluded that treatment did not reduce the incidence of delinquency as determined by judicial involvement. Joan McCord, later a founding member of the Campbell Collaboration, conducted a 30-year follow-up study. About 95% of the sample was tracked down through public records. McCord concluded in 1978 that the treatment program had no effect on juvenile or adult arrest rates (Sayre-McCord, 2007). There were no differences between the groups in terms of serious crimes committed and age at first commission of a serious crime. A larger proportion of the experiment group committed additional crime compared to the control group.

Mullen and Dumpson also observed similar evidence pertaining to the ineffectiveness of psychotherapy. They noted that Eysenck concluded in 1952, a year after the results of the Cambridge–Somerville study were published:

"There thus appears to be an inverse correlation between recovery and psychotherapy; the more psychotherapy, the smaller the recovery rate" (Mullen & Dumpson, 1972, p. 3). Eysenck based this conclusion on a review of 24 studies comparing psychoanalytic treatment to either custodial care or the care of a general physician. In addition, Levitt reported in 1957 that a review of 35 studies of children diagnosed as neurotic "failed to support the view that psychotherapy with 'neurotic' children is effective" (Mullen & Dumpson, 1972, p. 3). These reports, especially that of Eysenck, set off "violent and stormy reactions" (Mullen & Dumpson, 1972, p. 3).

Moving from psychotherapy to social work, Mullen and Dumpson observed that similar empirical results had emerged regarding social work counseling services. The Russell Sage Foundation published a report in 1965 titled *Girls at Vocational High: An Experiment in Social Work Intervention*. This study reported results of a 4-year experiment with girls whose behavior and performance predicted potential delinquency at New York City Vocational High School. Counseling services were provided to 189 girls in the experiment group, whereas 192 girls in the control group did not receive these services. Outcome variables included school completion, academic performance, school-related behavior, out-of-school behavior, and self-reported outcomes by the participants. Investigators reported: "With respect to all of the measures we have used to examine effects of the treatment program, only a minimal effect can be found" (Mullen & Dumpson, 1972, p. 4). This minimal effect or difference between the experiment and control groups was not statistically significant. The report generated controversy regarding the effectiveness of traditional social work services.

Another study, *The Chemung County Evaluation of Casework Service to Dependent Multiproblem Families*, in the 1960s, highlighted a similar problem (Brown, 1968). This study evaluated the effects of intensive social casework on 50 multiproblem families in comparison to a control group of multiproblem families who received care as usual provided by public assistance services during 31 months. The study showed that although

families in the experiment group functioned slightly better, the difference compared to control group families was not statistically significant.

With this backdrop of serious concerns about the effectiveness of interventions in the social work community of researchers and practitioners, the Fordham conference was arranged and attended by representatives of more than 125 universities and agencies. Sixteen intervention studies were reviewed at the conference. Nine studies evaluated the casework method as a primary intervention; two studies evaluated casework and group methods; three studies assessed casework, group work, and community organization; one study examined a combination of casework and nursing; and one study assessed a team approach.

Outcomes of all studies reported at the conference were consistently inconclusive, and researchers were rarely able to demonstrate that an intervention program had even modest success in achieving its main goals. Mullen and Dumpson (1972) concluded:

> Suggestions have been offered for the reorganization and development of social work practice and education, and the general directions are now clear. Social work must give priority to tackling what has been defined as the macro and mezzosystems, and the human needs and problems they generate. Basic to achievement of this goal is development of strategies for effecting social policy development on the macro and mezzosystem levels. The broad social problems of poverty, racism, and general social injustice must be addressed; but it is clearly evident that these problems cannot be properly addressed simply by interventions directed toward individuals experiencing these problems. The studies reviewed in this book clearly attest to the futility of attempting to resolve our major social problems through microsystem interventions. (p. 252)

They added: "This is not to suggest that microsystem problems should not be the concern of social work" (p. 252). However, contrary to Mullen and Dumpson's relative pessimism about the effectiveness of individual-level interventions, this concern would not be realized and instead many very effective interventions would be developed in the decades to come.

Furthermore, Mullen and Dumpson recommended that the profession pay attention to additional factors that are very similar to those prescribed by the modern theory of evidence-based social work practice: to draw on knowledge and skills from a variety of professions and disciplines (evidence-based practice prescribes tracking down the best available evidence to address an identified problem) and address the need for feedback, which is the last step in modern evidence-based practice, that is, evaluating outcomes of the implementation of an intervention. Finally, Mullen and Dumpson (1972) concluded: "We are struck with the observation that what was being observed in many of the reviewed evaluations was the dysfunctional nature of social agencies" (p. 253).

This observation may have led Mullen and Dumpson, together with Richard First of Indiana University's School of Social Service, to undertake a study exploring the state of education for effective social services administration practices. Study outcomes were reported in a book under the auspices of the Council on Social Work Education, *Toward Education for Effective Social Welfare Administrative Practice* (Dumpson, Mullen, & First, 1978). The empirical data were collected via a nationwide mail survey of all graduate schools of social work accredited by the Council on Social Work Education. The trio reported the following findings:

- A lack of systematic models for organizing accumulated knowledge on social welfare administrative practices.
- Disagreement and a certain degree of confusion regarding the most appropriate structural organization of social welfare administrative practice education.
- A discrepancy between the number of social workers in administrative positions (50%) or performing administrative functions (91%; this term was undefined) compared to rate of students enrolling in an administrative specialization (4%).

Further, the trio reported four unmet needs that should be addressed:

1. A need to increase the number of students enrolled in programs designed to equip graduates to function responsibly and effectively in administrative practice at the middle and top levels of administration, with priority given to the public social welfare system.
2. An urgent need to organize knowledge around the concept of effectiveness and efficiency in the context of the following question: What qualities increase or decrease the probability of effective and efficient administrative practice?
3. An urgent need to organize continuing education programs in social welfare administration for graduates of schools of social work.
4. "A need to test the relevance of efficacy of the field instruction models currently being used for direct social service delivery, as preparation for administrative practice" (Dumpson et al., 1978, p. 35).

It would take approximately 35 years before Ed Mullen (this time with Joseph Skuluk, then at the Social Work Leadership Institute of the New York Academy of Medicine) returned to the same issue that was the subject of the 1972 book: the effectiveness of social work interventions. He certainly maintained this issue as a main interest of his work and visited it from time to time, but his coauthored 2011 article in *Journal of Social Work* was a major literature review and a seminal publication.

In this article, Mullen and Shuluk (2011) concluded:

> There is now a large body of evidence supporting the effectiveness of a wide range of social work interventions with a wide range of social problems and populations. It is now reasonable to conclude that approximately two-thirds of clients served by social workers benefit in measurable ways. These positive outcomes remain, even after controlling for publication and investigator bias, which, nevertheless, have been shown to inflate positive outcomes. Because an increasing number of studies have contrasted competing, alternative, credible interventions using some form of comparison group design, evidence is beginning

> to become available about the relative efficacy of alternative interventions for specific problems and populations. (p. 60)

Further, they observed:

> We think that findings reviewed in this article are sufficiently encouraging to recommend that promising social work interventions with specific social problems and specific populations be more carefully studied with particular attention to questions of cost-effectiveness. Using comparative effectiveness strategies, specification of differential effectiveness should now be the focus so as to answer questions such as: what intervention, under what circumstances, for what problem, under what conditions, in what population has what effect and at what cost? (Mullen & Shuluk, 2011, pp. 60–61)

Four decades is a long time, and as Ed Mullen's efforts have demonstrated, the progress accomplished by social work research since the publication of his 1972 book is stunning.

Nonetheless, controversies regarding evidence of effectiveness remain ongoing. In 2011, the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare published an official report in Swedish; its title can be translated as *Debate on the Dodo Bird: Does the Treatment Method Play a Role in Client Work?* This article, written by Mullen, Shuluk, and Soydan, integrated empirical data from Mullen and Shuluk's 2011 literature review with the famous dodo debate. In 1936, American psychologist Saul Rosenzweig published an article (three and a half pages) arguing that psychotherapeutic theories worked because of common factors such as the alliance between therapist and patient, and not because of differences in specific techniques and methods of each psychotherapeutic theory. This proposition was termed the dodo bird verdict based on a tale in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. According to the story, a dodo bird is worried that some fellow birds got their plumage wet at the lake, so it organizes a running competition around the lake to dry them. The birds run and arrive to the finish line one after another, at which point they ask who won the race. The dodo bird concludes that everyone has won

and should get a prize. In other words, because all psychotherapeutic interventions work, they all should get a prize or recognition.

Outlined in controversial articles in a Swedish social work journal, Mullen, Shuluk, and Soydan's conclusion was criticized with reference to literature on psychotherapeutic interventions models. However, the authors argued that they limited their study to social work interventions. They wrote:

> We conclude that variables common to all social work interventions may explain the generally positive outcomes found in recent reviews of social work outcomes, but that such common factors seem to play a lesser role than in allied psychotherapeutic interventions. (Mullen, Shuluk, & Soydan, 2012, p. 47)

The last three decades have been the era of evidence-based medicine, evidence-based practice, and evidence-based policy. The development of systematic research reviews took off very strongly beginning in the mid-1990s, fueled by an increasing awareness among professionals and decision makers, and subsequently the general public, of the importance of high-quality evidence in professional practice and policy making. The inception and advances of the Cochrane Collaboration[1] in the health-related sciences and practices by the mid-1990s and the Campbell Collaboration[2] in the behavioral, social, and educational sciences from early 2000 established the science and technology of systematic research reviews and meta-analyses. Later, the dissemination, translation, and implementation of high-quality evidence came to the forefront and triggered innovations such as the Guidelines International Network,[3] which promotes excellence in creating high-quality clinical practice guidelines that foster safe and effective patient care, and many high-quality clearinghouses dedicated to making high-quality evidence available to end users. In these and other relevant contexts, the concept of evidence has taken a crucial and central role. Although

1 See http://www.cochrane.org
2 See http://www.campbellcollaboration.org
3 See http://www.g-i-n.net

relatively many scholars have questioned the nature of evidence as informed by randomized controlled studies and embraced by the Cochrane and Campbell collaborations as the gold standard of science, few if any brought as holistic and constructive a critique of the concept as Ed Mullen.

The opportunity presented itself when he was invited to address the Fourth European Conference for Social Work Research in Bolzano, Italy, in April 2014. His keynote speech, titled "The Idea of Evidence in Evidence-Based Policy and Practice," has been revised for publication (Mullen, 2015). Drawing on a broad array of disciplines such as epistemology, philosophy of science, law, and evidence science, Mullen proposed modification of the concept of evidence in the context of EBP. The abstract of the article summarized Mullen's radical, provocative, and very constructive approach to the idea of evidence:

> I propose that for EBP effectiveness questions: (1) to be considered 'relevant evidence' an explanatory connection between an intervention and an outcome must be established rather than a mere association; (2) the EBP definition of 'best available evidence' should include total available evidence (rather than a subset) about effectiveness, causal roles (i.e., mechanisms), and support factors and be inclusive of high-quality experimental and observational studies as well as high-quality mechanistic reasoning; (3) the familiar five-step EBP process should be expanded to include formulation of warranted, evidence-based arguments and that evidence appraisal be guided by three high level criteria of *relevance*, *credibility*, and *strength* rather than rigid evidence hierarchies; (4) comparative effectiveness research strategies, especially pragmatic controlled studies, hold promise for providing relevant and actionable evidence needed for policy and practice decision-making and successful implementation. (p. 1)

Finally, let's wrap up this chapter with a few closing remarks. I have tried to track a fraction of Edward Joseph Mullen's scholarly work, particularly pertaining to the important role of social work interventions in social work practice and related evidence of their effectiveness. My reading of these publications revealed a few characteristics of his work:

- His publications on social work interventions represent a major contribution to the advancement of research on social work practice and the profession to the benefit of our clients.
- His tireless dedication to evidence-based social work practice has been incredibly productive.
- His consistency and persistence throughout his scholarly career is admirable.
- His civil courage to engage in scientific controversies is honorable.

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7. Edward J. Mullen's Contribution: A Swedish and a Personal Perspective

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Abstract

This contribution will present Professor Mullen´s valuable influence on the formation of the Swedish Centre for Evaluation of Social Services (CUS) and its successor, the Institute for Evidence-Based Social Work Practice (IMS), against a background of decades of debate and struggle around the basis of knowledge for social work practice in Sweden. Already during the 1960s, national politicians in Sweden joined forces with representatives of social services agencies in demanding more research underpinning the practitioners' decisions. The late 1970s saw the establishment of social work as a full academic discipline and an academic upgrading of the training programs. For reasons touched on in this article, however, it has taken until fairly recently for the Swedish social work community to embrace topics on the value and effects of social work interventions and thus support the concept of evidence-based practice. Professor Mullen came to play an important role in supporting CUS and IMS work in this direction.

In my previous positions as director of the Swedish Centre for Evaluation of Social Services (CUS) and its successor, the Institute for Evidence-Based Social Work Practice (IMS), both affiliated with the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare, I had the pleasure of a quite long-lasting professional contact with Ed Mullen.

Our first encounter took place in 1997, when—as it says in the conference program—"Willma and Albert Musher Professor Edward Mullen, Columbia University, New York, USA" agreed to contribute to the first international CUS conference, held at Lejondal Castle in Stockholm. The conference theme

was Evaluation as a Tool in the Development of Social Work Discourse. Thanks to contributors such as Robert Boruch, Juliet Cheetham, Ernest House, Yvonna Lincoln, Peter Marsh, Ed Mullen, Michael Scriven, Robert Stake, and Evert Vedung, the conference gave the mainly Swedish auditorium both broad and deep insights into the state of the scientific evaluation discourse. The experiences at this conference were followed by a comparative analysis of the use of evaluative approaches in social work research (Cheetham, Mullen, Soydan, & Tengvald, 1998).

The theme of Ed´s conference lecture in 1997 was "Linking the University and the Social Agency in Collaborative Evaluation Research: Principles and Examples." As his impressive publication list indicates, this issue has been a long-lasting interest of his. His ideas and experiences of attempts to "bridge the gap" (McCartt Hess & Mullen, 1995) between research and practice in social work was very timely for those of us who had the responsibility of developing the CUS research agenda. The role of this new center, established in 1992 and based outside of university settings, was in essence to help contribute to the improvement of the professional knowledge base for social work practice.

7.1 A Weak Swedish Bridge

As in many other countries, the 1990s in Sweden were characterized by demands for more transparency and effectiveness and thus more evaluation of human services organizations. For politicians and practitioners in the comprehensive Swedish social services sector, these demands to develop better knowledge about its value and outcomes for clients and users were, however, largely a revival of themes from the 1960s and 1970s.

At that time the character and achievements of social services were criticized in broad circles, something that in 1982 resulted in a profound modernization of the social services legislation. The parliamentary commission that forwarded the proposals for legislative change also took action with regard to knowledge development. In its report on basic principles for the future of Swedish social services, we find several instances

in which the lack of professional knowledge is noticed and deplored and proposals are made regarding empirical validation, in the forms of continuous follow-up, evaluation, and research on the sector's achieved results (Statens Offentliga Utredningar, 1974).

The knowledge debate was heated in the 1970s and a solution to the shortcomings was demanded, not least by the trade unions of social services managers and practitioners. The political answer became an upgrading to academic status of all social work training programs in the country (bachelor of social work, 3.5 years), concurrent with the establishment of academic departments of social work with autonomous research agendas and PhD programs at all Swedish universities at the time. This academic superstructure of social work training and research has now existed and expanded considerably during the last 35 years.

In the mid-1990s, the need for information about research achievements for clients and users was again brought to the surface, albeit largely contaminated by urgent cost-effectiveness issues. Now the lack of knowledge about outcomes and effects of social work practices was the main and more specific target of criticism. This situation was not unique to Sweden. Influential American social work researchers noted at the time: "The profession lacks systematic empirical validation of its practice strategies. Ongoing evaluation of social work interventions seems to be a desperate need all over the world" (Hokenstad, Khinduka, & Midgley, 1992, p. 187).

However, an important difference between this American viewpoint and the position taken by the Swedish social work research community was Sweden's lack of acceptance or understanding that this type of information need could be a viable academic research topic. Representatives of the academic discipline of social work chose to regard social workers' need for a research base to underpin their professional decisions as a risk that could impair the academic autonomy of the discipline (Bäck-Wiklund, 1993). It was also opposed on epistemological grounds. The discipline of social work had come into being during a period in which Swedish social sciences were influenced by antipositivist philosophies of science and the discipline

followed these critical tendencies to the fullest extent (Månsson, 2001). The most conspicuous consequence was one-sided trust in the use of qualitative empirical methods. Undergraduate education in scientific methodologies has been overwhelmingly restricted to qualitative methods. For example, the vast majority of bachelor's and master's theses from the 1970s onward only used qualitative material (Dellgran & Höjer, 1999), a situation that persisted into the 2000s.

Therefore, the majority of social workers today lack a more balanced and profound understanding of quantitative methods and have simply not received the kind of training on empirical methods that could have prepared them to undertake or participate in serious and reliable evaluation efforts. Nor had the issues of intervention effects and user safety entered the research agenda of social work academia. The professional system as a whole simply lacked the impetus to join forces to develop a professional knowledge base (Tengvald, 1995), and for a decade CUS was often approached by frustrated managers and practitioners needing help evaluating their professional work.

Now the situation is slowly changing. Relevant research is gradually expanding and social services managers are showing increasing interest in implementing evidence-based practice and interventions (Socialstyrelsen, 2013). But the problems in social work training programs still influence this development. Managers observed and deplored a lack of training and understanding of evidence-based practice among their staff members in a recent comparative study, which also showed a lower level of understanding among Swedish practitioners compared to a group of practitioners from the United States (Nyström & Åhsberg, 2014).

It is therefore not surprising that the peer reviewers responsible for the latest national evaluation of all Swedish social work bachelor's and master's programs straightforwardly concluded that social work training programs did not contain teaching and training based on concepts that integrate scientific knowledge and social work practice, e.g., evidence-based practice (Högskoleverket, 2009). Ed Mullen, in his review of CUS performance,

alerted us to the need to develop good relations with social work training programs, a recommendation that turned out to be much too far reaching and challenging for both CUS and IMS. The gap is still to be bridged.

7.2 Ed Mullen and the Inter-Centre Network for Evaluation of Social Work Practice

The first CUS Lejondal conference in 1997 made us recognize the need to establish stable international contacts and thereby sparked the CUS internationalization process. To my recollection, Ed and I had our first chat, during a Society for Social Work and Research conference in Miami, about the possibility of creating a network of research and development centers and institutions interested in developing an empirically validated knowledge base for social work practice. For my part, the idea of a center–institution network instead of an individually based one originated from an urge to develop stable international relationships that were also broadly relevant to our topic of interest.

This discussion of ours continued in Stockholm and Haluk Soydan, then at CUS, took on an important role in translating this idea into the Inter-Centre Network for the Evaluation of Social Work Practice (Mullen, 2006). The first meeting of the network took place in York in 1998, during which one issue of discussion was its outreach efforts. Initially, opinions differed about whether the network should be intercontinental or solely European. Luckily, we all realized the value of having a partner in the United States.

In retrospect and for a person with my presently limited overview of variations in national research and the development of evidence-based practice, it seems that the network has been quite successful. It has survived during a period of turbulence for social work research and withstood structural changes. Some individuals, like me, have left active participation in centers and institutions yet have continued to take part in the network. New organizations and new individuals have joined. Some centers and individuals have remained continuously active. Ed is one of those individuals.

Ed´s comprehensive list of publications shows to me that, through his long-term insights into essential social work research and practice issues, he has been generously sharing his knowledge via very timely discussion papers at network meetings. Issues such as the use of assessment instruments; outcome measures and measurement practices; state-of-the-art reviews, impartially putting forward pros and the cons; issues regarding teaching evidence-based practice; and how to implement the concept of evidence-based practice into the reality of social services agencies are examples of topics addressed by his valuable network papers. These research issues have come to function as a platform from which network partners and participants can adapt and employ ideas in their own work on different aspects of the evidence-based discourse.

Ed has taken time to participate in several other European conferences and contribute to anthologies and European scientific journals. He also functions as a more informal advisor in several countries. It can be noted that his experience has been in particular demand in countries where the network has a representative—Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, etc. Thereby, Ed has been patiently spreading his knowledge about radically new forms of social work.

In Sweden, Ed has participated in many activities since our first contact in 1997, including all three of our international Lejondal conferences. A special moment for me was Ed´s acceptance to give the keynote speech at the inauguration of IMS, the institute that succeeded CUS (Mullen, Shlonsky, Bellamy, & Bledsoe, 2004). He has shared his knowledge and his personal network with the staff at CUS and later at IMS. He is now relied on more broadly in Sweden. In 2013, for instance, he gave a summarizing presentation on evidence-based practice in social work at a national research council conference titled "Evidence-Based Knowledge: Consensus or Controversy."

Toward the end of an active professional life, even distinguished scholars tend to look back at what has been. Ed Mullen strikes me as someone who is mostly doing just the opposite. Not only is he good at pinpointing essential problems

and giving profound summaries of the state of the art, he also continues to present new and promising ways for the future of evidence-based social work research and practice. His work continues to this day, in the form of a presentation of comparative effectiveness research and in his invigorating discussion of its very core: the concept of evidence.

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8. Edward J. Mullen and the Promotion of Research on Social Work Practice

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A trailblazer is someone who advances through unknown territory, leaving signs along the way for others to follow, so that they may not get lost and to help them safely arrive at their destination. In many ways, a review of the half-century research career of Dr. Edward Mullen justifies designating him as a trailblazer regarding the emergence of evidence-based practice (EBP) as a major influence in contemporary human services and health care. To support this contention, let us review the definition of EBP and its five steps.

8.1 Defining Evidence-Based Practice

It is important to note from the outset that EBP is a five-step decision-making process originally intended to help clinicians and their clients decide what course of intervention to undertake. EBP does not consist of simply locating research-supported treatments and deciding to apply them to a client. Indeed, this approach is completely antithetical to the original and continuing model of EBP. The five steps are based on the assumption that a practitioner needs guidance on the course of action to undertake with a client. A client is most commonly an individual, but it could equally refer to a couple, small group, or organization. Clients present with some situation, most often a problem, for which they are seeking professional help. Sometimes the problem has a discrete name, such as a formal diagnosis of a medical or mental disorder. Sometimes the problem is not a diagnosis per se, but rather a situation being experienced by the client, such as domestic violence, homelessness, poverty, or inappropriate behavior (e.g., committing criminal acts). Given this background, here are the five steps of EBP, as outlined in the latest edition of the original and primary source describing

the process (Straus, Glasziou, Richardson, & Haynes, 2011) and adapted to social work:

1. Frame your need for information into an answerable question (see Gambrill & Gibbs, 2015).

2. Locate credible, recent, and pertinent empirical studies that address your question (see Rubin & Parrish, 2015).

3. Review and critically appraise these studies for their relevance and potential application to your client's situation (see Bronson, 2015).

4. Integrate this information, with the client's preferences, values, professional ethics, and available resources, to come up with an intervention plan and carry it out (see Gambrill, 2015).

5. Evaluate your success in carrying about the above steps and empirically evaluating the client's outcomes (see Thyer & Myers, 2015).

Contrary to common misconceptions, the ability to undertake EBP does not depend on the existence of a large body of randomized experimental outcome studies in the client's problem area. On the contrary, EBP seeks out all credible sources of useful information, which of course includes randomized controlled trials (RCTs) if available, but also high-quality quasi-experiments, preexperiments, correlational research, qualitative studies (see Saini & Crath, 2015), expert opinions, and relevant theory. If recent high-quality meta-analyses or systematic reviews are available, these are often given preferential status because of their ability to better control for bias in conclusions. However there is always evidence that a practitioner can critically review, hence the process of carrying out EBP is always possible, even if the evidence is of low quality.

Contrary to common misconceptions, EBP pays as much attention to other nonresearch factors, such as the client's wishes, values, and preferences. Another primary resource regarding EBP contended that:

> knowing the tools of evidence-based practice is necessary but not sufficient for delivering the high quality of patient care. … The clinician requires compassion, sensitive listening skills, and broad perspectives from the humanities and social sciences. … For some patients, incorporation of patient values for major decisions will mean a full enumeration of the possible benefits, risks, and inconvenience associates with alternative management strategies that are relevant to that particular patient. For some of these patients and problems, this discussion should involve the patient's family … [our] responsibility is to develop insight to ensure that choices will be consistent with patient's values and preferences. … [This] requires skills in understanding the patient's narrative and the person behind that narrative. (Guyatt & Rennie, 2002, pp. 15–16)

8.1.1 Other Features of EBP

The literature tends to stress the research-related aspects of the EBP process, particularly the design, conduct, and reporting of outcome studies, but this should not cause us to lose sight of the profound role that patient preferences, professional ethical standards, and other non-research-based factors have in the process. One form of highly valued research evidence is called a systematic review, which consists of meticulous attempts to track down all the high-quality research aimed at answering a clinical question, and publishing the results. Stringent attempts are made to reduce and control for bias, as much as humanly possible. Two international organizations called the Cochrane Collaboration[1] and the Campbell Collaboration[2] were formed to help commission and publish systematic reviews in the areas of health care (Cochrane) and social welfare, education, criminal justice, and international development (Campbell). Included in the guidelines for creating teams to design and complete a systematic review is a strong commitment to involve consumers from the very beginning of each

1 See http://www.cochrane.org

2 See http://www.campbellcollaboration.org

systematic review and in virtually every other initiative undertaken by the Cochrane Collaboration.[3]

The measurement of a client's functioning, strengths, and problems is intrinsic to the EBP process. How one chooses to measure client functioning or status is seen as needing as much scrutiny as does evaluating outcomes research. Whether the measure is a medical diagnostic test, a measure of overt behavior, or a client-completed rapid assessment measure, the clinician implementing EBP is expected to pose careful questions pertaining not only to the reliability, validity, specificity, and precision of the measure, but also to its appropriate fit with a particular client. Issues of language, cultural nuance, and readability all influence which measures may be appropriate benchmarks of client functioning and change. Straus et al. (2011) provided entire chapters on the EBP perspective on locating, appraising, and using diagnostic, prognostic, and screening measures, as did Moore and McQuay (2006) and Guyatt and Rennie (2002), two other primary original texts establishing the EBP model.

Another feature intrinsic to EBP is its enormous effort to promote the transparency of reporting and disseminating research findings. The Cochrane and Campbell collaborations have helped develop and promote clinical trial registries, wherein experimental and quasi-experimental outcome study protocols can be prospectively published before an investigation is undertaken. This helps others keep abreast of research developments and promotes the honest and complete reporting of all studies and their results.[4] EBP has been at the forefront of urging the open-access publication of study results, which promotes their accessibility, and the complete publication of the results of all clinical trials, regardless of positive or negative implications.[5] This completes, in theory, the circle of intervention research—greater transparency at the beginning of a clinical trial; thorough

3 See http://consumers.cochrane.org

4 See https://clinicaltrials.gov

5 See http://www.alltrials.net

reporting of important details when the study outcomes are described, using checklists such as the Consolidated Standards of Reporting Trials[6]; and the open access publication of such results. These laudable features are also a part of the structure of the EBP initiative.

EBP has proven to be an immensely successful practice model that has come to exert a major influence not only on the teaching and practice of medicine, but also in related health care fields such as nursing, psychology, education, and social work. EBP has been endorsed by the National Association of Social Workers (2015), the Council on Social Work Education (2015), and the Society for Social Work and Research.

8.2 The Career of Edward Mullen and EBP

Dr. Mullen's professional social work career extends over 50 years, beginning when he received his master of social work degree in 1962 from the Catholic University of America, in part on the grounds of conducting a research thesis titled "Analysis of Change of Social Performance of Thirty-Five Newly Hospitalized Schizophrenic Patients." During the ensuing 50-plus years, Professor Mullen has undertaken initiatives that in many ways were precursors to the subsequent emergence of the EBP decision-making model. In the following sections, I restate some of the major features of EBP and describe Dr. Mullen's homologous contributions.

8.2.1 Promoting Practitioner Use of Research Findings to Guide Practice

One major feature of EBP is the responsibility of the practitioner to locate the current highest-quality research available related to the client's circumstances or problem and to judiciously appraise these studies to determine if their findings can be applied to the present situation. Precisely this recommendation was made by Mullen in his 1978 paper titled "Construction of Personal Models for Effective Practice: A Method for Utilizing Research

6 See http://www.consort-statement.org

Findings to Guide Social Interventions," a contention reiterated throughout his life's work and very clearly articulated in his 1991 chapter titled "Should Social Workers Use Scientific Criteria for Selection of Practice Knowledge?" A primary reliance on tradition, authority, and theory to guide practice was seen by Mullen to be generally less helpful than consulting relevant empirical outcome studies. Although an obvious and widely adopted ethical and practice standard today (see Myers & Thyer, 1997), in the mid-1970s research was more often than not given short shrift as a source of interventionist knowledge.

8.2.2 Promoting Evaluation Studies

The first comprehensive review of existing, published outcome studies in social work was undertaken by Mullen and Dumpson in their 1972 book, titled *Evaluation of Social Intervention*. This was an extensive description and commentary of 15 experiments and quasi-experiments undertaken across a wide array of social work practice. More of a narrative review, compared to the standards of contemporary meta-analyses and systematic reviews, this work was a highly valued and useful state-of-the-art appraisal for its time. One of its main messages was the need for more and higher-quality outcome studies, and throughout his career Dr. Mullen has conducted several such primary studies himself and published numerous methodological pieces addressing the special challenges of what has been called field research. His chapter titled "Design of Social Intervention" (Mullen, 1994) is but one example.

8.2.3 Promoting Measurement

An important aspect of the EBP framework for the critical appraisal of a published study, and of immense importance in the prospective design of intervention research, is the selection of reliable, valid, socially acceptable, and culturally appropriate outcome measures. Naturally, Dr. Mullen has produced an influential book on this topic, titled *Outcomes Measurement in the Human Services* (Mullen & Magnabosco, 1997), which deals not only with choosing measures for large-scale studies, but also the selection of outcome measures for use by individual practitioners to assess their clients and

evaluate results. This book is supported by other chapters and articles dealing with this issue, of which "Outcomes Measurement: A Social Work Framework for Health and Mental Health" (Mullen, 2004a) is one example.

8.2.4 Promoting Client and Practitioner Involvement in Outcomes Research

The Cochrane and Campbell collaborations strive to include consumers (e.g., patients, family members, other caregivers, practitioners) as full members of teams charged with designing and completing a systematic review. Consumers are also highly recruited by these organizations to review draft protocols and systematic reviews prior to their acceptance. These are commendable practices, given the useful insights consumers can provide in research projects, from beginning to end. As might be expected, promoting consumer participation in the design and conduct of outcome studies is something Dr. Mullen has similarly advocated for years. He produced a significant book on the topic, *Practitioner–Researcher Partnerships: Building Knowledge from, in, and for Practice* (McCartt Hess & Mullen, 1995), based on a national conference he organized related to the theme of developing partnerships between researchers and practitioners. For 10 years (1992–2002) he directed the Center for the Study of Social Work Practice at Columbia University, which sponsored national conferences and numerous intervention studies.[7] His seminal paper "Linking the University and the Social Agency in Collaborative Evaluation Research" (Mullen, 1998) is but one in a lengthy series of articles addressing this theme.

8.2.5 Promoting Dissemination of Research Findings

Professor Mullen and his associates have consistently worked at promoting the dissemination of current research findings so that they are more accessible and intelligible to practitioners. One approach they have recently advocated is the development of various evidence-based clearinghouses, websites that critically evaluate current research studies in particular areas and provide synopses of their findings. Soydan, Mullen, Alexandra,

7 Summarized at http://www.columbia.edu/cu/csswp

Rehnman, and Li (2010) described the operation and features of clearinghouses and detailed the operation of four such websites in the areas of child welfare, Swedish social services, services for older adults, and evidence-based practice in China. One chapter representative of this theme in Dr. Mullen's work is titled "Facilitating Practitioner Use of Evidence-Based Practice" (Mullen, 2006). As director of the Center for the Study of Social Work Practice, he coordinated national conferences and symposia on the themes of Outcome Measurement in the Human Services; Practice Research Partnerships; Research and Practice: Bridging the Gap; and Evidence-Based Social Work: Practice and Policy. Sponsoring a single conference is a major undertaking. Hosting and coordinating four of them is truly monumental. Each brought together subject-matter experts from around the world who spoke to a larger audience of practitioners and academics, and many important papers and books emerged from these meetings. Dr. Mullen also coedited two special issues of the journal *Brief Treatment and Crisis Intervention* (Mullen, 2004b, 2004c) focused on the theme of evidence-based policy and practice.

8.2.6 Promoting EBP

This section need not be unduly long because Dr. Mullen has been writing about and promoting EBP for decades. Along with Eileen Gambrill, he is one of social work's most stalwart advocates of this approach to practice and policy.

8.2.7 Critiques of EBP

Apart from his general advocacy of aspects of the EBP process, Professor Mullen has also discussed some of its limitations and made recommendations as to how it may be improved. He suggested, for example, that RCTs may not be the best form of evidence to rely on and has proposed more pragmatic alternatives and extensions such as comparative effectiveness research studies involving strategies such as crossover designs, N = 1 RCTs, cluster RCTs, and delayed-start designs (Mullen, 2015). He also recommended high-quality quasi-experimental designs because they can yield more practical results than RCTs may be capable of producing.

Mullen has recently emphasized that meaningful evidence should include information on the causal mechanisms of how interventions work, stating that "to be considered 'relevant evidence' an explanatory connection between an intervention and an outcome must be established rather than a mere association" (Mullen, 2015, p. 1). I like this suggestion very much, although it raises the standard used for inferring the effectiveness of a treatment considerably higher than the simpler task of determining that an intervention had a given effect. The great French physician Claude Bernard made similarly strong recommendations in his enormously influential text *An Introduction to the Study of Experimental Medicine* (1865/1949). For example:

- It is not enough for experimenting physicians to know that quinine cures fever; but what is above all significant to them is knowing what fever is and accounting for the mechanism by which quinine cures. (p. 209)
- They want to know what they are doing; it is not enough for them to observe and to act empirically, they want to experiment scientifically and to understand the physiological mechanism producing disease and the medicinal mechanism effecting a cure. (p. 210)
- The object of the experimenting physicians is to discover and grasp the original causation of a series of obscure and complex morbid phenomena … To find a cure, we must always go back, in the end, to the original causation of phenomena. (p. 216)

These were lofty aspirations for medicine more than 150 years ago. How much more of a challenge is presented by seeking to obtain a valid accounting of the causes of complex psychosocial phenomena and the actual mechanisms of action of social work interventions! Such an ideal has not yet been completely accomplished in medicine, and we will have to wait for some considerable time before it is achieved in social work. However, lofty aspirations established for us by leaders in the field such as Ed Mullen are exceedingly useful.

8.3 Summary

Throughout his career, Edward J. Mullen has focused on important themes relating to the better integration of research findings into the delivery of social work services. He has also contributed greatly to integrating practitioners into the process of designing and conducting intervention research. Many of the themes that Professor Mullen stressed have emerged as essential constituents to the model now known as evidence-based practice, so when EBP developed parallel to his own work, it is understandable that he embraced this approach with some enthusiasm. His embrace is not uncritical, however. EBP has elements that need refinement and Dr. Mullen has helpfully provided suggestions along these lines. Now retired but retaining the well-deserved title and honor of the Willma and Albert Musher Professor Emeritus at the Columbia University School of Social Work, Dr. Mullen and his past and continuing intellectual contributions to social work, and to applied social science more broadly, continue to inform and inspire new generations of practitioners and researchers.

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9. Advancing Social Work Research through Doctoral Education and Mentorship

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Abstract

Edward Mullen's long and productive career is noteworthy in light of his contributions to social work research in areas including the process of social work interventions, social indicators research for strategic planning, social work education, use of research for personal practice modeling, evidence-based policy and practice, and comparative effectiveness research. Consistent themes throughout his career included the replication of his scientific methods and scientific reasoning in providing mentorship to his students. In this chapter, we reflect on his career as a mentor by taking inspiration from a pragmatic controlled trial to examine this dimension of his contribution to the scholarly community. Dr. Mullen's career provides a framework for all mentors to propel their students toward scholarly excellence.

9.1 Introduction

Edward Mullen is by all accounts a luminary in the field of social work. He has been a leader in the field of social work interventions, social work education, use of social indicators for strategic planning, use of research for personal practice modeling, and comparative effectiveness research. He was an early and continuous innovator of evidence-based policy and practice. He envisioned a repository of single-subject research before there was a technological framework to do so. Given that Dr. Mullen's career has shaped

and reshaped the use of research evidence in the field of social work, it is no surprise that his method of mentorship and doctoral education was likewise innovative and effective. Through his mentorship, Dr. Mullen's students have secured faculty and research positions at leading schools of social work and American think tanks. His efforts produced highly productive students who have leveraged their learning from Dr. Mullen and amplified his contributions to the field of social work and ongoing innovation in the field through their work.

In this paper, three of his former students reflect on the quality and nature of his mentorship as an outstanding contribution to the field. Mentorship is an essential component of knowledge translation in academia, yet it is a challenging activity to execute with success and not often explicitly taught to aspiring social work scholars. We who benefited from Dr. Mullen's mentorship found it hard to quantify exactly how he was able to motivate and propel each of his students toward success, and yet it is clear to each of us that his supervision and guidance continue to pay dividends. His methods were tailored to our interests, augmented the development of our emerging areas of expertise, and targeted our unique strengths, challenges, and career goals. In many ways, his method of mentorship mirrors the elements of a pragmatic controlled trial (PCT) that he detailed in his work on reconsidering the evidence in evidence-based policy and practice (Mullen, 2015). Though he did not articulate a formal framework for mentorship with his students, Dr. Mullen's mentorship is well articulated by his use of a reflective scientific method with his students.

In the following pages we use key elements of a PCT to illustrate and reflect on Dr. Mullen's generation of approaches to successful mentorship. Although the PCT framework was designed to produce evidence for practice and policy decision making, this framework has elements that mirror the production of mentorship knowledge and successful mentees. The PCT framework is organized into seven essential elements. We highlight a key theme reflected in each of these elements that we believe reflects the strength and spirit of his mentoring approach: (a) *practicality* so as to provide

evidence to service users, practitioners, and policy makers for real-world decision making; (b) evaluation of study *participation and representativeness*; (c) use of *realistic* intervention alternatives as the comparison group; (d) gathering of information regarding *costs and resources*; (e) examination of a range of *valued outcomes* by stakeholders using mixed methods; (f) employment of *flexible* research designs to address the research questions; and (g) enhanced translation of findings and *implementation* with an emphasis on transparency throughout solicitation of federal training funds (Glasgow & Steiner, 2012).

9.1.1 Practicality

Although Dr. Mullen's written oeuvre is populated by critical and far-ranging scholarship drawing on broad theory and research from a myriad of disciplines, reflecting a true social work approach, his work has always remained grounded in the applied value of the work. So too was his mentorship oriented toward propelling each of us through the critical stages of our careers and attending to all areas of need and deficit. He worked to facilitate our success not only by prompting critical thought and reflection in each of us by reading and commenting in great detail on drafts of our written work, guiding us as we developed presentations for international conferences, and pushing our ideas forward through discussions and debate, but also by scanning lists of possible courses across departments and schools, suggesting practical campus resources for housing, and assisting with other challenges of graduate student life. In sum, he worked at the task of helping us move through our doctoral studies with whatever means best supported that process—from the scholarly to the banal. This practical orientation to mentorship extended beyond our doctoral education and continued well into the job market and early stages of our careers. He continued to provide support and guidance as we chose academic homes that played to our strengths and moved into the role of independent social work investigators.

9.1.2 Participation and Representativeness

To gain a better understanding how Dr. Mullen provided practical mentoring to his students, it is necessary to understand how he chose his mentees. For more than 20 years he ran a competitive predoctoral training program funded by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) that provided training for doctoral students in mental health services research. To participate in this training program, students had to apply at the outset of their doctoral education. After a written application and personal interview with Dr. Mullen, they committed to participating in a 3-year training program that included weekly team meetings, specialized courses, and interaction with alumni of the training program. Alumni were asked to update Dr. Mullen on their progress and offer assistance to current fellows.

The expectation of ongoing engagement in the training program postgraduation was critical to ensuring that current students could make evidence-informed decisions and have active connections to early career investigators who could be useful in providing peer mentoring and connectivity in the world of social work academia and external funding. Through a vast alumni network, students were able to discuss course choices, areas of research focus, career opportunities, and career trajectories. Dr. Mullen could connect his students with at least two dozen alumni at any given moment, instantly extending the mentorship network for each new trainee.

However, he did not limit connections to program alumni. At any opportunity he would create connections with experts and leaders in the mental health services, both within the field of social work and beyond. These connections led to lasting relationships that later contributed to awareness of postdoctoral fellowship and faculty opportunities and scholarly collaborations with leading experts in his students' substantive areas of interest. With access to a diverse array of educational and career paths, his students could easily view, explore, and learn from a menu of potential professional options and outcomes so that they might cobble together a plan that best suited their needs.

Similarly, Dr. Mullen would organize weekly meetings for his trainees during which students at varying points in their education would be given the opportunity to convene and share their experiences in courses, troubleshoot challenges on research projects, and collaborate on papers. The inclusion of students at various stages in their doctoral education was important because it built a natural peer-mentoring network that afforded younger students a window into their future and offered more senior students an opportunity for reflection and mentoring practice. These approaches to mentoring across a network of multigenerational trainees helped students at the earliest stages of their education learn from the experiences of more senior students, gave senior trainees the opportunity to develop and practice their own approach to mentoring, and facilitated opportunities for collaboration. Mentorship was facilitated by the participation of all trainees for the benefit of the larger group, with representation at all stages of each participant's career.

Although at the time his approach seemed standard, because it was all we knew as doctoral students, it became apparent after taking faculty positions that we had benefited from practices that were not standard in all social work doctoral programs or across all social work doctoral program faculties. Each of us has been able to incorporate elements of Dr. Mullen's approach into our doctoral programs or the mentoring of our own doctoral students and junior faculty members at our respective institutions; these have proven to be unique and novel approaches in our current programs and have contributed to the quality of the education of our doctoral mentees. Many of these individual strategies have been adopted by our colleagues, expanding the reach of Dr. Mullen's career contribution to generations of well-prepared social work scholars.

9.1.3 Realism

Edward Mullen sought out preexisting structures for evaluating his mentorship through his fellowship programs. This saved both cost and time. His students had to reflect on their academic and career plans in reports to the doctoral program and through regular audits of their degree progress.

These audits incorporated completion of not only the minimal doctoral education requirements but requirements to go beyond the minimum to obtain additional coursework in research and analytic methods that placed his students on the cutting edge of current research practices. Additional requirements facilitated professional development, such as mandates to attend professional conferences and provision of funds to do so. He also encouraged his mentees to join him on papers and presentations. Dr. Mullen met with each student individually to chart a career trajectory and plan out desired outcomes, including research projects, grant applications, conference submissions, and job applications. He was realistic about his mentorship in terms of his proactive and efficient approach to maximizing his mentoring work, but he was also realistic about the possible and probable trajectory for each student. He did not counsel all of us in the same way but took an individualist approach as he inquired about, and thoughtfully incorporated, each of our familial burdens and obligations, goals for future work, and strengths and weaknesses. For one of us, a postdoctoral position was the best next step after doctoral training. For the other two, tenure-track faculty positions were a better fit. He understood that these professional decisions were not made in a vacuum and helped us consider these questions in the context of our individual needs and life circumstances.

9.1.4 Costs and Resources

Dr. Mullen personally took it upon himself to be abreast of the costs of doctoral education. He evaluated monetized costs like the price of admission to the doctoral program, living expenses for students, and nonmonetary costs including emotional stress and impact on families. For every cost, Dr. Mullen found a resource. If NIMH funding came up short, he would find money from the school to defray admission costs or support conference travel. When a student had to take a leave of absence for several years, he helped her figure out how she could return to the program for 6 months, including making a cross-country move, finding short-term housing, and securing a workspace at the school. He encouraged students to pursue outlets that gave them a sense of emotional well-being. For example, he once supported a student in applying some unused course credits to take a dance

class. His students knew that for any problem they faced in completing their doctoral program, Dr. Mullen would work with them to find a solution.

9.1.5 Valued Outcomes

Incorporating a course as part of a mentoring strategy allowed for built-in mechanisms for evaluation. Every semester, students were asked to complete an evaluation of the course and provide feedback on what mentoring strategies had been successful and what could be improved. This approach was a brilliant way to incorporate preexisting organizational procedures to evaluate mentoring outcomes. Furthermore, Dr. Mullen had to provide an annual report to the NIMH describing key demographics (e.g., race, gender, area of interest) of each mentee, progress of each mentee, and outcomes of the mentorship program. Again, this built-in point of evaluation ensured that Dr. Mullen and an outside group of evaluators at the NIMH were regularly reflecting on the inclusive and representative nature of the training program. This reflection provided the foundation to ensure that any student, regardless of background, could benefit from Dr. Mullen's mentoring approach and doctoral training.

As a standard academic procedure, every doctoral student was assigned to work with a mentor in our doctoral program. Students in the NIMH predoctoral program were assigned to Edward Mullen and all other doctoral students were mentored by the chair of the doctoral program. By teaching courses in the program, Dr. Mullen could witness student development and compare it to that of his fellows. He also received feedback about student outcomes as a member of the doctoral program steering committee. Colleagues who taught seminars on dissertation development would report to him about his fellows' development versus other students. Finally, Dr. Mullen participated in evaluation of both the written component and the oral defense of his students' comprehensive exams, giving his students a third reviewer and offering him the opportunity to be present during and influence the oral defense and guide his students through the process. Dr. Mullen had three systematic points of feedback that allowed him to compare his fellows to other students. The results of this comparison were

undeniable—his fellows had access to more professional resources, networking opportunities, training opportunities, and feedback than any other students. We also benefited from faster graduation rates and by securing tenured positions at top-ranked schools of social work.

9.1.6 Flexibility

Dr. Mullen's flexibility in mentorship is best exemplified by his engagement of colleagues in facilitating his students' progress while allowing them to chart their own course in mental health services research across various career paths. We previously noted that all students in the NIMH fellowship were assigned Dr. Mullen as a mentor. However, Dr. Mullen was clear from the point of entrance into the fellowship that no student is successful with a single mentor. He asked every student to identify their key area of interest and would locate other federally funded colleagues with similar interests. He was exceptionally skilled at convincing his colleagues to work with his students, to our great benefit. He was also exceptionally skilled at placing his students with the most prolific people in their area of interest. This is even more impressive when considering the diverse areas of interest that his students explored under the umbrella of mental health services research. The three authors of this chapter alone focused on such diverse areas as using community-based participatory research to address mental health issues for HIV-positive youth, engaging fathers in their children's mental health treatment, and perinatal and maternal mental health and the cultural adaptations of interpersonal psychotherapy. It seemed as if no topic was off limits or too circumscribed for Dr. Mullen to support and to tap his colleague network for support.

Although engagement of colleagues may have been his greatest strength in terms of flexibility, it was by no means his only one. Dr. Mullen was able to tailor his mentoring style to the individual needs of each of his mentees. He had a unique way of quickly discovering and subscribing to the most appropriate mentoring style with each of his mentees. This is why many of his students may have had markedly different experiences with Dr. Mullen, but all shared the benefit and success of his guidance. Whether taking a

more hands-off approach, a more supportive role, or a more collegial style, Dr. Mullen was able to be flexible with his students, always seeming to know the right time and the right way to encourage individual students to stretch their limits and make the most of the doctoral program and their own abilities to contribute to social work research. Similarly, when it came time for students to launch their careers, he was able to connect them to almost any school or organization for which they wanted to work. He encouraged his students to search nationally to increase their options while also expanding their lens of potential employers to include prestigious postdoctoral fellowships, think tanks, policy organizations, and federal agencies.

9.1.7 Transparency

Perhaps the most unique element of Dr. Mullen's mentorship is that he found a way to translate it into a federally funded project. By doing so, he ensured that his methods were reviewed by experts in the fields of mental health services research, scholarly training, and mentorship. In essence, by sharing his approaches in a much more transparent manner than is often the case for doctoral-level mentoring, his mentoring program benefited from the review and feedback of scholars within and outside of the profession and within and outside of the Columbia University School of Social Work. It also meant that he had to regularly track the program's progress, share those findings, and integrate feedback and critiques on an ongoing basis. He could not cover up or dilute poor outcomes, but rather had to acknowledge challenges and incorporate possible improvements. More so than any other scientific endeavor, this requires exceptional levels of honesty and transparency, because a student's failure easily can be attributed to the mentor's shortcomings. His ability to translate his mentorship approach to multiple early career scholars and have similar successful outcomes was far more likely because of his methodical, scientifically supported, reflective, and flexible form of mentorship.

9.2 Conclusion

Edward Mullen can be directly linked to the successful careers of dozens of students he mentored during the course of his career and indirectly linked to the students they have mentored by adopting his techniques and strategies. His success in mentorship mirrors his success in scholarship. In both endeavors, Dr. Mullen focused on innovation, scientific rigor, adaptation, and practicality. He is a lifelong mentor to his students, who continue to collaborate with him as their careers progress. We have continued to call on him for career advice, help with tenure preparation, and planning for our next scientific inquiry. Although we celebrate one of the most illustrious people in our field, we are also saddened by the fact that fewer students will have access to his formal mentorship. However, by imparting to us a method of mentorship that we can disseminate ourselves and clear principles for continuing to evaluate and adapt our approach to mentoring, we hope to continue his legacy of producing the finest social work scholars.

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10. Mullen Responds

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Abstract

In this chapter I provide responses to comments made by the contributors to this volume. These authors have provided critical cross-national commentaries on contemporary issues that my past work has touched on. My responses are organized by key topics discussed by the authors. These issues pertain to evidence-based practice (EBP) including: (a) social work's journey toward EBP; (b) whether there is evidence of social work intervention effectiveness; (c) meanings of EBP across cultures; (d) what should be done when there is a shortage of evidence; (e) whether a conflict exists between practice research and EBP; (f) the gap between academic research and the needs of social work providers; and (g) social work expertise and the crisis of modernity. Prior to discussing these EBP topics, I comment on the role of mentorship in social work education.

10.1 Introduction

Haluk Soydan and the individual chapter authors are to be commended for undertaking this project, which is a critical examination of major developments in social work practice research spanning more than half a century (1962–2015). Each of the scholars contributing to this book has had a distinguished career in social work research and as a group they provide perspectives from a range of European countries and the United States. Their individual perspectives and philosophies are markedly different from one another and these chapters present a diversity of contemporary perspectives on social work research. Each author has considered an aspect of social work research found in one or more of my publications and related it to

contemporary developments, issues, and even controversies in their respective countries or regions.

I am most honored by the contributors for their essays addressing my work, especially their focus on the development of evidence-based practice (EBP). I express appreciation to Haluk Soydan for marshaling this project through from the beginning and for serving as editor. I am aware that the volume has not been conceptualized as a mere *festschrift*, but rather as a critical cross-national commentary on contemporary issues that in one way or another my past work has touched on and hopefully contributed to in some measure. Indeed, the chapters in this volume make important contributions to the literature in diverse ways.

I have organized my response by key topics discussed by the contributing authors. For the most part, these topics pertain to EBP. Prior to discussing EBP, however, I comment on the fundamentally important topic of mentorship in social work education.

10.2 Mentorship

Traube, Bellamy, and Bledsoe (2015) make a significant and fundamental contribution by calling attention to the importance of mentorship in shaping the next generation of social work scholars. Beyond their shining a light on the importance of mentorship in shaping future scholars, Traube, Bellamy, and Bledsoe provide an innovative conceptual framework and case examples in which they identify key elements of effective mentorship, drawing on the pragmatic controlled trial (PCT) framework of Glasgow and Steiner (2012). They write: "Although the PCT framework was designed to produce evidence for practice and policy decision making, this framework has elements that mirror the production of mentorship knowledge and successful mentees" (p. 114). As they note, the PCT framework is organized around seven elements: (a) practicality; (b) participation and representativeness; (c) realistic interventions; (d) attention to costs and resources; (e) respect for and

responsiveness to stakeholder-valued outcomes; (f) flexibility; and (g) transparency.

They further observe that "mentorship is an essential component of knowledge translation in academia, yet it is a challenging activity to execute with success and not often explicitly taught to aspiring social work scholars" (p. 114). Traube, Bellamy, and Bledsoe's call for attending to how mentorship should be conceptualized and cultivated in social work education is on target.

As Traube, Bellamy, and Bledsoe have so correctly stated, mentorship is an understudied and underappreciated aspect of social work education that can have significant and long-lasting effects on the future shape of social work practice and education.[1] Indeed, it is likely that many of the EBP implementation problems cited by contributors to this volume can be traced, at least partially, to how social work practitioners have been educated and mentored in social work educational programs.

10.3 Contemporary Issues Pertaining to Evidence-Based Policy and Practice

In my subsequent comments I address contemporary issues raised by contributors to this volume pertaining to EBP. These issues include: (a) social work's journey toward evidence-based practice; (b) whether there is evidence of social work intervention effectiveness; (c) meanings of EBP across cultures; (d) what should be done when there is a shortage of evidence; (e) whether a conflict exists between practice research and EBP; (f) the gap between academic research and the needs of social work providers; and (g) social work expertise and the crisis of modernity.

1 The importance of mentorship in social work education may be especially salient for racial and ethnic minorities. Mentorship was found to be one of two key strategies used in social work education to retain students from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds (Mullen et al., 1993).

a. Social Work's Journey toward Evidence-Based Practice

Haluk Soydan (2015) paints a broad picture of social work practice research as represented in my publications. He provides an insightful and detailed description of social work's history pertaining to evaluation research examining intervention outcomes, which he correctly asserts ultimately led to the development of evidence-based practice. He is the first to describe parallels in the development of the foundations in evidence-based health care and evidence-based social work when he writes:

> In 1972, Edward Mullen, then a professor of social work at the University of Chicago, and James Dumpson published a book that to me served as a forerunner to evidence-based social work practice. The book, titled *Evaluation of Social Intervention*, is a collection of the contributions of 13 intervention studies presented at a national conference on the subject. … Archie Cochrane's pivotal book, *Effectiveness and Efficiency: Random Reflections on Health Services*, was also published in 1972 and the first Cochrane Center (in Oxford) was established in October 1992 (two decades after Cochrane's book). *Evidence-Based Medicine: How to Practice and Teach EBM*, the publication in which David Sackett, W. Scott Richardson, William Rosenberg, and R. Brian Haynes introduced the concept of evidence-based medicine as a process, was published in 1997. So perhaps social work was not so much behind medicine in observing the need to base its practices on strong scientific evidence. In fact, these were two contemporary, parallel, and emerging insights and ideas—each on one side of the Atlantic, unknown or not organically connected to each other—that would later be associated with medicine and social work. (p. 79)

Soydan makes the valuable observation that although EBP began as an outgrowth of concerns about intervention effectiveness in health care and social work, EBP has become a professional culture, an idea that he and Palinkas recently described (Soydan & Palinkas, 2014). Accordingly he writes: "Mullen and Dumpson's (1972) book and the Cochrane (1972) book would become beacons for the development of a new professional culture" (p. 81).

Soydan concludes his essay by highlighting recent efforts to reexamine and perhaps broaden the idea of evidence as used in social work EBP. This is timely and a call that is voiced by Mäntysaari, Lorenz, and other contributors to this volume. Like Mäntysaari and Lorenz, Soydan raises questions about how the idea of evidence has been conceptualized in social work EBP, with particular reference to systematic reviews such as those conducted by reviewers associated with the Cochrane and Campbell collaborations. He calls attention to the need to further develop the idea of evidence.

b. Is There Evidence of Social Work Intervention Effectiveness?

Soydan correctly observes that although early studies of social work intervention effectiveness were bleak, stunning progress has been made in the four subsequent decades as reported in recent publications such as that of Mullen and Shuluk (2011). He makes the important point that the generally reported positive outcomes of social work interventions provide evidence of both common and specific factors as causes of these impressive outcomes, citing Mullen, Shuluk, and Soydan (2011). This is an important observation because, as William Reid has noted, EBP's viability and utility is largely dependent on the assumption that alternative interventions with demonstrated specific effects are available for use by practitioners (Reid, Kenaley, & Colvin, 2004).

Nevertheless, some scholars continue to interpret the available evidence as suggesting that social work interventions are effective due largely, if not solely, to common relationship factors. For example, Otto, Polutta, and Ziegler (2009) stated that when it comes to the question of what works in social work, the evidence indicates that outcomes are explained by relationship characteristics such as alliance and emotional involvement of the client rather than programs or technologies (see p. 246, footnote 2). This view is shared by other European social work scholars such as Bergmark and Lundström, who have drawn inferences about social work effectiveness from psychotherapy research. Bergmark and Lundström (2011) argued that the evidence

concerning psychotherapy outcomes indicates that such outcomes are largely due to common factors such as relationship qualities.

I have addressed this question elsewhere and shown that this is a misreading of the current evidence about what accounts for social work intervention outcomes (Mullen, 2014). This misreading is based on a logical error involving mixing levels of discourse. Although some social workers engage in psychotherapy, many do not. From a global perspective, it seems fair to say that most social work practitioners provide some form of service other than psychotherapy at the direct service level, and many engage in group, community, administrative, and policy practice. Accordingly, social work is not reducible to psychotherapy, so it is not logically appropriate to take evidence about psychotherapy outcomes and apply it to the broad scope of social work practice.

In addition to this logical error, there also has been a misreading of the available evidence regarding psychotherapy outcomes. My reading of the evidence along with the conclusions of Soydan and Shuluk indicate that both social work interventions and psychotherapy interventions often have specific effects beyond those that may be due to common relationship factors (Mullen, 2014; Mullen et al., 2011).

c. Meanings of EBP across Cultures

Because the contributors to this volume are citizens of many countries, a reading of their respective contributions provides an interesting set of contrasts about how EBP is defined, viewed, and implemented from a cross-national perspective. Karen Tengvald (2015) describes the development of EBP in Sweden and Mikko Mäntysaari (2015) comments on the Finnish context (discussed subsequently). Inge Bryderup (2015) describes how EBP ideas have influenced Danish social policy and social work research, with special attention to the trade union for Danish social pedagogues and practitioners. She presents a vivid description of how various constituencies understand and define evidence-based practice and research. She concludes

that EBP has not had a significant impact on social work practice and research in Denmark, and furthermore it has sparked a debate in the Danish social pedagogue community that seems to concern the heart of that profession's identity in Danish society.

> Thus, the debate between the trade union [for social pedagogues] and the practitioners can be seen as a struggle to define the social pedagogical profession and the extent to which evidence-based practice should be used in relation to social pedagogical practice. Evidence-based practice is understood as intrusive, whereas knowledge in a broader sense is seen as more appropriate for the development of social pedagogical work. There is also more indirect talk about resistance against the evidence hierarchy of knowledge as a strategy to research outcomes and the effects of interventions. (pp. 41–42)

These concerns about the impact of EBP on professional identity and the emphasis on quantitative methods and hierarchical views of evidence as contrasted with qualitative approaches to knowledge are of concern to several of the contributors to this volume, notably Mikko Mäntysaari and Walter Lorenz—concerns that I subsequently address.

It is noteworthy that EBP in Denmark as described by Bryderup is equated with evidence-based programs rather than the process of evidence-based decision making. I wonder how Danish social pedagogues and other relevant constituencies would respond if the emphasis were to be placed on viewing EBP as a decision-making process as described by Bruce Thyer in this volume, which I comment on next.

In contrast to how EBP has been defined and viewed in Denmark (as described by Bryderup) Bruce Thyer (2015) presents a comprehensive description of EBP as applied to social work in the United States. His chapter should be carefully studied by individuals wishing to understand what is meant by EBP and those who are skeptics. Frequently encountered criticisms of EBP are that it is mechanistic and overly prescriptive; depreciates practitioner expertise and relationship factors; ignores client values and

preferences; promotes a cookbook approach to social work practice; is basically a cost-cutting tool; and is an ivory tower concept of little practice value (Mullen & Streiner, 2004; Straus & McAlister, 2000). A reading of Thyer's description of EBP shows how these criticisms of EBP result from misunderstandings.

As Bryderup's (2015) description of EBP in Denmark illustrates, EBP as a process is often equated with specific interventions that have been validated through research (e.g., evidence-based practices, evidence-based programs, evidence-based interventions, research-supported or tested treatments, empirically or research-informed or tested interventions, best practices, practice guidelines) and that are typically carefully designed and empirically validated manualized interventions developed for use with specific populations and specific types of problems. Thyer takes exception to this view, arguing that EBP and research-supported treatments are not equivalent, writing: "EBP does not consist of simply locating research-supported treatments and deciding to apply them to a client. Indeed, this approach is completely antithetical to the original and continuing model of EBP" (p. 101). This is a view I strongly endorse.

In Thyer's view, EBP is not mechanistic and prescriptive but rather rests on practitioner expertise including judgement and relationship skills that enable informed choices among alternatives, taking into account not only research evidence but client values and preferences, resources, and in situ contexts. It is far from a cookbook approach to social work practice because it involves consideration of a great deal of information and many subjective factors specific to each client's situation. EBP is a complex process focused on the client's best interest and as such is hardly a cost-cutting tool. As described by Thyer, EBP is practical and responsive to the needs of everyday practice. I find Thyer's view of EBP most congenial and consistent with my own perspective.

d. What should be Done when there is a Shortage of Evidence?

An additional criticism of EBP is that it leads to nihilism in the absence of evidence from randomized trials. Mikko Mäntysaari (2015) identifies this criticism as an issue and therefore a limitation of EBP. He observes that strong evidence often is not available to guide practitioners as they seek to provide services to their clients. Mäntysaari, writing from his experiences in Finland, examines the question of how to maintain a research-based orientation when evidence of the effectiveness of intervention options is weak or altogether absent, as in the case in his assessment of services provided to Finnish victims of domestic violence. This shortage of evidence can be due to the lack of findings from high-quality studies; the absence of a sufficient number of relevant high-quality studies; or the availability of high-quality studies that are not culturally or demographically relevant. He states that in such circumstances an ethical dilemma is created because social workers must provide services even in the absence of convincing evidence that those services are effective.

This is a concern that is frequently raised about EBP and one that, as Mäntysaari notes, we have examined previously:

> EBP, as the term implies, is predicated on the belief that what we do as professionals should be based on the best available evidence. Generally, the best evidence [concerning the effectiveness of social work interventions] comes from well-designed and -executed randomized controlled trials (RCTs) or, better yet, meta-analyses of a number of RCTs (Egger, Smith, & O'Rourke, 2001). … The question that faces proponents of EBP is whether there are enough high-quality studies so that evidence-based decisions can be made. … [In fact, studies have shown] there are still many decisions that are made that are not based on good evidence. (Mullen & Streiner, 2004, pp. 114–115)

Thyer (2015) addresses this issue when he writes:

> Contrary to common misconceptions, the ability to undertake EBP does not depend on the existence of a large body of randomized experimental outcome studies in the client's problem area. On the contrary, EBP seeks out all credible sources of useful information, which of course includes randomized controlled trials (RCTs) if available, but also high-quality quasi-experiments, preexperiments, correlational research, qualitative studies (see Saini & Crath, 2015), expert opinions, and relevant theory. If recent high-quality meta-analyses or systematic reviews are available, these are often given preferential status because of their ability to better control for bias in conclusions. However there is always evidence that a practitioner can critically review, hence the process of carrying out EBP is always possible, even if the evidence is of low quality. (p. 102)

Mäntysaari calls for a reexamination of the idea of evidence so as to address this ethical and practical concern (Lorenz also reinforces this point in his chapter). Mäntysaari questions the relevance to social work of limiting the meaning of high-quality evidence to findings derived from RCTs and suggests that other types of evidence should be considered, including what Max Weber referred to as *verstehen*. He writes:

> In social work there is always an interplay between rational, goal-oriented action (in Weberian terms, *Zweckrationale Handlung*) and emotional understanding, which can also generate evidential knowledge, although it is much more difficult to generalize and describe to others. The key word for Weber is *verstehen*, or understanding the meaning of action, and this is needed even when we use rational inference to determine whether some piece of research knowledge can be considered as evidence. (p. 74)

Drawing on Weber's views, Mäntysaari concludes with a thought-provoking observation that represents his answer to the ethical dilemma identified at the outset of his chapter.

> I think that many of the actions of professional social workers are based on an understanding of the meaning of social actions, which is the only way to act in

> response to Chancen in the Weberian sense of the term—to act socially is to follow up on leads and hints that make it possible to understand social actions.
>
> If Weber's idea about social action is valid, there may never be enough evidence to support airtight decision making about care. The professional cannot avoid taking chances. Evidence-based practice can never guarantee certainty, but it can limit the amount of uncertainty. (p. 75)

Lorenz addresses this idea in his chapter as well, which I discuss subsequently. I am in basic agreement with Mäntysaari's (and Lorenz's) position that the concept of evidence in the context of social work effectiveness questions needs to be reexamined. His critical analysis as well as Lorenz's is a contribution to that dialogue. In addition, their emphases on the uncertainties of EBP decision making are critical observations. Individuals seeking certainty when making social work intervention decisions will not find that certainty in EBP, for as Mäntysaari concludes, EBP can be considered a rational process for making decisions in the face of uncertainties, in situations wherein certainty is not attainable. And as he concludes, EBP can never guarantee certainty but it can limit the amount of uncertainty.

e. Practice Research and EBP: Is there a Conflict?

Mike Fisher and Peter Marsh (2015) note that my work has focused primarily on social work practice research and that in that context I have championed the importance of practitioner–researcher collaboration, as well as the notion that such research should be relevant to the needs of agency-based practitioners.

Their observations caused me to reflect on how I came to this position. I can now trace the origins of this emphasis to my exposure to mentors during my doctoral studies at Columbia University in New York. At the time (1964), it was widely believed that social work faculty members and researchers should be experienced social work practitioners. It was held that only experienced practitioners could be sufficiently familiar with the realities and nuances of practice so as to have the sensitivity and insight needed to conduct relevant

research and teach social work practice. Accordingly, with few exceptions, social work doctoral programs only admitted students who had completed a master's degree in social work and had a minimum of three years of supervised practice experience. Furthermore, it was held by many individuals that practice researchers and teachers of social work practice should continue to practice social work so as to stay relevant in their research and teaching. This view of practice research was clearly reflected in the most influential social work practice textbook at that time:

> Casework today has two great needs. One is for the development of greater skill among practitioners in using all that is already well established in casework theory. … The other is for research into problems of casework practice, carried on by investigators who are skilled in research methodology, grounded in casework content, theory and practice, and thoroughly cognizant of the nature of the problems and treatment methods they seek to study. … If the art of casework is to be passed on in schools of social work course content must be the product of seasoned, first-hand knowledge … teachers must find ways to continue to engage in casework practice. (Hollis, 1964, pp. 269–270)

This view no longer seems to hold sway in American schools of social work, and an increasing number of doctoral program graduates, researchers, and faculty members no longer have a lengthy amount of practice experience nor do they typically continue to engage in practice. Rather, given the demands emanating from practice, research, and faculty roles, it is now common to abandon this all-in-one expectation and look to other ways that practice research and practice teaching can be relevant and grounded in the realities and requirements of practice, such as through collaborations and partnerships between practitioners and researchers and through university and social agency collaborative efforts.

Fisher and Marsh (2015) describe current work in this area and provide a clear example of one such effort to build research from practice, family group conferences, in which "the research has originated in practice innovation (rather than arising from researchers), a process characterized as enquiring

social work practice"(p. 47). Their chapter is an exemplar of forward thinking regarding how practice and research collaboration can be achieved given contemporary conditions.

Fisher and Marsh raise a troubling issue about how some EBP advocates appear to "remain unconvinced of the need to engage directly with practice to develop knowledge" (p. 47). They state: "In particular, these advocates misrepresent the work because they fail to understand the model [i.e., enquiring social work practice], what makes it work, and why it matters" (p. 47). They call for research that emanates from practice and that engages practitioners, clients, and researchers in the formulation and conduct of research and the use of findings. This strikes me as a most sensible suggestion and one that I have long advocated.

Fisher and Marsh correctly identify a potential conflict between some versions of EBP and the vision of practice research that they put forth. I believe this potential conflict can be avoided by separating EBP as a process from the issue of how research for use in that process is generated. As described by Thyer (2015), EBP should be conceptualized as an umbrella framework that is designed to facilitate collaborative decision making involving, first and foremost, clients together with informed practitioners and that takes into account not only the best available research evidence but also client preferences, values, and circumstances and available resources, constraints, and organizational contexts. In this form of EBP, practitioner expertise and experience are considered valuable resources made available to the client system. I see no conflict with the vision of practice research put forth by Fisher and Marsh and this conceptualization of EBP as a collaborative decision-making process.

I see their concerns as more relevant to the way in which research for practice is generated. Whatever process is used to generate and disseminate practice research findings for use in EBP, that process must ensure not only validity of findings but also relevance for use in practice decision making. As Fisher and Marsh note, as do Tengvald and others in this volume, research that is not

practice relevant will be of little help to clients and practitioners engaged in the process of EBP.

f. Gap between Academic Research and Needs of Social Work Providers

Karin Tengvald (2015) makes a significant contribution to this volume by describing the Swedish context and identifying a key issue, namely the gap that sometimes occurs between the academy and the needs of social work providers. Tengvald notes that just as in the United States, Sweden also experienced a period beginning in the 1970s during which critical concern was raised about the effectiveness of Swedish social work practice and the shortage of scientifically validated knowledge needed to support Swedish social services. She notes that in 1982 this led to "a profound modernization of the social services legislation" (p. 94) and a call for increased research and evaluation.

Tengvald further reports that in the mid-1990s, under the pressure of cost-effectiveness requirements, concern again was raised about the lack of information about the outcomes of social work services. The Swedish Centre for Evaluation of Social Services and its successor, the Institute for Evidence-Based Social Work Practice, both affiliated with the Swedish National Board of Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen), responded to this call by becoming major producers of needs-based social work research and evaluation so now Tengvald (2015) is able to report that "the situation is slowly changing. Relevant research is gradually expanding and social services managers are showing increasing interest in implementing evidence-based practice and interventions (Socialstyrelsen, 2013)" (p. 96).

Tengvald reports that these concerns also led to the expansion of social work education programs at all Swedish universities. However, Tengvald sees a significant gap between the needs of social work managers and practitioners for knowledge about effective social work practices and the orientation of social work educational programs, which she reports have little interest in research that would address these needs—that is, applied, needs-based

research of direct relevance to social work practice—and are especially uninterested in quantitative, outcomes-oriented evaluation research. For the most part, Tengvald states, it seems that these social work programs are not interested in educating their students to appreciate or be prepared to engage in practices that are evidence based. She writes:

> It is therefore not surprising that the peer reviewers responsible for the latest national evaluation of all Swedish social work bachelor's and master's programs straightforwardly concluded that social work training programs did not contain teaching and training based on concepts that integrate scientific knowledge and social work practice, e.g., evidence-based practice (Högskoleverket, 2009). (p. 96)

If this is true, serious concerns for the future of effective and relevant social work practice in Sweden must be raised. It would seem that there is a major challenge ahead for Swedish social work education and practice, namely, if practice-relevant, needs-based research and outcomes-oriented evaluation research are not to be conducted in the universities and students are not to be trained in these methods by their instructors and mentors, then how will such knowledge be generated?

Sweden has a history of conducting social work research through the Swedish Centre for Evaluation of Social Services and the Institute for Evidence-Based Social Work Practice. Now that these social work research entities no longer exist, a gap appears to have developed between the knowledge needs of practitioners in municipalities and how those needs will be met. Furthermore, although there are impressive efforts to conduct systematic reviews of outcome studies pertaining to social work in Sweden (and in Denmark, Norway, and the United Kingdom), much of the outcomes research included in those reviews has been conducted in other countries with different forms of service systems and different cultures. Accordingly, there is a need for research that examines the relevance of this research to the Swedish context and for additional research to focus on the unique problems faced by Swedish social workers.

Although Tengvald describes the Swedish context, in my view several other European countries share similar circumstances pertaining to the gap between social work educational programs and provider needs. This gap is reflective of differing academic views about the value and relevance of EBP, the function of social work in society, the relationship between the academy and service providers, and national policies pertaining to EBP and resource allocation.

g. Social Work Expertise and the Crisis of Modernity

Walter Lorenz's (2015) essay critically examines the broad political, cultural, historical, and social context in which the social work profession's consideration of EBP must be embedded. He presents an insightful analysis of how the crisis of modernity has shaped contemporary social work, observing:

> Social work as a product of modernity shares in the fundamental ambiguity of the principles that gave rise to the development of modern societies: the emphasis on individual autonomy and freedom as a means of breaking free from imposed obligations and constraints on one hand and the demand for universal equality in recognition of the mutual dependence in organic solidarity on the other. (p. 9)

Lorenz warns that:

> In the current political climate, resonating in popular culture, which privileges individual autonomy over principles of equality, the social work profession is in danger of becoming polarized between a predominance of control functions in interventions concerning the public sphere and the relegation of care functions to the private sphere. (p. 9)

Lorenz relates this polarization to EBP when he writes:

> This split is also affecting the production of knowledge for social work practice, in which on one hand positivist approaches to research are receiving heightened attention and seek to satisfy the demand for the achievement of predetermined goals of intervention within the framework of evidence-based practice, whereas on the other expert systems are being challenged by the articulation of knowledge

> based primarily on direct experience and hence expressed in self-help and user-led approaches to services. (p. 9)

Lorenz proposes that this polarization, emanating from the crisis of modernity, must be addressed "to allow social work to return to its essential mandate under current political and cultural conditions, which is to contribute to the existence of social conditions of human existence in modernity" (pp. 9–10).

Previously, Lorenz (2007) cautioned the profession when he observed that European social work is now in its third wave as it moves toward adopting functionalist EBP:

> The third wave is currently reaching most countries with established social service structures. It occurs in the context of responses to the so-called crisis of the welfare state, the alleged unsustainability of those very achievements of the postwar consensus which had secured economic success and social stability in western Europe. It draws social workers into the ambit of neoliberal social policies which are concerned with creating market-like conditions in public service areas and organizing services according to standards of cost-effectiveness. Here the ahistorical emphasis on activating clients to construct their own life projects … is aided by an objectifying, quantifying view of social problems that can then be resolved with managerial procedures. The benchmark criteria according to which clients are being given standardized services are frequently derived from functionalist notions of evidence-based practice and make scant reference to cultural values and historical continuities (Parton, 2004; Trinder and Reynolds, 2000; Webb, 2001). (pp. 606–607)

In Europe, this functionalist view of EBP is seen as raising issues about managerialism, quantification of social problems, and standardization of practice. Lorenz (2007) stated the need for caution.

> At this point, when we witness the advance of management and coaching models in social work, more than our professional identity and standing is at stake. Withdrawal to a position of value neutrality, to technical detachment, has to be regarded with extreme caution in the light of the misuse once made of social work

> in the period of national socialism in Germany (Lorenz, 1994; Sunker and Otto, 1997). (pp. 600–601)

Europe's history with totalitarian regimes has left many Europeans with skepticism about any social work proposal that smacks of authoritarianism. Lorenz (2007), citing Fukuyama's thesis of the end of history, expressed such skepticism.

> If the end of history means the victory of a particular way of thinking that eliminates opposition, then the consequences for us today are indeed precarious. This corresponds precisely to the point where many practising social workers experience a sense of powerlessness when faced with prescribed intervention scenarios in which the actual frame of reference leaves no alternatives: economic conditions have to be respected, management criteria prevail, efficiency targets are absolute, procedures have to be adhered to, risks have to be eliminated. At the end of this agenda lies not the perfect society but the totalitarian society. (p. 602)

Given this historical context, I am quite aware that many scholars in Europe seem to reject evidence-based practice outright and see it as fundamentally at odds with social work's mission. Lorenz (2007) wrote:

> Wiping out the historical frame within which a form of social work takes place capable of engaging with issues of identity and culture would mean wiping out the possibility of understanding clients as persons in a hermeneutic sense. It would make social work clinical and functional as a means of turning people into objects through the helping process and losing essential parts of their personhood. This is why the current language of management and efficiency, the preoccupation with rules and procedures, the advance of a positivist evidence-based practice model and the focus on risk reduction are all threats to the central mandate of social work which is not to repair situations of need and deficit but to accompany and assist people in coping with their lives appropriately and competently (Ferguson, 2003). (p. 610)

I believe that these worries about positivist and technologically driven evidence-based practice being a threat to social work's central mandate may

well be based on a view of EBP that most of EBP's contemporary social work advocates would not endorse. Indeed, Lorenz concludes his essay in this volume with a conceptualization of EBP that is largely congruent with more recent descriptions of social work EBP. Commenting on my description of EBP evidence dimensions, Lorenz (2015) writes:

> All these dimensions [EBP evidence domains] are held together by ethical considerations that subject criteria of effectiveness to a critical examination of the wider implications of interventions, which might adversely impinge on the dignity of individuals and their rights. The end must never justify the means—a fascination with technical means of achieving results in modernity has all too often led to … people being treated against their will and their best interest. (p. 27)

I am in agreement with Urban Nothdurfter and Lorenz's (2010) view that the EBP conflict as it is being played out in Europe must be faced and dealt with dialectically. Nothdurfter and Lorenz (2010) suggested that the issues raised by the evidence-based practice philosophy pose a dilemma for the profession.

> As one can recognize easily, there is a fundamental contraposition in the debate about what might be a valid base for good and accountable practice, mainly between those who promote approaches of evidence based practice and those who criticize them. The argument sustained here in this regard is rather simple, namely that this conflict cannot be resolved or overcome, but that social work has to face it and to deal with it dialectically. (p. 47)

I am in further agreement with Lorenz's optimistic concluding observation when he writes: "The debate on evidence in social work is an opportunity to affirm this profession's ethical commitment, professional competence, and critical political competence" (p. 27).

10.4 Coda

The European contributors to this volume have uniformly identified significant issues pertaining to the acceptance and implementation of EBP in their respective countries. Because EBP in social work has now been considered and debated in much of the English-speaking world and in many European countries since the turn of the century, the striking variance across countries in acceptance and implementation requires an explanation. It strikes me that there are two major explanatory drivers that facilitate or impede acceptance and implementation across countries. I believe it reasonable to assert that the two key determinants of the form social work practice will take in the future are: (a) the vision, values, knowledge, and skills imparted to students through faculty instruction and mentorship; and (b) macro-level public sector policies that largely determine the character of the organizations and social service systems employing social work practitioners. In the case of EBP, graduates of social work educational programs that prepare their students to be evidence-based practitioners by providing training in the development of critical reasoning and research assessment skills through instruction and mentorship, when employed by organizations and service systems that have been incentivized by public policies to be providers of evidence-based services, will likely implement evidence-based practice and research-tested interventions. Conversely, graduates of educational programs that reject or ignore the teaching of EBP in instruction and especially in mentorship or who are subsequently employed by organizations or service systems not exposed to public policies that incentivize and provide resources for EBP are not likely to provide evidence-based services to their clients. Increasingly, these two facilitators are becoming more common in some countries such as the United States and the United Kingdom. It seems that in many European countries, the second condition is increasingly present, namely macro-level public sector policies that incentivize or at least encourage EBP, whereas the first condition is largely absent, namely instruction and mentoring in EBP in European schools of social work. Without strong and consistent support among academic social workers, it is likely that EBP will face an uncertain future in European social work practice.

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Research and Publications of Edward J. Mullen

1. Biographical Summary

Edward J. Mullen is the Willma and Albert Musher Professor Emeritus, Columbia University, where he was a professor (1987–1995), the Willma and Albert Musher Professor (1995–2011), and associate dean (1987–1992). He was a professor at the University of Chicago (1976–1987) and Fordham University (1967–1976) and a visiting professor at Case Western Reserve University (1975–1976). He has directed research programs including the Community Service Society of New York's Institute of Welfare Research (1969–1973), the Center for the Study of Social Work Practice (CSSWP) at Columbia University (1992–2002), and Columbia University's Musher Program (1995–2011). He was the principal investigator of the National Institute of Mental Health-funded National Research Service Award doctoral training programs in mental health services research at Columbia University (1989–2007) and University of Chicago (doctoral and postdoctoral, 1984–1989).

He is a founder of the International Network of Social Work Research Centers; editor-in-chief of Oxford University Press's *Oxford Bibliographies: Social Work*; and a member of Northwestern University's interdisciplinary Council for Training in Evidence-based Practice. For more than 50 years, his research and publications have examined mental health, process and outcomes, using research to enhance social work policy and practice, and evidence-based policy and practice (EBP).

Mullen received a bachelor of arts in philosophy (cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa, Delta Epsilon Sigma, 1960) and a master of social work (1962) from Catholic University of America; a doctor of social welfare (1968) from Columbia University School of Social Work; and a doctor of philosophy (2011) from Columbia University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. In 2011, he was among the first group of scholars inducted as a fellow of the honorific American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare.

2. Research and Publication Topical Areas

Mullen's research began in 1961 with his master's degree thesis, conducted on the campus of the National Institute of Mental Health, Clinical Psychopharmacology Research Center, where he served as a social science analyst. This research examined the psychosocial functioning of families of individuals with a schizophrenia diagnosis. From 1962 to 1964, he continued his clinical research as a psychiatric social worker employed by the National Institute of Mental Health, Clinical Neuropharmacology Research Center, St. Elizabeth's Hospital, Washington, DC.

2.1 Process and Outcomes of Social Work Interventions

Since 1967, Mullen's research and publications have focused on questions about the process and outcomes of social work interventions.

2.1.1 Social Casework Process

His dissertation research conducted at Columbia University School of Social Work and the Community Service Society of New York examined the communication processes of social caseworkers providing family counseling services. This research examined a wide range of hypotheses about the relationships between psychosocial diagnoses and treatment processes derived from diagnostic psychosocial casework theory. This research was reported in his dissertation and published in three articles that were also published in combination as a monograph (Mullen, 1968a, 1968b, 1969a, 1969b).

In these publications, Mullen provided an empirical description of the social casework counseling process, detailing the communication treatment procedures used by experienced practitioners. He also found that core procedures used by practitioners were not influenced by theoretical prescriptions but rather were largely a matter of individual practitioner style. Accordingly, what treatment clients received was strongly determined by which practitioner the client happened to see.

2.1.2 Outcomes of Social Work Interventions

Mullen was the principal investigator of the one of the first field experiments designed to examine the effectiveness of social casework interventions to prevent chronic economic and psychosocial dependence for families living in poverty in New York City during the late 1960s. The intervention was composed of a partnership between the city's largest voluntary social agency, the Community Service Society of New York, and the New York City Department of Social Welfare. The major hypotheses that such intervention would prevent chronic dependence were not supported (Mullen, Chazin, & Feldstein, 1970, 1972). The findings received national attention, contributing to the convening of a national workshop of social work educators and researchers to deliberate about the implications of this study's findings and those of other field experiments conducted in the United States, Canada, and Denmark (15 studies in total) that had been reported during the 1960s. The papers from this workshop, paired with a narrative systematic review of these studies, were published together (Mullen & Dumpson, 1972).

These findings contributed to the Community Service Society of New York's shift from an agency whose primary services were individualized social casework for families to a new community-based service strategy targeted to New York City's poorest and most depressed geographical areas. This shift was partially influenced by several additional studies conducted by Mullen when he was director of the Community Service Society's Institute of Welfare Research (Community Service Society of New York, 1970a, 1970b).

The outcomes of social work interventions were examined by Mullen in additional publications during the subsequent decade (Fischer & Mullen, 1979; Mullen, 1972, 1973, 1976b, 1977, 1983c).

Although outcomes research of the 1960s and 1970s was primarily driven by social work professional interests in demonstrating effectiveness and developing more effective interventions for use by social work professionals, in the 1990s outcomes measurement in the United States was driven by a national emphasis on accountability in health and human services. Many

federal and state programs had moved to require outcomes measurement for publicly funded programs. These new requirements affected social work and there was growing concern about how social agencies and programs could respond to these new requirements. Stimulated by these concerns, in 1995, Mullen as director of the CSSWP organized a national symposium on outcomes measurement in the human services. This symposium brought together leading figures from a range of disciplines concerned with outcomes measurement issues. The symposium formed the basis of a coedited book (Mullen & Magnabosco, 1997). Mullen's subsequent publications further examined aspects of outcomes measurement (Mullen, 2002a, 2004c, 2004d, 2006a; Mullen & Shuluk, 2011; Mullen, Shuluk, & Soydan, 2011; Mullen, Shuluk, & Soydan, 2012).

In the 2010s, a new emphasis on comparative effectiveness research led Mullen to examine how comparative effectiveness research might be adapted to social work (Mullen, 2014a).

Mullen's most influential publications that examined the outcomes of social work intervention are:

- Mullen, Chazin, and Feldstein (1972)
  - This article reported the findings of one of the first field experiments examining the outcomes of social casework intervention. The effects of intervention were found to be largely insignificant.
- Mullen and Dumpson (1972)
  - This book examined the outcomes of 15 field experiments that explored the outcomes of social work interventions, including social casework, social group work, and community organization. Implications for redesigning social work intervention, social research methods, and social work educational programs were detailed by leading scholars.
- Mullen and Magnabosco (1997)
  - In this book, Mullen and Magnabosco described the history of outcomes measurement and provided recommendations for how to improve outcomes measurement methodology. This book included

chapters by leading scholars examining outcomes measurement in various fields of practice.

- Mullen and Shuluk (2011)
  - This article described the findings of systematic reviews, including meta-analyses, that examined social work intervention outcomes. The findings indicated that in general, social work interventions have been found to be effective and that comparative effectiveness research is needed to contrast two or more effective interventions so as to specify relative effectiveness and efficiency.

2.2 Using Research to Enhance Social Work Policy and Practice

Because outcomes research reported in the 1960s and early 1970s indicated that social work interventions were often ineffective and at times harmful, some social workers turned their attention to developing strategies to enhance the use of scientific research evidence by social agencies and individual practitioners. This turn was based on the assumption that too often social interventions were developed or selected without attending to scientific research evidence supporting their effectiveness. It was further assumed that if strategies could be developed and implemented to enhance greater use of and attention to scientific research evidence, then intervention outcomes would be enhanced. Mullen developed one such strategy, which he termed personal practice modeling (Mullen, 1978).

Another broad strategy advocated since the early 1990s is creating and sustaining practitioner and researcher partnerships in the conduct and use of practice- and policy-relevant research. This strategy is based on the assumption that practice research conducted by scientists without direct involvement of those responsible for providing services or developing policies risks irrelevance. From 1992 to 2002, Mullen was the director of a research center (CSWPP) that sought to bring practitioners and researchers together in partnerships to conduct practice-relevant research. In that capacity, he oversaw a wide range of studies conducted in partnerships between researchers and practitioners. Together with faculty member Peg

McCartt Hess under the auspices of the CSSWP, he organized a national symposium on the topic of practitioner and researcher partnerships. That symposium resulted in a coedited book (McCartt Hess & Mullen, 1995). Other publications examined specific aspects of practice and research partnerships and strategies for enhancing the use of research evidence in practice and policy (Mullen, 1993, 1998, 2002a, 2002b, 2006b). This line of research and publication led to Mullen's subsequent interest in EBP.

Mullen's most influential publication examining the use of research to enhance social work intervention is:

- McCartt Hess and Mullen (1995)
  - This book included chapters that examined practitioner and researcher partnerships from theoretical and practical perspectives. Chapters described a wide range of studies conducted by practitioner and researcher partnerships conducted under the auspices of the CSSWP.

2.3 Evidence-Based Policy and Practice

As previously noted, Mullen's work at the University of Chicago in the late 1970s and 1980s resulted in the development of an educational program for teaching graduate social work students a strategy for using research evidence in practice, which he termed personal practice modeling. This strategy emphasized individual practitioner responsibility for critically appraising research finding regarding the outcomes of various interventions and integrating that information into the choice of interventions for specific clients while taking into account client, organizational, and environmental considerations. In medicine in the late 1980s and 1990s, a similar approach was developed called evidence-based medicine. When applied to administrative or policy practice, this approach is called evidence-based health care and evidence-based policy.

Since 2003, Mullen has focused his research and publications on adapting EBP to social work policy and practice with particular attention to

identifying barriers and facilitators for implementation. Much of this work has been in collaboration with researchers in allied health disciplines and social work faculty and practitioners nationally and internationally.

Mullen's most influential publications examining EBP are:

- Mullen and Streiner (2004)
  - Mullen and Steiner as coeditors of a special two-issue series on EBP coauthored this introductory essay that critically examined the arguments for and against EBP from an interdisciplinary perspective. They endorsed the arguments for EBP and proposed solutions to issues raised in the arguments against such practice.
- Satterfield et al. (2009)
  - In this article, Mullen and the members of the Northwestern University Evidence-Based Behavioral Practice Council described an innovative transdisciplinary model of EBP that draws on the strengths of discipline-specific frameworks and minimizes associated weaknesses.
- Mullen (2015)
  - Mullen critically examined the idea of evidence in the context of EBP, drawing from cross-disciplinary and multidisciplinary perspectives. He proposed a reformulation of how evidence should be conceptualized and used in EBP decision making.

2.4 Research Methods

From time to time, Mullen has published papers on specialized research methods and methodological issues including cross-national comparative evaluation research, methodological and epistemological issues, qualitative research methods, expert system methods in social work, research and development design methods, and comparative research methods. (Cheetham, Mullen, Soydan, & Tengvald, 1998; Mullen, 1985, 1994a, 1994b, 1995, 2014b; Mullen & Schuerman, 1990; Schuerman, Mullen, Stagner, & Johnson, 1989).

Mullen's most influential publication pertaining to research methods is:

- Mullen (1985)
  - Mullen summarized substantive ideas contained in the heuristic formulation of social work research as expounded by Martha Heineman Pieper, expanded on methodological problems raised, assessed implications, and identified related issues. Mullen identified the substantive issues that he viewed as pertaining to epistemological assumptions.

2.5 Social Work Education and Curriculum Development

Throughout his academic career, Mullen has conducted research and published papers examining social work educational strategies and methods.

In 1976, Mullen began to formulate a social work practice model that he called personal practice modeling. He developed this practice model while researching and teaching at the University of Chicago between 1976 and 1987. Essentially, his view was that prior research had shown that social work interventions based solely on theory, tradition, and authority, and not supported by research, had been shown to be ineffective and at times even harmful. Accordingly, he believed that a key component of social work education should be to prepare students with critical research appraisal skills and an appreciation for research findings and processes as a guide to practice. Students should be prepared to critically appraise research findings about the effectiveness and outcomes of alternate interventions and to take personal responsibility for shaping their own interventions with clients, monitoring outcomes, and reshaping interventions based on those outcomes. Mullen developed a curriculum for teaching and learning this approach during his years as the University of Chicago, an approach broadly disseminated in a range of publications (Mullen, 1978, 1981, 1983a, 1983b, 1988; Mullen, Bostwick, & Ryg, 1980).

Mullen's seminal publication describing personal practice models is:

- Mullen (1978)
  - In this article, Mullen described a strategy that can be used by social worker practitioners for integrating research findings from outcomes research into their personal practice models. This strategy is now viewed as a forerunner of the EBP process, which became popular in social work during the first decade of the 21st century.

2.6 Other Topics Examined

In the early to mid-1970s, social work education was being offered for the first time at the undergraduate baccalaureate degree level. Accordingly, interest developed in how to link these programs with traditional graduate social work programs and how to accommodate students transferring into baccalaureate degree programs from 2-year community colleges. In 1974, Mullen conducted a national survey examining strategies for linking the newly developed baccalaureate social work educational program with graduate-level programs (Mullen, 1974). In 1976, he conducted research on linkages between social work baccalaureate programs and community college transfer students (Mullen, 1976a). His research also examined strategies for enhancing education for social work administrative practice (Dumpson, Mullen, & First, 1978).

A troubling issue throughout social work education has been the underrepresentation of racial and ethnic minority students in social work educational programs. In 1993, Mullen and colleagues conducted a national survey of schools of social work to identify promising strategies for the recruitment and retention of such minority students in social work educational programs (Mullen et al., 1993).

The following section features a selection of Edward J. Mullen's scholarly publications, including those referenced earlier and other seminal works.

Selected Publications

Bellamy, J. L., Bledsoe, S. E., Fang, L., Manuel, J., & Mullen, E. J. (2012). Addressing the barriers to EBP implementation in social work: Reflections from the BEST Project. In T. L. Rzepnicki, S. G. McCracken, & H. E. Briggs (Eds.), *From task-centered social work to evidence-based and integrative practice: Reflections on history and implementation* (pp. 136–155). Chicago, IL: Lyceum Books.

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