

# 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 at 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.
- Bellamy, J. L., Bledsoe, S. E., & Mullen, E. J. (2009). The cycle of evidence-based practice. In H.-U. Otto, A. Polutta, & H. Ziegler (Eds.), *Evidence-based practice: Modernising the knowledge base of social work?* (pp. 21–29). Leverkusen-Opladen, Germany: Barbara Budrich.
- Bellamy, J. L., Bledsoe, S. E., & Mullen, E. J. (2010). Evidenzbasierte Sozialarbeitspraxis: Konzepte und Probleme der Implementation. In H.-U. Otto, A. Polutta, & H. Ziegler (Eds.), *What Works - Welches Wissen braucht die Soziale Arbeit? Zum Konzept evidenzbasierter Praxis* (pp. 29–62). Opladen, Germany: Barbara Budrich.
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- Dumpson, J. R., Mullen, E. J., & First, R. J. (1978). *Toward education for effective social welfare administrative practice*. New York, NY: Council on Social Work Education.
- Fischer, J., & Mullen, E. J. (1979). *Evaluating the empirical base of clinical practice*. Chicago, IL: University of Illinois at Chicago.
- Manuel, J. I., Mullen, E. J., Fang, L., Bellamy, J. L., & Bledsoe, S. E. (2009). Preparing social work practitioners to use evidence-based practice: A comparison of experiences from an implementation project. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 19, 613–627. doi:10.1177/1049731509335547
- McCartt Hess, M., & Mullen, E. J. (Eds.). (1995). *Practitioner–researcher partnerships: Building knowledge from, in, and for practice*. Washington, DC: NASW Press.
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