Social Work: A Half Century in Perspective[i]

Keynote Presentation for CSSW Alumni Conference "Dealing with Disorder: Micro and Macro Strategies for Coping" May 13, 2016

Edward J Mullen

Contents

I thank the Alumni Conference Planning Committee for inviting me to present this keynote address. The Committee has asked that I comment on major American social welfare and social work developments during the past half-century including comments on themes that will be the subject of breakout sessions later in the day: poverty in America, the American criminal justice

system, and evidence-based practice. I am happy to do so especially since this time frame overlaps with my own social work career which began in 1960.

Introduction

At the macro level during the past half century in America there has been major societal conflict; economic and social upheaval; growing threats to social and economic justice; racial, ethnic, and religious divisions; and, large scale failures of governments to function in the best interest of citizens. Reisch identifies emerging social policy issues including "economic globalization, population migration, demographic and cultural diversity, climate change, terrorism, welfare reform, crises in the financing of entitlements, the privatization of social policy, and the transformation of the welfare state." (Reisch, 2010)(section: "Introductory Works")

At both a global and national level these developments and others have challenged those entrusted with social policy development and implementation. All three branches of the U.S. federal and state governments have responded to these challenges by forming or reforming social policies, or failing to act, which in itself becomes a policy statement.

At the micro level the past half-century has been a time of radical change in American social work. Social workers have been challenged to cope with new social problems emanating from the macro-system dynamics just mentioned, as well as being challenged to cope with old social problems with innovative interventions in new, evolving, technology-rich, client-centered service delivery systems demanding accountability, efficiency, and effectiveness.

I will comment about developments at the macro-policy level, and then move to micro-level developments.

Macro-level Developments: 1960-2016

Social work is fundamentally concerned with basic social welfare values that foster what James R. Dumpson has called a *caring society.* (Carten, 2015) As P. Nelson Reid proposes, in such a caring society there is a moral obligation to bring to fruition social welfare conditions that "--- would provide opportunities for work and human meaning and a reasonable amount of security from want and assault, promote fairness and evaluation based on individual merit, and be economically productive and stable." (Reid, 2011)(section: "Introduction")

Notable progress has been made in the nation's move toward a *caring society* during three periods: the *Progressive Era*; the *New Deal*; and, the *New Frontier/Great Society*.

As Reid notes it was during the *Progressive Era* (circa 1890-1920) that "the bulk of the agenda of social development that dominated the 20th century, from race and gender to public health and slum clearance" was developed. (Reid, 2011) (section: "20th Century Social Development) Most notably it was during this time that the model of *social insurance* as contrasted with *charity* was instituted, albeit at the state rather than national level, including *Mother's Aid* and *Workman's Compensation*. And, it was in the context of the *Great Depression* of the 1930's that *New Deal* programs were crafted. For the first time social insurance was provided at the national level with the passage of the *1935 Social Security Act* which provided for federally administered *entitlements* for the working middle classes and state run *means-tested* benefits for the poor. The *Act* provided for pensions, unemployment insurance, and aid to blind, deaf, disabled, and dependent children. Much of the debate, at least since the mid-

1970's has focused on modification of the provisions of the *1935 Social Security Act* and its

subsequent amendments, especially assaults on provisions for the poor or the so-called *welfare*

class.

The *New Frontier* and *Great Society* of the 1960's moved beyond issues of economic

security attained through defined benefits to attack those structural, societal conditions which

prevented minorities and the poor from full participation in American life. This was a period of

civil rights and social reform, especially at the community level, with an emphasis on creating

opportunities for *maximum feasible participation* of minorities and the poor in policy and

program development as well as implementation. Legislation was passed to combat

discrimination and to foster voting rights for all citizens. The 1960's was a period of relative

prosperity enabling large-scale investments in social programs to enhance opportunity and full-

participation. For social work this was a period of expansion and promise, especially because of

the need for social work personnel who were authorized to provide social services for a wide

range of citizens including those receiving Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)

under the 1962 amendments to the Social Security Act.

To a large extent the last 40 years have witnessed an attack on the social policy

accomplishments of these three eras (i.e. *Progressive Era*, *New Deal*, and *New Frontier/Great*

Society.) For much of this time a social and economic conservative ideology has dominated

American politics fueled by the specter of scarce fiscal resources. This ideology has exalted

"private markets, limited government, supremacy of states over the federal government,

advocacy of lower taxes, and support for cuts on social spending." (Jansson, 2014, p. 476) As

Reid observes this conservative ideology moved the nation: toward work-based and work-

enhancement programs (e.g., *Earned Income Tax Credit* in the 1970s, the *Family Support Act of 1988*, the *Americans with Disabilities Act* and *Welfare Reform* in the mid-1990s); individualism; privatization; and federalism (reassertion of state-level power and the diminishment of central government). (Reid, 2011) (section: 20th Century Social Welfare) And, as Stuart (2014) notes beginning in the late 1970s and especially in the 1980s and 1990s limits to the growth of the welfare state became apparent in the context of increasing energy costs and an economic slowdown. This retrenchment of the welfare state became worldwide the 1990s through the present. (Stuart, 2014) (section: "Introduction")

In his *History of Social Work and Social Welfare: 1980-2014* Michael Reisch describes this period:

Economic globalization and technological developments have fundamentally altered the nation's political economy, the nature of work, and the economic prospects of millions of Americans. The US political system has become increasingly polarized on ideological grounds, and the electoral process has changed as a consequence of the influence of money on politics. Demographic and cultural shifts—particularly the aging of the population, the growth proportion of racial and ethnic minorities in the US population (especially in urban areas), the expansion of women's and LGBT rights, and the increase in the number of children born outside marriage—have created new social problems [challenges]. As distrust of government has become more widespread, market-oriented ideas and values have permeated the culture of nonprofit and public-sector organizations. New unprecedented issues also emerged during this period, such as the HIV/AIDS epidemic, crack cocaine, pervasive and chronic homelessness,

terrorism, and the effects of climate change. The focus of social welfare policy shifted

from the expansion of legal entitlements to concerns over fiscal responsibility and from

the protection of vulnerable populations to an emphasis on work over welfare. The

consequences of the early-21st-century Great Recession [December 2007 - June 2009]

exacerbated long-standing political and social conflicts and created new sources of

tension in US society, particularly over the future of domestic policy. (Reisch, 2015)

(section: "Introduction")

Micro-level Developments: 1960-2016

Social Work's Evolution from Moral Imperatives to Evidence-based Practice

Okpych and Yu (2014) published an account of social work's evolution through three

phases during which intervention was based during a first phase on *moral* imperatives, a

second phase during which intervention was based on *authority*, and the most recent phase

which they refer to as *empirical*. The *empirical* phase, spanning the last half century, is viewed

as encompassing the *empirical practice* movement as well as most recently the *evidence-based*

practice movement.

Moral Phase

The settlement house movement, the Charity Organization Society (COS) movement,

and the Associations for the Improvement of the Conditions of the Poor (AICP) were motivated

by moral imperatives; in the case of settlements to "correct class division and violations of the

American ideal of democracy by --- infusing culture and resources into communities on the

social fringe;" and, in the COS movement, "to prompt a moral transformation within poor

households."(p. 9) The AICP was based on the belief that poverty was due to some moral fault

of the poor and the AICP's aim was to help the "deserving poor" by providing for their moral uplift.

Authority as a Basis for Practice

OKpych and Yu note that as social work matured, morphing into a profession, there was a growing awareness that social work needed to be based on more than a moral imperative. Accordingly, "the mid-1910s through the 1930s was a period of professional instability, and concerted effort was directed toward articulating a unique function and technique. What emerged was a new worldview of and template for social work practice based on authority. The two strategies used to actualize authority-based practice were the formalization of social work practice methods and the importation of psychoanalytic theory." (Okpych & Yu, 2014) (pp. 10-11) Okpych and Yu believe that "the authority-based movement ushered in a mode of practice organized around conceptual appeal, reputation, and endorsement by the professional community." (p. 13)

Empirical Foundations

Beginning in the 1960's developments contributed to a reshaping of social work causing a shift away from *authority-based practice* toward what is now called *evidence-based practice*. First, social work educators expanded the profession's foundation knowledge by importing social science theories and methods. As a consequence, students were increasingly exposed to a wider range of theoretical and disciplinary perspectives with decreasing reliance on psychoanalytic frameworks. Second, the programs fostered by the *New Frontier*, *Great Society* and *War on Poverty* forced social work to compete with other professionals and para-professionals in the delivery of services, and, required social work to stretch its methods

beyond traditional psychoanalytic-based interventions --- to invest in community based

methods and empowerment strategies. And, third social work interventions were put to the

test of *effectiveness*, especially interventions designed to prevent or ameliorate problems of

poverty and delinquency. By the beginning of the 1970's social work practice began a major

transformation. Its knowledge base had been strengthened by the addition of social science

frameworks, yet the profession's relevance and credibility had been brought into question due

to the changing societal context and growing skepticism about the effectiveness of its services.

One response by many in the profession was to call for strengthening the science-base of the

profession. Accordingly, to a considerable extent from 1960 to the present, social work has

been engaged in efforts to strengthen its scientific foundations by collaborating with other

disciplines; by engaging in intervention research designed to build data-based interventions; by

adapting emerging technologies; and by experimenting with ways to productively bridge the so-

called *practice – research gap*. During the last 15 years' social work, together with virtually all of

the helping professions, has been experimenting with a new policy and practice framework

which combines those elements into a single science-based framework, namely, *evidence-

based practice*. Okpych and Yu refer to this phase of professional development as a shift to an

empirical paradigm.

21st Century Challenges

Having outlined some of the more significant macro and micro-level developments

affecting social work during the last half-century, I now turn to current issues and challenges

emerging from those developments that demand social work's foremost attention.[ii] I limit my

comments to three areas which will be the focus of subsequent sessions during this conference: *poverty; criminal justice,* and *evidence-based practice*.

Poverty: A Core Concern of Social Work[iii]

No single social problem is as central to social work as that of poverty.[iv] Yet, as Marcia Meyers observes "---it is difficult not to wonder why, given all the thought, resources, and effort that have gone into the study of poverty, we seem to have made so little progress toward answering the questions of why poverty persists in the United States and, importantly, what we can do about it." (p. 439) She infers that one answer to this question of why so little progress has been made is a lack of a clear and persuasive understanding of the causes of poverty and relevant solutions. Meyers concludes that "successful policy reform efforts need a persuasive intellectual narrative about the nature of the problem and what can be done to solve it." ((Meyers, 2014) (p. 439) I agree with Meyers' observations and, accordingly, I now turn to three questions about poverty in America that I think need clear thinking if there is to be a *persuasive narrative*.

Issues to be addressed:

- How should poverty be conceptualized? As social work's history demonstrates *how poverty is conceptualized* affects choice of interventions. In the 19th century when poverty was considered a moral issue, moral interventions were used to assist the *deserving poor* and coercive measures were used with the *undeserving poor*. During the depression of the 1930s poverty was associated with lack of jobs and loss of income due to widowhood, disability, and old age. Accordingly, federal programs were established to provide income and jobs. In the 1960s

poverty was conceptualized as resulting from a lack of opportunity, exclusion from civic participation and discrimination so a wide range of programs were put in place to expand opportunities, to maximize participation, and to combat discrimination. Michael Harrington's book *The other America: Poverty in the United States* (1962) provided an influential conceptualization of poverty which was an impetus for the *War on Poverty*.

    a. In a noteworthy shift of mission, a founding organization of the social work profession and the Columbia School of Social Work, the Community Service Society of New York conceptualized urban social problems in terms of interconnected clusters of social conditions affecting whole neighborhoods such that urban poverty was redefined as a condition of neighborhoods, especially neighborhoods populated by racial and ethnic minorities with high prevalence of substance abuse and other social problems. Accordingly, in 1972 CSS dropped social casework as an intervention in favor of community level interventions and advocacy focused on urban poverty so defined. This continues to be the CSS strategy 45 years later. (Community Service Society of New York, 1970; Goldberg, 1980)

    b. Currently, there is much discussion of how poverty should be conceptualized and measured. Amartya Sen views poverty as *capability deprivation* such that poverty is not just low income but also involves a lack of basic capabilities to participate fully in society. (Sen, 1999)

c. John Hills, Julian LeGrand, and David Piachaud conceptualize poverty as *social exclusion* which is defined as lack of income, lack of employment, political and community disenfranchisement, and the inability to participate in the activities of everyday life. (Hills, LeGrand, & Piachaud, 2002)

d. And, policy and practice implications flow from whether poverty is viewed as an *absolute* or *relative* condition. Currently, much attention is being given to the growing disparity of income or wealth among social classes which has important social consequences.[v]

For social workers then, how poverty is conceptualized is fundamentally important, **not as an intellectual exercise**, but because alternate views to a large extent will shape policy and practice options selected.

- How can poverty be explained? As Rank notes (2011) explanations have been proposed which point to individual deficiencies as well as the culture that the individual resides in; or, alternatively, as due to the economic, social, and/or political structures of a society.

  a. Individual-level and cultural explanations of poverty have emphasized: the causal role of counterproductive attitudes, behaviors, or motivations that cause poverty; social welfare policy and program disincentives that are believed to reduce motivation and work behavior; the lack of individual human capital; and, culture as a major mechanism that keeps

families in poverty. (Rank, 2011) (section: "Explanations of Poverty;" subsection "Individual and Cultural") Oscar Lewis's *The culture of poverty* was an influential example of the cultural explanation. (Lewis, 1966) Lawrence Mead's *Beyond entitlement: The social obligations of citizenship* (Mead, 1986) invoked the explanation that poverty results from social welfare disincentives. Isabel Sawhill's *The behavioral aspects of poverty* proposes that poverty can be attributed to individual behaviors such as dropping out of school, early childbearing, remaining unmarried, and failure to work full-time. (Sawhill, 2003)

b. Alternately, as Rank notes: "Structural explanations of poverty focus on the economic, social, and/or political structures of a society as major reasons for poverty." In this type of explanation poverty is a consequence not of individual deficiencies but of: the failure of economies to produce sufficient opportunities; deficits in the political and social welfare structures; discrimination; cumulative disadvantages; or the wider societal functions served by the poor. For example, William Julius Wilson describes how political, economic and other structural forces impact impoverished inner-city black neighborhoods. (Wilson, 2008) Herbert Gans, using Robert Merton's *functional analysis* framework, proposes that poverty serves a number of *latent societal functions*, especially for the upper classes, and, accordingly that "phenomena like poverty can be eliminated only when they become

dysfunctional for the affluent or powerful, or when the powerless can obtain enough power to change society." (Gans, 1972)

Of course one's views about the causes of poverty and how one explains the persistence of poverty **in the midst of affluence** are closely intertwined.

- What poverty groups should be the focus of social work interventions? Between 2014 and 2015 the U.S. poverty rate decreased by 1.2% to 13.5% which is the largest annual percentage point drop in poverty since 1999. (United States Census Bureau, 2016) However, this decrease appears to be the exception since as Meyers reports "Since the mid-1970s, the US poverty rate has remained nearly constant. About 15 percent of all Americans have incomes at or below the conservative federal poverty threshold."[vi] (Meyers, 2014) (DeNavas-Walt & Proctor, 2015) However, this generalization does not apply to the most disadvantaged groups in American society. Mark Rank (2011) calls attention to those groups at higher risk of impoverishment which include: children and the elderly; single-parent female-headed families; women; nonwhites, especially African Americans and Hispanics; and, those residing in economically impoverished geographical areas (e.g. Appalachia, the Mississippi Delta, urban ghettos). (Rank, 2011) Because poverty has been shown to have long-range consequences for children, children experiencing extended poverty are especially at risk for long-term detrimental outcomes.(Plotnick, 2016) Austin Nichols, examining poverty rates in the U.S. describes historically high overall

poverty rates for some vulnerable groups, especially for children, and especially

for black children. (Nichols, 2012) Deep poverty rates are especially high among

non-Hispanic blacks and Hispanics as well as among unmarried, female-headed

households.[vii]

I have stressed the importance of being clear about how poverty in America is

conceptualized and explained as well as what groups in society are most affected.

Depending on one's understanding of poverty and the most vulnerable populations

alternate strategies for alleviating poverty may be considered such as reforming the

social safety net and welfare state; increasing support and services to low-income

households; asset building; economic and job creation; and economic development and

micro-enterprise strategies. For social workers this background knowledge together

with a clear sense of professional mission and values should suggest strategies for

alleviating poverty and improving the American social welfare system.

Criminal Justice

Recent events have triggered widespread debate and concern about what is perceived

by many to be a deepening crisis in the nation's criminal justice system. Many see the crisis as

fueled by a series of so-called tough on crime initiatives beginning with the Omnibus Crime

Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, the Rockefeller Drug Laws of 1973 and, most recently, the

1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act signed by President Clinton. It is generally

acknowledged that while these policies may well have contributed to a reduction in violent

crime in some areas of America, the tough on crime laws have also contributed to

unprecedented numbers of Americans being imprisoned as well as growing antagonism between community residents and police.

A recent *New York Times* op-ed editorial notes: "THE growth in the nation's prison population has been nothing short of staggering. The United States' incarceration rate is now more than four times the world average, with about 2.2 million people in prisons and jails. Of those, roughly 200,000 are federal inmates, double the number from 20 years ago. This substantial increase occurred even as violent crime was falling sharply." (Furman & Holtz-Eakin, 2016) As noted by Margaret Severson, in 2013: "More total persons and more women are incarcerated in the United States than in any other country in the world." (Severson, 2013) The number of persons under supervision of the U.S. correctional system has been rising since the early 1970s despite decreases in total numbers since 2007/2008 and decreases in violent crimes since 1991 (exception was 2005 and 2006; rate in 1994 713.6 vs rate in 2013 of 367.9; according to FBI statistics the 2013 estimated violent crime total was 14.5% below the 2004 level.) although in some cities violent crimes are again on the rise (e.g. Chicago, San Francisco). According to a 2014 *Human Rights Watch* report, so called *tough-on-crime* laws adopted since the 1980s, have filled U.S. prisons with mostly nonviolent offenders. (Human Rights Watch, 2014)[viii]

Black and Hispanic males are especially affected by the inequities most often cited.[ix] "Black men have been incarcerated at increasingly disproportionately high rates before leveling in the early 2000's." (Acs, Braswell, Sorensen, & Turner, 2013)

Often forgotten about are the children and partners of those incarcerated, especially how incarcerations affect the lives, present and future, of family members. According to Yvette Harris "An estimated 1.7 million children have parents in the criminal justice system, and more than ten million young children have experienced the incarceration of one or more parents and patterns of familial incarceration. African American children represent 53 percent of that number --- ." For these children there is concern about the effects of incarceration on developmental and clinical outcomes, basic rights, and the loss of parental custody. (Harris, 2013)

The after effects of incarceration on those imprisoned as well as their families is too often not addressed in either social policies or practices. Once arrested and/or incarcerated some 70 million Americans are marginalized by exclusion from jobs, housing, higher education, consumer credit systems, voting and other sources of support and participation.[x] For example, by some estimates 1 in 13 African Americans are unable to vote because of their Criminal Justice system status as felons. (Sentencing Project, 2016) [xi] High rates of incarceration especially among racial and ethnic minorities as well as heightened citizen-police tension at the community level are among the most critical issues demanding macro-level attention. Indeed, one expression of that tension is the alarming number of people killed by police officers. According to a report by the *Guardian* there were 1,134 deaths at the hands of police officers in 2015. Black men were nine times more likely than other Americans and five times more likely than comparable white males to be killed by police officers.[xii] (Jon Swaine, Oliver Laughland, Jamiles Lartey, & McCarthy, 2015) In recent years there have been stunning instances of such killings, oftentimes of unarmed and innocent citizens of color by police or armed citizens

assuming law enforcement functions.[xiii] In the aftermath of these killings many have called for a careful review of policies and practices fostering police and citizen conflict.[xiv]

David Yassky, counsel to the House Subcommittee on Crime who drafted the 1994 crime bill, recently called for reimaging prisons and as much as possible replacing them. Yassky suggests: "The next evolution in criminal justice policy must be to reform our correctional system, and we must start by restoring rehabilitation as a core goal --- we should make much greater use of parole, halfway houses and other forms of supervised release. We also need to devote far greater resources to mental health services. (Yassky, 2016)

Under the administration of President Obama significant steps have been taken to reform the criminal justice system such as the establishment in 2011 of the Federal Interagency Reentry Project which coordinates reentry efforts of 20 federal agencies and promotes effective reentry policies. President Obama's final budget proposal is prioritizing **reforms over punishment**. The new "21st Century Justice Initiative" program which is part of a $29 billion request for the U.S. Justice Department for the year beginning October 1, 2016 has three objectives: reduce crime, reverse policies that cause "unnecessarily long sentences and unnecessary incarceration" and build community trust in the justice system. While this and similar initiatives such as Federal Interagency Reentry Project hold promise it remains to be seen what will be enacted given current political polarization.[xv]

Social workers provide the majority of treatment services for correctional institutions and for criminal justice–involved populations, especially the most vulnerable groups including women who have experienced trauma, the children of parents in the criminal justice system,

the mentally ill, individuals with substance abuse problems including comorbidity, and racial

and ethnic minority populations. (Severson, 2013) Social workers have unique skills that can be

used to limit incarceration as well as to assist individuals and families re-integrate following

incarceration. It seems right that given their intimate knowledge of the needs and problems of

those involved in the criminal justice system social workers should be among those calling for

reform. And, such reform should include efforts to insure that services provided are data

informed and evidence-based both at the macro and the micro levels.[xvi]

Evidence-based social work practice

As I have already noted evidence-base practice is arguably the most significant development

affecting micro-level social work during the last half-century, and it has also had a significant impact

on social work education and macro-level practice. Evidence-based practice is a generic process in

which practitioners systematically seek out, assess, and use best evidence to select client

appropriate interventions that have been tested for effectiveness; and, with this information in

hand engage in informed decision-making with clients about intervention options. This process can

be used at all levels of social work including at the clinical level and at the policy level.[xvii]

In 1999 when Eileen Gambrill brought evidence-based practice to the attention of social

workers few references could be found to evidence-based practice in the social work literature.

(Gambrill, 1999) In that seminal article she called for replacing what she called *authority based*

practice with evidence-based practice. Gambrill called for transforming social work practice by

adopting the newly developed evidence-based medicine paradigm which had been developed and

promoted in the health professions during the prior decade. In 2003 one of Gambrill's students,

Leonard Gibbs, published the first social work evidence-base practice textbook. (Gibbs, 2003)

Together with David Streiner, in 2004 I proposed that like most innovations evidence-based practice would be resisted and initially rejected in social work but that once it had taken hold the naysayers would join the band wagon and some even claim ownership.(Edward J. Mullen & Streiner, 2004) Since those early days it now seems that evidence-based practice has indeed taken hold in social work as well as in allied disciplines. Indeed, evidence-based practice has become the new social work practice framework; some would say the new social work paradigm. (Okpych & Yu, 2014) Two recent examples serve to make my point.

- The 12 Grand Challenges for social work recently issued by the American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare is a call to action to tackle America's toughest social problems - powered by science. In nearly every one of the challenges there is a call for using scientific evidence to enhance individual and family well-being, strengthen the nation's social fabric, and create a just society for all.

- Recently, the Institute of Medicine released an influential report proposing recommendations for establishing efficacy standards for psychosocial interventions for the treatment of mental health and substance use disorders. (Insititute of Medicine, 2015) The IOM report concludes that:

- Psychosocial interventions that have been demonstrated to be effective in research settings are not used routinely in clinical practice.

- No standard system is in place to ensure that the psychosocial interventions delivered to patients/consumers are effective.

In her commentary on the IOM report Dr. Myrna Weissman, one of three social work members of the IOM committee drafting the report, notes: "The focus was on evidence-based care and the long term goal was that all psychosocial interventions be grounded in evidence."

Dr. Weissman suggests that because of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 (MHPAEA) as well as the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 (ACA) there is an expectation that the numbers of persons with mental health problems able to receive care will expand, and, accordingly the IOM study was undertaken to create a framework to assure that those psychosocial interventions provided are evidence-based. (Weissman, 2015) (pp. 787-788)

These are examples of how in the relatively short span of 15 years' evidence-based practice has become ubiquitous in social work as well in the allied human service professions.

However, in spite of this popularity there are a number of issues, controversies, and debates associated with evidence-based practice. The limitations typically cited, especially by critics of evidence-based practice are: the shortage of coherent, consistent scientific evidence; difficulties in applying evidence to the care of individuals; organizational and other barriers to doing high-quality practice; the need to develop new skills; limited time and resources; and a paucity of evidence that evidence-based practice "works." Common misperceptions that contribute to skepticism about evidence-based practice's fit with social work are: that evidence-based practice denigrates practitioner expertise; that it ignores clients' values and preferences; that it promotes a cookbook approach to practice; that it is simply a cost-cutting tool, that it is an ivory-tower concept, that it is limited to research applications, and that it leads to nihilism in the absence of evidence from randomized trials. (Edward J. Mullen & Streiner, 2004)

Social work needs to consider the issues as it continues to experiment with moving evidence-based practice from the policy and academic worlds into everyday practice. While considerable attention has been given to promoting and conceptualizing evidence-based practice at the policy and direct practice levels a major challenge remains, that is to find ways of moving this framework into actual practice to the benefit of the profession's clientele. (Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace,

2005; Mullen, Bledsoe, & Bellamy, 2008; Soydan, 2015) As the IOM report concludes, while evidence-based practice is widely lauded in government and academic circles data suggests that it has not yet found its way into actual policy decisions or direct practice. (Bledsoe et al., 2007; Mullen & Bacon, 2003; M. M. Weissman et al., 2006)

Conclusion

These then, are among the macro and micro-level issues confronting 21st century social workers that I think to be of particularly pressing concern.

I would encourage social workers to engage in fresh and innovative thinking about policy and practice options needed to address 21st century social problems, but also to do this while taking into account the profession's history. These options should be assessed through the value prism of the extent to which each option would further the goals which the profession embraces, namely, social justice; equality; economic and social security for all; social inclusion, solidarity and social integration for all; human rights, the worth and dignity of all people; and self-determination. It is through innovation infused with these values that social work will impact macro and micro practice for the benefit of our clients in the 21st century. And, it is through such value-based innovation that, in the words of James R. Dumpson, social work can contribute to creating a truly *caring society*.[xviii]

References

Acs, G., Braswell, K., Sorensen, E., & Turner, M. A. (2013). *The Moynihan Report Revisited*. Retrieved from washington: DC: http://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/alfresco/publication-pdfs/412839-The-Moynihan-Report-Revisited.PDF

Carten, A. J. (2015). *Reflections on the American Social Welfare State: The Collected Papers of James R. Dumpson, PhD, 1930–1990*. Washington: DC.

Community Service Society of New York. (1970). *New York City: A problem census and social report. New York: Community Service Society.* New York: Community Service Society of New York.

DeNavas-Walt, C., & Proctor, B. D. (2015). *U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P60-252, Income and Poverty in the United States: 2014*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Furman, J., & Holtz-Eakin, D. (2016, April 21, 2016). Why Mass Incarceration Doesn't Pay. *New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/21/opinion/why-mass-incarceration-doesnt-pay.html?ref=opinion

Gambrill, E. (1999). Evidence-based practice: an alternative to authority-based practice. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services, 80*(4), 341.

Gans, H. (1972). Positive functions of poverty. *American Journal of Sociology, 78*, 275 - 289.

Gibbs, L. E. (2003). *Evidence-based practice for the helping professions: a practical guide with integrated multimedia*. Paific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole-Thompson Learning.

Goldberg, G. S. (1980). New Directions for the Community Service Society of New York: A Study of Organizational Change. *Social Service Review, 54*(2), 184-219. doi:doi:10.1086/643824

Haberman, C. (2016, May 1, 2016). 20 Years Later, Welfare Overhaul Resonates for Families and Candidates. *New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/02/us/20-years-later-welfare-overhaul-resonates-for-families-and-candidates.html?rref=collection%2Fsectioncollection%2Fus&action=click&contentCollection=us&region=rank&module=package&version=highlights&contentPlacement=7&pgtype=sectionfront

Harris, Y. R. (2013). Children of Incarcerated Parents. In E. J. Mullen (Ed.), *Oxford Bibliographies in Social Work*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Hills, J., LeGrand, J., & Piachaud, D. (2002). *Understanding social exclusion*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press.

Human Rights Watch. (2014). *Nation Behind Bars: A Human Rights Solution*. Retrieved from https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/related_material/2014_US_Nation_Behind_Bars_0.pdf

Insititue of Medicine. (2015). *Psychosocial interventions for mental*

and substance use disorders: A framework for establishing

evidence-based standards. Retrieved from Washington, DC:

Lewis, O. (1966). The culture of poverty. *Scientific American, 215*, 19 - 25.

Mead, L. (1986). *Beyond entitlement: The social obligations of citizenship*. New York: Free Press.

Meyers, M. K. (2014). Are We Asking the Right Questions about Poverty in America? *Social Service Review, 88*(4), 728-744. Retrieved from http://ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/login?qurl=http%3a%2f%2fsearch.ebscohost.com%2flogin.aspx%3fdirect%3dtrue%26db%3dsih%26AN%3d99907164%26site%3dehost-live%26scope%3dsite

Mullen, E. J. (2010). Evidence-based practice. In E. J. Mullen (Ed.), Oxford Bibliographies Online. New York: Oxford University Press. doi:10.1093/OBO/9780195389678-0001

Mullen, E. J., & Streiner, D. L. (2004). The evidence for and against evidence based practice. *Brief Treatment and Crisis Intervention, 4*(2), 111-121. doi:10.1093/brief-treatment/mhh017

Okpych, N. J., & Yu, J. L. H. (2014). A Historical Analysis of Evidence-Based Practice in Social Work: The Unfinished Journey toward an Empirically Grounded Profession. *Social Service Review, 88*(1), 3-58. doi:10.1086/674969

Plotnick, R. (2016). Child Poverty. In E. J. Mullen (Ed.), Oxford Bibliographies. New York: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from //www.oxfordbibliographiesonline.com/document/obo-9780195389678/obo-9780195389678-0102.xml. doi:10.1093/obo/9780195389678-0102

Rank, M. R. (2011). Poverty. In E. J. Mullen (Ed.), *Oxford Bibliographies in Social Work*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Reid, P. N. (2011). History of Social Welfare in the United States. In E. J. Mullen (Ed.), Oxford Bibliographies in Social Work. New York: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from

//www.oxfordbibliographies.com/document/obo-9780195389678/obo-9780195389678-0075.xml. doi:10.1093/obo/9780195389678-0075

Reisch, M. (2010). Social Policy. In E. J. Mullen (Ed.), *Oxford Bibliographies in Social* New York: Oxford University Press.

Reisch, M. (2015). History of Social Work and Social Welfare, 1980-2014. In E. J. Mullen (Ed.), Oxford Bibliographies in Social Work. New York: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from //www.oxfordbibliographies.com/document/obo-9780195389678/obo-9780195389678-0223.xml. doi:10.1093/OBO/9780195389678-0223

Sawhill, I. (2003). The behavioral aspects of poverty. *The Public Interest, 153*, 79 - 93.

Schwartz, N. D. (2016, April 23, 2016). In an age of privilege, not everyone is in the same boat. *New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/24/business/economy/velvet-rope-economy.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=photo-spot-region&region=top-news&WT.nav=top-news&_r=0

Sen, A. (1999). Development as freedom. In A. Sen (Ed.), *Poverty as capability deprivation* (pp. 87 - 110). New York: Knopf.

Sentencing Project. (2016). Felony Disinfranchisemenbt.   Retrieved from http://www.sentencingproject.org/template/page.cfm?id=133

Severson, M. (2013). Criminal Justice. In E. J. Mullen (Ed.), Oxford Bibliographies. New York: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from //www.oxfordbibliographiesonline.com/document/obo-9780195389678/obo-9780195389678-0120.xml. doi:10.1093/OBO/9780195389678-

Stuart, P., H. (2014). History of Social Work and Social Welfare, 1950-1980. In E. J. Mullen (Ed.), Oxford Bibliographies in Social Work. New York: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from //www.oxfordbibliographies.com/document/obo-9780195389678/obo-9780195389678-0113.xml. doi:10.1093/obo/9780195389678-0113

United States Census Bureau. (2016). *Income, poverty and health insurance coverage in the United States: 2015*. (CB16-158). Washington, DC: United States Department of Commerce.

Weissman, M. (2015). Commentary: The Institute of Medicine (IOM) sets a framework for evidence-based standards for psychotherapy. *Depression and Anxiety, 32:787–789*, 787-789.

Wilson, W. J. (2008). The political and economic forces shaping concentrated poverty. *Political Science Quarterly, 123*, 555 - 571.

Yassky, D. (2016, April 9, 2016). Unlocking the Truth About the Clinton Crime Bill. *New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/10/opinion/campaign-stops/unlocking-the-truth-about-the-clinton-crime-bill.html?ref=opinion

Endnotes

[i] Key Sources:

Bailey, M. J., & Danziger, S. H. (2013). Legacies of the War on Poverty. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Cancian, M., & Danziger, S. H. (2009). Changing poverty. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Carten, A. J. (2015). Reflections on the American Social Welfare State: The Collected Papers of James R. Dumpson, PhD, 1930–1990. Washington: DC.

DeNavas-Walt, C., & Proctor, B. D. (2015). U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Reports, P60-252, Income and Poverty in the United States: 2014. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Ehrenreich, J. (1985). The altruistic imagination: A history of social work and social policy in the United States. Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press.

Holmes, J. (2013). Social Work Education and Research. In E. J. Mullen (Ed.), Oxford Bibliographies in Social Work. New York: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from //www.oxfordbibliographies.com/document/obo-9780195389678/obo-9780195389678-0077.xml. doi:10.1093/OBO/9780195389678-0077

Hopps, J. G., Lowe, T., & Robinson-Dooley, V. (2009). Social Work Profession. In E. J. Mullen (Ed.), Oxford Bibliographies Social Work. New York: Oxford University Retrieved from //www.oxfordbibliographies.com/document/obo-9780195389678/obo-9780195389678-0068.xml. Retrieved from //www.oxfordbibliographies.com/document/obo-9780195389678/obo-9780195389678-0068.xml

Jansson, B. S. (2012). The reluctant welfare state: Engaging history to advance social work practice in contemporary society (7 ed.). Belmont, CA: Brooks/Cole Cengage Learning.

Okpych, N. J., & Yu, J. L. H. (2014). A Historical Analysis of Evidence-Based Practice in Social Work: The Unfinished Journey toward an Empirically Grounded Profession. Social Service Review, 88(1), 3-58. doi:10.1086/674969

Rank, M. R. (2011). Poverty. In E. J. Mullen (Ed.), Oxford Bibliographies in Social Work. New York: Oxford University Press.

Reid, P. N. (2011). History of Social Welfare in the United States. In E. J. Mullen (Ed.), Oxford Bibliographies in Social Work. New York: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from //www.oxfordbibliographies.com/document/obo-9780195389678/obo-9780195389678-0075.xml. doi:10.1093/obo/9780195389678-0075

Reisch, M. (2010). Social Policy. In E. J. Mullen (Ed.), Oxford Bibliographies in Social Work. New York: Oxford University Press.

Reisch, M. (2015). History of Social Work and Social Welfare, 1980-2014. In E. J. Mullen (Ed.), Oxford Bibliographies in Social Work. New York: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from //www.oxfordbibliographies.com/document/obo-9780195389678/obo-9780195389678-0223.xml. doi:10.1093/OBO/9780195389678-0223

Severson, M. (2013). Criminal Justice. In E. J. Mullen (Ed.), Oxford Bibliographies. New York: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from //www.oxfordbibliographiesonline.com/document/obo-9780195389678/obo-9780195389678-0120.xml. doi:10.1093/OBO/9780195389678-

Stuart, P., H. (2014). History of Social Work and Social Welfare, 1950-1980. In E. J. Mullen (Ed.), Oxford Bibliographies in Social Work. New York: Oxford University Press. Retrieved from //www.oxfordbibliographies.com/document/obo-9780195389678/obo-9780195389678-0113.xml. doi:10.1093/obo/9780195389678-0113

Trattner, W. I. (2007). From poor law to welfare state: A history of social welfare in America (6 ed.). New York: Simon & Schuster.

Endnotes

[ii] Michael Reisch (2015) identifies social policy domains which are now especially important and contentious: the goals and means of the US social welfare system including welfare "reform" and entitlements; Social Security and aging policies; health care and health care reform; affordable housing and homelessness; privatization, marketization, and faith-based social services; poverty – its causes, consequences, inequality among groups affected, and responses; race, gender, and inequality; employment and employment policy; income and assets policies; education and educational policy especial race and class differentials in outcomes; urban transformation and emerging urban problems; children's issues --- especially poverty and abuse --- and child welfare policy; social justice and social policy; and, the politics of policymaking in the face of fiscal scarcity, inequality, racial conflict, ideological and cultural differences, and political polarization. (Reisch, 2015) Since I neither have time nor competence to discuss all of these areas.

[iii] For poverty statistics see (DeNavas-Walt & Proctor, 2015) census report 2014 which includes trend data since 1950's excluding in-kind benefits.

[iv] Consider the names of the two key organizations giving birth to the social work profession in the late 19th century: the Association for Improving the Conditions of the Poor (AICP) and the Charity Organization Societies (COS). These organizations were established to assist the "deserving poor"; individuals and families found

in large numbers in urban, industrial cities increasingly populated by European immigrants in the mid to late 19th century and early 20th century. Indeed, in Zimbalist's study of the history of social work research he found that the predominant social work research themes at that time were studies of the causes, distribution and consequences of poverty, and, subsequently, its measurement. The social survey movement, so popular during the Progressive Era, focused on documenting urban poverty and other social conditions with the purpose of stimulating action. And, of course the social settlements were founded in urban poverty neighborhoods to serve the poor. Social work's focus on poverty and the poor continued as a major preoccupation through the 1930's. Social workers were among the leading architects of reform legislation throughout this period which resulted in social security, slum clearance and public housing, adequate relief standards, public works, and industrial minimums to name but a few areas of effective activity. The names of these social workers are well known such as Jane Addams, Grace and Edith Abbott, Edward T Devine, Florence Kelley, Harry Hopkins, and Florence Perkins to name a few. And, at the micro level throughout this time social workers were face to face with individuals, families, and communities enmeshed in poverty as so vividly described by Mary Richmond and the large numbers of friendly visitors and social caseworkers of the time as well as by settlement house volunteers. Nevertheless, in the 1940's, 1950's and early 1960's social work retreated from social reform and a concern with poverty, seemingly more concerned with development of psychotherapeutic methods best suited for private agency, middle class clients than with the poor who were largely served by public welfare agencies. (Burns, 1942; Cloward & Epstein, 1965; Ehrenreich, 1985) Social work's concern with poverty re-emerged in the mid-1960's and early 1970's stimulated by the Great Society and War on Poverty programs as well as internal criticism regarding its abandonment of the poor. (Chambers, 1963)(p. 85)

[v] "Emmanuel Saez, a professor of economics at the University of California, Berkeley, estimates that the top 1 percent of American households now controls 42 percent of the nation's wealth, up from less than 30 percent two decades ago. The top 0.1 percent accounts for 22 percent, nearly double the 1995 proportion. (Schwartz, 2016)

[vi] According to a *New York Times* article of May 2, 2016: "Nationwide, the Census Bureau counts 46.7 million Americans as living in poverty, which for a family of three (typically a mother and two children) means annual earnings of less than $20,160. About 20 million people live in deep poverty, with earnings below $10,000 a year for a family of three. In 2014, the last year with full census figures, the poverty rate among children — people under 18 — was 21 percent. - Plainly, government cash payments are not what they used to be. In 1996 they went to 68 percent of families with children that qualified as impoverished, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a liberal research group in Washington. Now they go to 23 percent. In some states, the figure is minuscule: 8 percent in Arizona, 5 percent in Texas, 4 percent in Louisiana. - Other federal policies, like the earned-income tax credit and the child tax credit, offer some help. Nonetheless, millions of Americans get by on nothing besides disability payments or food stamps, formally called the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The social scientists Kathryn J. Edin and H. Luke Shaefer have calculated that 1.5 million American households subsist on no more than $2 per person a day." (Haberman, 2016)

[vii] 1.   Nichols reports: "The U.S. poverty rate remained high at 15 percent in 2011, with 46.2 million people poor. --- The poverty rate was roughly as high in 2010 and 2011 as it has been in any year since 1965 ---. Child poverty remained high overall, at 21.9 percent in 2011 ---, and especially among black children, at 37.4 percent. --- Poverty continues to disproportionately affect minorities and single-parent families. Annual poverty rates among blacks increased to 27.6 percent in 2011 --. Rates for individuals in unmarried female-headed households remained high at 31.2 percent, compared with 13.1 percent for individuals in other types of families. --- The rate of deep poverty (incomes less than half the poverty level --), was 6.6 percent in 2011. Deep poverty is more prevalent among non-Hispanic blacks (12.5 percent) and Hispanics (10.5 percent) than among non-Hispanic whites (4.4 percent), and among individuals in unmarried female-headed households (15.3 percent) than among individuals in households with a married head (2.2 percent)." (Nichols, 2012) (pp. 1-2)

[viii] In 2014 there were 2,224,400 incarcerated prisoners and 4,708,100 persons under community supervision. (Kaeble, Glaze, Tsoutis, & Minton, 2015) The number of federal inmates stood at 196,285 on April 7, 2016. (Federal Bureau of Prisons, 2016)

[ix] See the NAACP Criminal Justice Fact Sheet at http://www.naacp.org/pages/criminal-justice-fact-sheet .

[x] IA, FL, KY permanently disenfranchise all people with felony convictions from voting unless government approves individual rights restoration; AL, AZ, DE, MS, NV, TN, WY permanently disenfranchise some people with criminal convictions, unless government approves individual rights restoration.

xi Such policy reforms have received considerable attention. For example, the 1994 Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act (passed at a time when crack cocaine was epidemic and violent crime had more than tripled in the previous three decades) increased penalties for nonviolent drug offenders and funded new prisons as well as 100,000 police officers. This Act, is seen by some as having further contributed, to today's high rates of incarceration as well as the increased tension between citizens and police although others think it had little effect.(Hinton, Kohler-Hausmann, & Weaver, 2016)

xii African American males aged 15 to 34 accounted for 15% in spite of the fact that they made up only 2% of the US population.

xiii The killing of Tamir Rice (Cleveland, November 22, 2014), Michael Brown (Ferguson, Missouri, August 12, 2014), Trayvon Martin (Miami Gardens, Florida July 13, 2013), Laquan McDonald (Chicago, October 21, 2014) are well known recent incidents. (Sandra Bland is another casualty of alleged police brutality - Waller County, Texas, on July 13, 2015.)

xiv For example, "Trayvon's Law" is a set of social policy principles which call for legislative actions thought to reduce the probability of such killings. Under the umbrella of Treyvon's Law the NAACP is calling for: an end to racial profiling; repeal of stand your ground type laws; creation of law enforcement accountability through effective police oversight; improvement of training and best practices for community watch groups; and mandating law enforcement data collection on homicide cases involving people of color. Beyond these principles the NAACP is calling on state level advocates to "establish policies that aim to dismantle the school to prison pipeline – which are critical to keeping youth safe and in schools." (NAACP, 2013) Within the last month the task force established after the Chicago killing of Laquan McDonald released its report and recommendations for combating racism in the Chicago police force. (Police Accountability Task Force, 2016) And, the most recent special issue of the *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environme*nt examines police shooting of unarmed African American males with articles addressing implications for the individual, the family, and the community. (Moore, Robinson, & Adedoyin, 2016)

xv At the April 7, 2016 Columbia University David Dinkins Forum Attorney General Loretta Lynch presented a forceful keynote address detailing the Obama administration's criminal justice agenda including the Department of Justice's Smart on Crime Initiative (ways to become smarter and tougher on crime), and the Task Force on 21st Century Policing which was charged with identifying best practices and recommending strategies for assuring that policing practices promote effective crime reduction while building public trust.(President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015; US Department of Justice)

xvi Recently there has been considerable attention given to identifying and disseminating evidence-based practices and guidelines such as through the Campbell Collaboration, the National Criminal Justice Reference Service, the National Institute of Corrections, and the National Reentry Resource Center. (E.J. Mullen, 2010b)

xvii I have previously defined evidence-based social work practice "as a professional decision-making process in which social workers and their clients systematically make intervention choices using practitioner expertise to identify (1) client conditions, needs, circumstances, preferences and values; (2) best evidence about intervention options, including potential risk and benefit likelihoods; and (3) contextual resources and constraints bearing on intervention options. Intervention choices refer to action options about how to assess client conditions and circumstances, how to provide services, and how to evaluate the process and outcomes of services. Clients can be individuals, families, groups, communities, or large populations. Best evidence includes findings from scientific studies as well as from other reliable sources considered to be of highest quality, strength, and relevance." (E.J. Mullen, 2010)

Evidence-based social work practice is modeled on the evidence-based medicine paradigm. Originally developed by clinical epidemiologists led by David L. Sackett, evidence-based medicine was formalized for use in the McMaster University internal medicine residency training program in 1990 and first appeared in the literature in 1991. Because evidence-based medicine has been adapted by all the health care professions, some have called for a common, transdisciplinary model. (Satterfield et al., 2009) The evidence-based medicine philosophy was introduced into social work through the writings of Eileen Gambrill, Leonard E. Gibbs, Geraldine MacDonald, and Brian Sheldon as an alternative to authority-based practice. Much of the evidence-based social work practice literature focuses on applications at the clinical or direct practice level. This is especially so in the United States. Indeed, as I have noted evidence-based medicine has its origin in clinical practice. Nevertheless, the principles of evidence-based practice apply to all levels and forms of social work practice, including community work and policy

practice. However, policy applications are most prominent in discussions of public services in the United Kingdom rather than in the United States.

[xviii] The profession of social work and social work education should take a leadership role in transitioning to a more socially just and equitable society. Indeed, a defining characteristic of social work is its mission which is to promote social justice. Social work and social work education in particular should aim through advocacy as well as through practice at all levels to be bring about a caring society.

While social work practice and education occurs globally, in countries with very diverse political, economic, and social contexts, a common unalterable characteristic of the profession is its social justice mission and its aim of fostering the development of a caring society. As stated by the International Association of Schools of Social Work:

The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being. Principles of human rights and social justice are fundamental to social work. --- its values are based on respect for the equality, worth, and dignity of all people. --- Human rights and social justice serve as the motivation and justification for social work action. In solidarity with those who are disadvantaged, the profession strives to alleviate poverty and to liberate vulnerable and oppressed people in order to promote social inclusion. (International Association of Schools of Social Work, 2013)

Social work practice and social work education has grown dramatically in terms of numbers of practicing professionals, diversity of practice roles, and the numbers of social work educational programs around the world. In the United States alone there are approximately 450 baccalaureate, 200 master's, and seventy doctoral programs, educating approximately 100,000 students. At an international level there are approximately 2,000 schools of social work affiliated with the International Association of Schools of Social Work. (Holmes, 2013) Social work educators may be delighted with the expansion of social work globally as well as nationally but at the same time there should be concern about retention of quality and a clear sense of mission both of which are often compromised with growth. Educators and practitioners may need to be reminded to place quality and mission first and foremost. I reiterate Porter Lee's emphasis on keeping clearly in mind that social work is both cause and function. (Lee, 1937) I support the recent view that social work policy and practice should be value-based and evidence-infused, and that social work is a profession with a unique mission aimed squarely at promoting social justice and a caring society.