CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

THE DOMAINS OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK

Mohammed S. Yusuf

Discussing the differences and similarities between Social Work and Sociology has become extremely important against the background of confusion, misunderstanding and misgiving in the public domain. Some even think that Sociology and Social Work are the same. It must be categorically stated, from the onset, that Sociology and Social Work are not the same, although the two are interrelated. The two disciplines are basically concerned with human society and the social problems therein. They are therefore social sciences, although Social Work can be offered either under the Faculty of Education (University of Ibadan style) or the Social Sciences (University of Ilorin and others style). Sociology does not only provide the framework upon which Social Work is built, it also helps social workers to understand the socio-cultural contexts of problems.

However, Sociology and Social Work differ in so many ways, particularly, in terms of application and scope. While Sociology is more theoretical, Social Work is more practical. This does not, however, mean that Social Work lacks theoretical inputs and that Sociology does not lay emphasis on the application of sociological theories in addressing practical human and social problems. It only means that the extent to which both are practical or theoretical is a matter of degree. Thus, this chapter examines the nexus and differences between Sociology and Social Work. The chapter is divided into six sections. The first section looks at a brief history and development of both disciplines. The second section explores social problems as the subject matter of both disciplines. In the third section, the key concepts in both Sociology and Social Work are discussed. The fourth section looks at similarities and differences between sociology and social work as well as the common theories in Sociology and Social Work. The last chapter examines theories that are peculiar to Social Work.

THE DOMAIN OF SOCIOLOGY

There is no consensus among sociologists on what Sociology actually is (Doda, 2005). For the purpose of this chapter, attempts are made to examine some of the definitions of the discipline. Sociology is one of the disciplines in the social

sciences that involves the use of scientific methods of inquiry to develop theories, constructs and models about social order, social problems and social change. Also, there are three levels of analysis in Sociology: the macro, micro and messo levels (Marks and MacDermid, 1996; Messner and Rosenfield 2009; Huisman, Hough, Langellier & Toner, 2011). The macro level of analysis in Sociology concerns itself with complex interactions in social systems; interaction between nations, comparison among complex societies and how these interactions affect social order and social change (Frank, Camp, & Boutcher, 2010). The micro level of sociological analysis was engineered by symbolic interactionist scholars like George Herbert Mead, Herbert Blumer and Erving Goffmann. This level views society from individual perspectives of analysis in sociology. It looks at how daily interactions between and among people affect behaviour. The crux of micro sociology is the analysis of small groups within larger social systems and how social interactions affect and influence behaviour. The messo level of analysis is between the macro and micro levels of analysis and it studies the society from group perspective. It is used in sociological analysis of sophistication among groups and the interactions that ensue between members of the group (Huisman, Hough, Langellier, & Toner, 2011).

Nobbs, Hine & Flemming (1978) conceive of Sociology as a form of welfare service and socialism. This implies that the goal of sociologists is to address problems arising from everyday social interactions among various groups in the society. According to Doha (2005), Sociology is an academic field of study developed to help find solutions to societal problems emanating from social interactions. Ritzer (2010) defined Sociology as a scientific study of social pathologies of human societies. To Ravelli & Webber (2016), Sociology is a systematic way of studying human beings and their social interactions. The Team of Experts (TOE) in Sociology, however, provided a considerably all-inclusive definition of Sociology. According to them, Sociology:

> ...studies the processes and patterns of human individual and group interaction, the forms of organisation of social groups, the relationship among them, and group influences on individual behaviour, and *vice versa, and* the interaction between one social group and the other (Team of Experts, 2000).

From the above definitions, it is clear that sociologists are more concerned about what is going on in the society through the use of established theoretical perspectives in finding answers to complex social phenomena in our society. While classical and neo-classical sociologists focused more on the scientific study

of social order and social action, contemporary sociologists are more interested in scientific studies of problems such as poverty, inequality, mass movement, feminism, ethnicity, urbanisation, terrorism and health-related issues (Burawoy, 2005). Sociologists are interested in a wide range of topics in human activities, some of which include poverty, prejudice, social stratification, demography, social mobility, religion, deviance, law, sexuality, deviance, health, medicine, education and technology, war and terrorism. These areas are germane to an understanding of the flexibilities of social institutions and social systems. In understanding and perhaps solving these societal problems, sociologists rely on the use of theories and empirical facts.

THE DOMAIN OF SOCIAL WORK

Social Work can be seen as an offshoot of Sociology. It is relatively the youngest of all social science disciplines. Its development could be possibly traced to the earlier efforts of Jane Addams (1860 –1935) and Marry Richmond (1861–1928). Unlike Sociology, Social Work is both a professional and an academic discipline that seeks to enhance the psycho-social wellbeing of the individuals, groups, communities and other vulnerable groups. It gives people who have human feelings the opportunity to help others (Suppes & Wells, 2011). This explains why Social Work is referred to as a "helping profession". The International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), at its meeting in 2004, provided a comprehensive definition of Social Work. For them, Social Work is:

> practice-based and an academic discipline that promotes social change and development. Social cohesion, social justice, human rights, collective responsibility, and respect for diversities are central to social work. Underpinned by theories of social sciences, humanities and indigenous knowledge, social work engages people and structures to address life challenges and enhance wellbeing (IFSW, 2014, p. 1).

What could be deduced from this definition is that Social Work incorporates ideas from other disciplines like Sociology, Psychology, Psychiatry, Medicine, Criminology and Economics to solve (people and) societal problems. Hence, methods and theories that social workers mostly use to achieve the goal of helping others are derived from other disciplines, particularly Sociology and Psychology (Ogundipe & Edewor, 2012). Interestingly, the major focus of Social Work is "welfarism". Although Sociology also focuses on social welfarism (Nobbs, Hine & Flemming, 1978), the point of departure is that Social Work is more particular about individual and collective welfare in all ramifications, with the goal of achieving an ideal or a just society (Suppes & Wells, 2013). As noted

by Kirst-Ashman (2010), the foundation of Social Work practice is based on five major activities. :

i. Social workers as professionals offer counselling to individuals, families, groups and communities with social problems and help intervene through the change process.

ii. Providing this service to clients, therefore, requires strict adherence to the core values and principles of Social Work.

iii. Social workers as brokers help clients identify where resources are available by linking clients to needed resources.

iv. Participation in policy-making is one of the hallmarks of social workers. In doing this, social workers may implore the legislature on the need to pass laws that improve social services and the general wellbeing of people.

The key discussions in Social Work are on social welfare, substance use and abuse, social work with youth and children, military social work, school social work, criminal justice, forensic social work, social work with older adults (Geriatric Social Work), social work in work places (Industrial Social Work), social work and globalisation, poverty, inequality, social work in rural settings, social work and HIV/AIDS, social work and sports, religion and spirituality in social work practice, social work practice with individuals, families and groups, social work practice in hospital settings, and social work in mental health. These areas form the basics or the foundation of Social Work practice across the globe. Furthermore, Social Work is preoccupied with intervening in the individual's problems as well as contemporary social problems in various societies such as family problems, divorce, child welfare, poverty, discrimination and other social and personal problems. In other words, Social Work is a professional practice that seeks to enhance the psycho-social functioning of people through the application of theories and techniques.

LEVELS OF ANALYSIS IN SOCIAL WORK

As obtainable in Sociology, three levels of analysing social problems and intervention exist in Social Work. These levels as we also have in Sociology are, micro, messo and macro. In Social Work, social problem is often analysed from the micro level, mezzo level and down to the macro level. However, the major point of divergence is that social workers also use these three levels for intervention or planned change process (Kirst-Ashman, 2010). We examine how these levels of analysis work in Social Work.

Macro Social Work: This level of analysis entails the dissection of a problem from a systemic point of view. It is used in Social Work practice during the change (intervention) process and it may include the involvement of advocacy and social welfare policy initiation and implementation, which may range from health care to welfare policies. At this level, the belief of social workers is premised upon the fact that macro practice empowers the client as well as leads to systemic social change (Social Work/License Map, 2018). This implies that social workers are involved in advocating for the welfare and wellbeing of the less privileged, the vulnerable and the oppressed.

Mezzo Social Work: This entails working with groups which include the family, school, community and local organisations. The objective is to provide intervention through institutional change. In most cases, this strategy is adopted by social workers to achieve a meaningful development for the benefit of group of people with varying social problems. Also, this level of analysis is often adopted by social workers through community organization meant to bring social services to disadvantaged groups.

Micro Social Work: Micro social work practice involves assessment and intervention with individual client. This is carried out through family counselling session, individual counselling and therapy (Kirst-Ashman, 2010). This, according to Naidoo (2004), is a rehabilitative and preliminary level of the treatment of individuals and families with social problems.

HISTORY OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK

Every discipline has its own historical antecedents, its beginning. History, according to Carr (1961), is the study of past events relating to human affairs. In this context, history relates to past events, issues and ideologies behind the development of both Sociology and Social Work. The importance of historical accounts on these disciplines cannot be over-emphasised. This is because it helps us to better understand events and antecedents that culminated in their development of these disciplines.

Sociology

The word 'Sociology', is derived from Greek and Latin words. Sociology, as an academic discipline, is a product of interrelated socio-historical and intellectual forces, most importantly, the twin revolutions (the French and Industrial Revolutions) (Ritzer, 2010). The revolutions, which started in France and England, permeated other countries in Europe, America, Asia and, later, Africa.

The consequences of these revolutions were greatly felt in family life and other social relations which subsequently led to the problem of order in the society. As a result of this, social philosophers of the time were concerned with finding by the solution to the problems which subsequently led to the development of Sociology as a scientific discipline (Muhammed-Baba & Abubakar, 2012). Since then, Sociology has developed to become a discipline that is interested in knowing patterns of human behavior, interactions and elements within the social system.

Relevant literature has traced the development of Sociology to the work of Auguste Comte (1798–1857) (see Pickering, 1993). Comte is believed to have coined the word 'Sociology' from Social Physics in 1839. Comte saw Sociology as a science of society and was concerned that this 'new' science of society would provide scientific explanations to of the social problems of his time. Ritzer (2010) noted that August Comte was particularly interested in providing solutions to the societal ills brought about by the Industrial and the French revolutions. These revolutions brought about several social problems during that period which included unemployment, a high crime rate, suicide, and family crisis. In essence, Comte's mission was to use his new science of society (positivism) to find solution to social problems. He further developed *the law of the three stages* (Theological, metaphysical and Positivism) which he used to explain the three intellectual stages that the world had experienced in history. According to Comte, the first stage (*Theological*) is the era in which people believed in supernatural powers and religion. During this period, human beings failed to acknowledge the natural cause of events and, thus, attributed such to religion and supernatural powers. The second stage (*Metaphysical*) though more advanced than the *theological stage* is an extension of it. The stage was witnessed between 1300 and 1800 (Ritzer, 2010). It was during this stage that people started to believe that God is an abstract being and that things happened naturally. The last stage, (*passivism*), also known as the scientific era was characterised by scientific method of inquiry.

Apart from Auguste Comte, many other scholars also contributed, very immensely, to the development of Sociology in the early 19th century. This included Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) who was of the opinion that Sociology should be seen and treated as a science. Spencer, like other classical sociologists, likened society to an organism. In his theory of evolution, Spencer argued that the evolution of society from a simple to a complex structure is constantly determined by the natural law of selection (Ritzer, 2010). He saw the society as a

biological being that contains several other parts with each of these parts, working independently and interrelatedly to maintain the whole. This later became the *structural-functionalist* perspective in Sociology.

The development of Sociology is incomplete without reference to Emile Durkheim (1858-1917), a French sociologist and the first scholar to set up the Department of Sociology in Europe. Durkheim describes Sociology as "not just only a positive science and method of investigation, but also a foundation of integrated social philosophy which men could use to raise social standards" (Young, 1962, p.2). Durkheim contributed to the development of Sociology through his works such as *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893), *Rules of Sociological Method (1895), Suicide (1897) and The Elementary Forms of Religious life (1912)*. Durkheim was also the first to set up a sociological Journal (*L'annee Sociologique*) in 1898. He was mostly concerned with the problem of social order.

Karl Marx (1818-1883), a German thinker, was another great contributor to Sociology. Although Marx was not a trained sociologist, he influenced the development and establishment of Sociology as an academic discipline. His development of thought capitalism, social movements, socialism and social change does not only impact the development of theories in the social sciences (Oxana & Lyudmila, 2014) but was fundamentally important in the development of Sociology. He was of the opinion that capitalism as an economic system creates divisions in the society. According to him, capitalism does not only create inequality but helps maintain the dominance of the rich over the poor. He used the concept of the bourgeoisie to describe the rich or the haves and "proletariat" to describe the have-nots. He maintained that conflict within capitalism will lead dialectically to ultimate collapse, which would later give birth to socialism. Marx laid the foundation of the conflict Theory in Sociology, which neo-Marxist built upon.

Several other scholars that were instrumental to the development of Sociology include Max Webber (1864-1920), a German sociologist who contributed to the sdevelopment of social theory development in Sociology. His works include *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904), *The City* (1912), *The Sociology of Religion* (1922), *General Economic Theory* (1923) and *The Theory of Social and Economic Organisation* (1925). He was influential in the development of theories such as Structural Functionalism, Conflict Theory, Symbolic Interactionism, Critical theory, and Ethnomethodology (Ritzer, 2010).

Finally, one of the black scholars and intellectuals who influenced Sociology but was not always reckoned with are Sojourner Truth (1797-1883). Truth was considered as the first feminist sociologist in history. Others included Anna Julia Cooper (1858-1964), the fourth African-American woman to obtain a Ph.D. She was influential in the area of racism and economic inequality. W.E.B. Dubois (1868-1963), was also considered together with Karl Marx and Emile Durkheim as early thinkers of modern Sociology. Charles S. Johnson (1893-1956) a Chicago School sociologist whose work was on how legal, economic and social forces produce structural racial oppression was also one of these black scholars

There is however an evidence of the development of Sociology in Africa. Some scholars have linked the development of Sociology in Africa to the works of an African Arab, Abdel Rahman Ibn-Khaldun (1332 – 1406) (Ravelli & Webber, 2016; Abdullahi & Salawu, 2012). Ibn Khaldun is said to have developed interest in social issues such as the role of religion in ensuring social order, the systematic study of the society, social institutions and their interrelationships, decades before Sociology was coined.

Social Work
The history of Social Work is difficult to trace, as there is no consensus among scholars regarding the major pioneers of Social Work. One account has traced the development of Social Work to Christianity. It is argued that services provided by churches for those who were in need between 1300s and 1700s laid the foundation of modern social work. In fact, Johnson (1941) once referred to the church as the "mother of social work" (p. 40). Harris, (1995) further argued that for centuries now, churches and Christians have been providing for vulnerable individuals and groups such as the poor, the sick, the disabled, the orphaned, the widowed, the elderly, the hungry and other vulnerable groups. In view of this, there are different and conflicting accounts on the development of Social Work as a profession.

The second account notes that the establishment of the Charity Organisation Society (COS) in 1860 was instrumental to the development of social work practice in England (Engelbrecht, 1999). The COS was meant to provide charity to vulnerable and poor individuals. Services provided by "friendship visitors" (volunteers who supervised the alms giving to disadvantaged groups) to people in need laid the foundation for case work practice in social work (Engelbrecht, 1999). During this period, Mary Richmond initiated a new dimension to helping

the profession through her book "*Social Diagnosis*" in 1917 which laid the foundation for social work intervention and processes.

Another account has it that a woman named Jane Addams (1860 – 1935) was a leader in the field of social justice and opposed the individualised services of Mary Richmond and therefore advocated the advancement of social justice and democracy, which is believed to have led to social welfare in contemporary social work practice. According to this account, Social Work emerged when Jane Addams established 'Hull House' in 1889 to provide welfare services for the needy, particularly women and children. Similarly, another account argues that the development of social work is credited to the Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601 (Zastrow, 2013). Apart from these four accounts, some other scholars have argued that modern Social Work originated in England in the 19th century. This was traced to the socio-economic problems emanating from the Industrial Revolution. Popple, Philip, Leighninger & Leslie (2011) submitted that the Revolution created poverty, and the local authority's efforts to deal with poverty related problems which led to the development of social welfare. While there are different accounts regarding the development of Social Work as both a profession and an academic discipline, researchers and scholars in Social Work seem to have reached a consensus that Social Work addresses social problems through practical application of theories (Kirst-Ashman, 2010; Suppes and Wells, 2011).

However, the history of social work in Africa predates the 18th century, though social services were already embedded in traditional societies. Different types of communal societies such as clans and kin-based, cultural-based and religious-based groups used to provide various social services to their members (Midgley, 1997). The communal living of those days made social services the sole responsibility of the family and the community at large. However, certain events such as the activities of missionaries across the globe, especially in Europe. The influence of the Industrial Revolution, the colonialisation of African societies by colonial powers, the emergence of democratic institutions in Africa, have all combined to contribute to the rise of social work in Africa. Unlike in other countries outside Africa where Social Work was already established as far back as the early 18th century, in Africa, the first Social Work department was only established in Cairo in 1937 (Yiman, 1990) but was professionally kick-started in the 1960s. This may be due to the fact that the majority of African societies were yet to become independent. According to Mupedziswa (2005), the activities of colonial powers like Britain, France, Portugal, Belgium, Germany and others gave

shape to the development of the profession in Africa today. Currently, professional social work practice and academic disciplines now exist in virtually all African countries. However, the level of practice and professionalism is still at a crude level compared to what obtains in other countries in Europe and America (Chitereka, 2009).

SOCIAL PROBLEMS: THE SUBJECT MATTERS

The subject-matter of both Sociology and Social Work are social problems. Both disciplines are concerned with finding solutions to contemporary social problems but their approaches differ. Before examining how each of the disciplines addresses social problems, it is imperative to conceptualise what social problems are.

Scholars have conceptualised social problems in different ways. For instance, Holstein & Milner (1993a) view social problem as a social condition that needs to be solved. Kallen, Miller & Daniels (1989, p. 98) view a social problem as "as a dislocation or dysfunction in the social system which the society regards as detrimental and which requires to be addressed by "change agents". They noted further that for a social condition to be called a social problem, it must exhibit three different characteristics: (i) the problem must be social in origin; (ii) It must be defined as a social problem by the majority and (iii) the solution must come from the society. This implies that social problems emerge from social interactions and be solved in order to ensure the proper functioning of the society.

Similarly, Timms & Timms (2016) define a social problem from Sociology and Social Work perspectives. From the Social Work perspective, the authors conceive social problems as some undesirable social conditions (family violence, crime and child abuse) affecting individuals and families. To address these undesirable social conditions, the professional efforts of social workers are needed. On the other hand, from the sociological perspective, Timms & Timms (2016) defined social problems as large-scale social conditions that need large-scale solutions. According to Timms & Timms (2016), while social workers give a more practical definition of social problems, sociologists present a more theoretical definition of social problems. The argument is that Social Work and Sociology have different perspectives on what constitutes social conditions. In Social Work parlance, personal problems such as divorce, depression and mental illness are more likely to be seen as social problems while in sociological parlance

they are seen as social conditions that have a damaging effect on the lives of many people and which require a large-scale solution (Schrager & Short, 1978).

Therefore, Sociology and Social Work are distinct disciplines but with similar historical antecedents. While Social Work applies scientific and experience-based knowledge in practice, Sociology focuses on investigations and conceptualisation of social life in all aspects. For Olesen (2011) Sociology is an academic discipline without a specific practice relationship. That is, Sociology is scientifically oriented, abstract in nature and apply a systematic approach to solving social problems while Social Work is a practical and an experience-based professional practice. However, as noted by Day (1987), for social workers to thrive in discharging their duties, it is imperative that they have the knowledge of Sociology in order to effectively intervene in problems within the social system. The author stated that intervening in the clients' psycho-social and other problems of the clients requires the understanding of the dynamics of human behaviours, which can only be done when social workers have adequate theoretical and practical knowledge of Sociology (Day, 1987).

While commenting on the importance of Sociology to Social Work, Parker & Bradley (2008) argued that Sociology helps social workers to be conversant with varying social problems and trends. Ravelli & Webber (2016) opined that social workers cannot comprehend human behaviour, social issues and the world in which we live without probing the interaction between individuals and the social system. This explains why social workers assess their clients from the micro (individual level), macro (societal level) and mezzo (family and group levels) levels in understanding the problems of their clients. However, the two disciplines differ in their end products. While sociologists conduct inquiry about a specific social problem in order to identify its causes and effects so as to know the kind of intervention(s) required to address such a problem, the disposition of social workers goes beyond identifying causes and effects and making recommendations or interventions. Social workers create and implement rehabilitation, re-integration and reformation programmes for those individuals and groups that are either directly or indirectly affected by such a social problem (Ambrosino, Ambrosino, Heffernan & Shuttlesworth, 2008). In other words, social workers participate in the drafting of social welfare policies to tackle such a social problem and are actively involved in the implementation of these policies.

Furthermore, one of those things that distinguish a social worker from a sociologist is that a social worker must possess special skills needed for practice.

This is because social workers, unlike sociologists, are directly involved with clients. Since social workers help their clients with mental and psychosocial problems, they therefore need certain skills that are essential for a successful career. These skills, according to Dunlap (2013) are:

- Assessment skills required at the first meeting between the client and the social worker;
- Communication skills which require social workers to be able to effectively communicate verbally and non-verbally;
- Advocacy skills that make it possible for social workers to stand for their clients to ensure positive change;
- Problem-solving skills, which enjoin social workers to look for resources in fighting obstacles and constraints;
- Documentation skills, to ensure that social workers keep adequate records and monitor the prognosis of their clients;
- Respect for the diversity that makes it mandatory for social workers to always consider the diversity of the client system in the change process as individual clients are not the same; and
- Intervention skills, which enjoin social workers to regularly intervene in crisis situations to benefit their clients.

Also, social workers, unlike their Sociology counterparts, are guided by ethical standards in the form of a code of ethics. The code of ethics, according to Jamal & Bowie (1995), is drafted to address three major issues in the discipline.

- To address moral hazards or situations where professional self-interest affects public interest. For instance, a social worker must not have any intimate relationship with his/her client and must not, under any circumstance disclose information on his or her client information to anybody unless with their explicit permission.
- The Code of ethics in social work addresses matters of professional integrity. For example, just as lawyers are not permitted to advertise their services in some environments, social workers are equally not ethically permitted to have sexual relationship with their clients.
- The Code of ethics addresses matters related to the professional duty to serve the public interest. In other words, a social worker must not, in any way, seek the client's help for personal gain.

In its effort to standardise social work practice, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) has divided the code ethics into four different parts (Kirst-

Ashman, 2010). The first part addresses the general goals, mission and core values of Social Work. The second aspect looks at the purpose of the NASW code in professional practice. The third explains ethical principles which are based on core the values of social work, while the fourth part addresses ethical standards, which are the most substantial of all. This, ethical standard, contains 156 specific principles grouped into six categories. They include the social worker's ethical responsibilities to clients; ethical responsibilities to professional colleagues, ethical responsibilities in practice settings, ethical responsibilities as professional, and ethical responsibilities to the society. These principles in the code of ethics make Social Work unique and professionally grounded and guided. They serve to guide the conduct and behaviour of social workers in their interaction with clients, colleagues and the community.

COMMON THEORIES IN SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK

While Sociology uses theories to understand and explain contemporary social problems, Social Work uses theories to explain and understand social problems and subsequently use the theories for treatment. Sociologists see social theories as ways of providing detailed explanations about personal and collective problems. As argued by Allan (2006), sociologists see social theories as tools for explaining issues relating to interaction and developing a proposition to explain them. For both sociologists and social workers, social theories are critical to an understanding of social problems or social phenomena (Wolfe, & Callahan, (2017)). However, the use and application of theories to social problems differ remarkably between Sociology and Social Work. Although Social Work got its theoretical ideas from social science and humanity disciplines such as Sociology, Economics and Psychology (Hutchison, Lund and Oltedal, 2001), social workers use and apply social theories for treatment or rehabilitation purposes. Teater (2014) asserted that theory helps social workers predict and assess clients' problems so as to provide effective interventions on the clients' problems. While functionalist and conflict theories are more common with sociologists because they are large-scale social theories, some micro level theories are commonly used in social work. Let us examine theories that are common to both Sociology and Social Work.

- **Sociology and the Structural-Functionalist Theory**

Structural-functional Theory is also known as Functionalism. It is known in Sociology and Social Work and is the oldest theory developed by classical sociologists (Wolfe & Callahan, 2017). The Structural-functionalist Theory was developed by classical sociologists like Auguste Comte, Herbert Spencer, Bronislaw Malinowski, Taylor, Radcliffe Brown and Emile Durkheim (Macionis,

2013). It was later enriched by the likes of Robert K. Merton, Kingsley Davies and William Moore. The basic assumption of the theory is that society is a complex whole that consists of different parts which work together to maintain the whole. The "whole" here means society, while the parts mean the social institutions in the society. These are the family, economic, political, religious, education, and health institutions. If any of these institutions fails to perform, it will affect the whole. For example, the moment there is a problem in the economic institution, the political institution would find it difficult to provide basic amenities for its people and pay salary. The family institution would find it difficult discharging its responsibilities and the education institution would suffer as well. Classical sociologists, therefore, linked the harmony and tranquility in the society to the functionality of the various parts.

Another important concept in the Functionalist Theory is the concept of *homeostasis*. This concept means that asocial system is equipped with an internal regulating mechanism that keeps the whole at equilibrium level (Parson, 1951). However, as noted by Hutchison, Laud & Oltadel (2011), change may occur in the society but not evolutionary and radical. For a society to be considered functional, individual and institutional needs must be met. However, this theory has been criticised by some scholars for lack of merit (Macionis, 2013). For instance, Karl Marx argued that dysfunctions in the society would only bring about revolutionary change.

- *Functionalism in Social work*

The Structural-functional theory in Social Work is likened to the System Theory. It incorporates Talcott Parson's functional theory (Ritzer, 2010). However, the theory became prominent in Social Work in the 1970s, largely due to the efforts of Goldstein and other scholars. Goldstein was a prominent social worker who contributed to theory and practice in Social Work (Melgray, 2012). Fundamentally, the theory has it that society as a system comprises different parts with each of the elements performing different functions to maintain the whole. In this case, Social Work is regarded as one of the elements within the society that helps maintain social equilibrium. Martin (1994) was the first social worker to describe the social workers' role in the society as that of maintaining the whole system, as they help integrate the disempowered and marginalised individual in the society (Cunningham & Cunningham, 2008). Therefore, social workers are likened to "motor mechanics who perform an important role in the maintenance of society" (Cunningham & Cunningham, 2014, p. 14). Social work as a unit of the society performs various assistive roles to all age groups in the

society irrespective of their social status. These helpful services include restoration of social functioning, provision of social services and prevention of social ills that could disrupt the peace and harmony in the society. The rationale behind the services performed by social workers is to help restore individual to normal social functioning and the 'smooth running of the social system' (Cunningham & Cunningham, 2008, p. 14). While explaining the practicability of functionalism in Social Work, Oana (2010) explained that understanding the theory is key to unlocking community problems in Social Work. Understanding and applying structural functionalism helps discover why the *status-quo* must be maintained in solving personal and societal problems. In essence, Social Work helps maintain decorum, sanity and equilibrium in the society while social workers constitute the homeostasis of the system.

It needs to be reiterated that this theory has been criticised on the grounds that not all misfits in the society can be rehabilitated. Some people's behaviour is beyond rehabilitation. It was also argued that Social Work is an instrument of the state "and as such reflects and reinforces the interests of the ruling class" (Cunningham & Cunningham, 2014, p.28). It, therefore, serves the interest of the powerful individuals in the society.

- **Sociology and the Conflict Theory**

This theory is applicable to both disciplines but the application differs. Conflict theorists, like Karl Marx, reject the view of the functionalists. They maintain that the social patterns only benefit few members of the society at the expense of the majority. Sociologists believe that the unequal relationship between the *haves* and the *haves-not*, the rich and the poor, the government and the governed, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie has led to poverty and inequality in human society. Invariably, inequality in the society has continued to enrich the few individuals the more at the expense of the majority poor. This inequality is perpetuated in all institutions of the society such as the family, economic, educational, religion, religious and health institutions. Fundamentally, the conflict theory posits that inequality in the society will lead to conflict because "people on top try to protect their privileges while the disadvantaged try to gain more for themselves" (Macionis, 2011, p. 16).

- **Social Work and Conflict Theory**

Social Work as an academic discipline and profession recognises the existence of inequality and oppression in the society. The major event that led to the establishment of Social Work as a discipline in the first place was the poverty and marginalisation of some sections of the society. Also, the application of the Conflict Theory to Social Work helps social workers to be aware of inequality as

a product of the society. Marx explains that resources are unequally distributed and as such only the few (powerful) control societal resources. In view of, the Conflict Theory allows social workers to know how society is structured, which invariably creates the inequality that calls for social work intervention. Therefore, Social Work helps resolve conflicts emanating from human interactions. The Conflict theory guides social workers on the change process. In other words, the theory helps social workers realize how macro orientation level is to the client's change process and the assessment method to be employed in cases involving the oppression and the vulnerability of the client. Also, it enhances how conflicts between individuals, ideas, groups, classes and larger society can be understood. According to Phillips & Pittman (2009), the conflict theory in Social Work provides an explanation of social life and the inequality that exists among the various groups in the social system such as ethnics, classes, young and old, male and female. Phillips & Pittman (2009) noted that the conflict theory does not only explain how inequality permeates the society but also on how social workers can use it to understand social and personal problems.

- *Sociology and the Symbolic Interactionist Theory*

The Symbolic Interactionist theory is a micro level orientation, known to both Sociology and Social Work, which sees society "as the product of everyday interaction of individuals" (Macionis, 2011, p. 16). The theory originated from the works of classical theorists such as George Herbert Mead, Charles Horton Cooley and Herbert Blummer. The major focus of Symbolic Interactionism "is the idea that individuals use language and significant symbols in their communication with others" (Carter & Fuller, 2015, p.932). According to them, Symbolic Interactionism is not interested in social patterns and interactions in the society play out but in the interpretation of subjective viewpoints and how individuals make sense of their world from their different perspectives. Blummer (1969) cited in Carter & Fuller (2015) highlighted the basic thrust of symbolic interactionism:

a. Individuals act based on the meanings objects have for them.
b. Interaction occurs within a particular social and cultural context in which physical and social objects (persons) as well as situations must be defined or categorised based on individual meaning.
c. Meanings emerge from interactions with other individuals and with society
d. Meanings are continuously created and recreated through interpreting processes during interaction with others.

Social Work and Symbolic Interactionism

Social Work, unlike other disciplines in the social sciences, is considered as an applied social science discipline. The applied nature of Social Work makes it more practical-oriented than any other social science disciplines. As such, the use of a theory in Social Work is quite different from how social science theories are being used in other social science discipline. Hence, the application of Symbolic Interactionism is quite different in Social Work. As noted by Horner (1979), the use of Symbolic Interactionism in Social Work helps social workers in social assessment and data collection. Denzin (1992) posited that the usefulness of Symbolic Interactionism is premised upon the fact that it enables social workers to know how people interact with one another and how these interactions can be encouraged to address the individual's problems. Manis, Meltzer & Manis (1972) outlined the major thrusts of Symbolic Interactionism and its applicability to social work.

1. Human behaviour and interaction are made possible through the use of symbols and the meaning attached to such.
2. The individual becomes a better being through interaction with other people.
3. Interaction between and among people is what defines the society.
4. Human beings are active in shaping their own behaviour.
5. What constitutes human behaviour (consciousness and thinking) connotes interaction with oneself.
6. Human beings establish their behaviour in the process of execution.
7. An understanding of human conduct requires the study of the actor's covert behaviour.

All these suggest that social workers must look out for these behaviours emanating from social interactions. This explains why social work practitioners are always interested in how interacting forces constitute the focus of assessment during a planned change process (Horner, 1979). Therefore, to understand and have better ideas about clients' problems, social workers must be able to apply symbolic interaction at all levels of assessment.

CONCLUSION

This chapter looks at the relationship between Social Work and Sociology. It unveils historical antecedents that inspired the development of the two disciplines. It unravels the contributions of both philosophers and modern scholars to the development of these two disciplines. In order to know the areas

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