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What Is Social Work?

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At 3:00 A.M., an ambulance pulled up to the medical center emergency room. Attendants rushed to get a 17-year-old Hispanic teenager into the hospital and onto life support systems. The teenager had desperately, but resolutely, driven his car into a solid brick wall.

The social worker on duty during those early hours was called to be there when the boy's parents arrived. The look of desperation on their faces told the whole story. This couple had come to the United States from Mexico some three years ago, bringing their boy and his three younger sisters with them. The language, the school system, and the entire community had created subtle barriers for this family. The father and mother both obtained low-paying jobs and tried to begin a new life.

The 17-year-old tried to fit in. His grades weren't bad, but he just didn't have friends. He couldn't get a sense of who he was. His dad saved some very hard-earned dollars to buy the young man a car. Perhaps the car would help his son find a place. It was that same car that now was a twisted wreck.

The boy died that night. The social worker tried to comfort the parents. Over and over again the social worker asked himself the questions, "Why couldn't this tragedy have been prevented? What can I do now to help this family?"

A second case glimpse illustrates community problems. Riots rocked Los Angeles after the acquittal, Wednesday, April 29, 1992, of four white police officers in the videotaped beating of a black motorist, Rodney King. In less than twenty-four hours, mobs attacked police headquarters, motorists were dragged from their cars and beaten, and hundreds of businesses and homes were looted or burned in South Central Los Angeles. A night of arson, looting, and gunfire killed nine persons. By the following Tuesday, when life was "back to normal," the rioting had resulted in fifty-five dead and 5,500 fires. More recently, Cincinnati has suffered from severe riots brought on by the shooting of a young black man by a white police officer. What might have been done to prevent such disasters? Can social work play a part in facing and helping solve community problems?

We live in a challenging, fascinating world. We have learned how to travel to the moon and sent a millionaire son of a retired U.S. astronaut on a Russian rocket to live on the orbiting international space station, yet we often have difficulty reaching someone in the same room. We live in a fast-moving, push-button space age, yet we find that people are still the center of the world and its values. Mars and the rings of Saturn are important, but humans are more important. As people live together, problems of relationship and interaction emerge. Personal problems, family problems, and community problems appear on the horizon of everyday living. Drug abuse, homelessness, crime, delinquency, mental illness, suicide, school dropouts, AIDS, and numerous other social problems abound at every turn.

Every day, new scientific and technological discoveries enlarge our knowledge and skills. We not only travel in space and have space stations but also have one or more cars in the garage for personal travel. We carry iPods, iPhones, video cell phones, laptop computers, and TV sets that bring instant news twenty-four hours a day, shrinking the world to a small community. Fifteen-second ads channeled into our homes are common. Wonder drugs are being used by millions everywhere searching for peace of mind as well as for treatment. Genetically engineered foods are reaching dining

tables for distinctive eating. Digital cameras, VCRs, computer chips, Internet, DVDs, and computer banking are altering our recreational, educational, and business endeavors at every turn.

Medical triumphs surprise the imagination with the use of lasers and miniature instruments under high magnification to restore eyesight, the use of artificial arms that give amputees lifelike dexterity, and the creation of test-tube babies.

On the negative side, all kinds of difficult situations exist. Terrorism is rampant; the Iraq War has cost much in human lives and money; no place on the globe is any longer free from attack. Single mothers are raising children in many women-dominated homes with no fathers around. Use of drugs is on the increase around the world, bringing bizarre, uncertain behavior into the lives of people, their families, and their communities. "Computer criminals" are on the scene. Movies, TV, radio, and current literature are continuing to increase in negativism and violence. The average child views TV about four hours a day. By the age of sixteen, he or she has watched more than 200,000 acts of violence—50,000 of which are murders.

In this high-tech uncertain world, personal, family, and community problems exist as never before. Emotional difficulties are rife. Teenage and senior citizen suicides are on the increase. There seems to be an overall ebb in meaningful human relationships—people enjoying people and helping each other.

When serious difficulties in human relationships arise, the question immediately becomes, "Can we get help?" The answer is usually, "Yes." Many professions, one of which is social work, are ready and eager to help. What is social work? What is social welfare? What part do they play in this satellite age?

Social work and social welfare are based on three premises: (1) that the person is important; (2) that he or she has personal, family, and community problems resulting from interaction with others; and (3) that something can be done to alleviate these problems and enrich the individual's life. An introductory glimpse of two particular cases illustrates all three premises.

A second case further illustrates these three premises.

In this high-tech uncertain world, personal, family, and community problems exist as never before. Emotional difficulties are rife.

Joe had been in a state hospital for nineteen years, confined to one of the back wards. Hospital personnel were unsuccessful in getting him involved in any type of interaction with staff or fellow patients.

Then came a change. As a part of a new program, a social worker was assigned to meet with Joe for thirty minutes daily with the goal of encouraging him to be more active in his own treatment. The worker explained to Joe that she was going to see him regularly and that she was genuinely interested in him. For the first two weeks, he uttered not a word. Then one day he surprised the worker by saying, "I like you."

The worker continued to spend about thirty minutes daily with Joe. She was sympathetic, interested

in him, warm, friendly, and accepting. He responded steadily to her interest and efforts. Within six months he was discharged from the hospital; and with the follow-up help of the local community mental health center, Joe was placed in an independent-living situation where his quality of life improved dramatically over the next several years.

When Joe was later asked by a close friend what had happened to make the difference in his life, he eagerly replied with much seriousness, "The worker was just like a magnet—drawing me out of my shell. I couldn't resist her."

A school of social work and a local businessman formed a partnership to bring both volunteer and professional social services to a small inner-city neighborhood that contained many senior citizens who were not being served adequately to meet their needs. Neighborhood residents were helped to form a “neighbor-to-neighbor” volunteer effort. The volunteers, assisted by social work students, became the “eyes and ears” of the local community and began to address the needs of many of the seniors. The needs ranged from

having a friendly visit to the replacement of broken-down furnaces and roofs. The funding for these repairs came from the local businessman. Many of the services were provided by volunteers who lived in the neighborhood whereas others were provided by volunteers recruited from the larger community. The social work students were also able to link senior citizens with professional services already available. The quality of life and the independence of these senior citizens were improved by this social work approach.

SOCIAL WELFARE

The terms *social work* and *social welfare* are often confused and sometimes used synonymously. Actually, *social welfare* has a broader meaning and encompasses social work, public welfare, and other related programs and activities. Social welfare, according to Friedlander,¹ “is the organized system of social services and institutions, designed to aid individuals and groups to attain satisfying standards of life and health, and personal and social relationships that permit them to develop their full capacities and to promote their well being in harmony with the needs of their families and the community.” Long and Holle state: “Social welfare is a necessary thread in the fabric of social structure, and society has a responsibility for the plight of its members.”²

Social welfare, in a broad sense, encompasses the well-being and interests of large numbers of people, including their physical, educational, mental, emotional, spiritual, and economic needs. Economically it is big business. For example, in August 1985, the Old Age, Survivors, Disability, and Health Insurance (OASDHI) program in the United States was paying \$15.3 billion in monthly cash benefits to 36,787,000 beneficiaries. By July 1999, monthly benefits in the amount of \$31.96 billion were sent to 44,335,030 beneficiaries.

As reported in the *Social Security Bulletin*, expenditures for social welfare under public law amounted to \$1,434.6 billion in fiscal year 1994, an increase of 5 percent over the previous year. The 1994 amount represented 21.8 percent of the national output of goods and services as measured by the gross domestic product (GDP). Federal and state governments spent \$407.9 billion on health and medical care alone in 1994.³ A 2006 news article reported that the Medicare trust fund will run out of money in 2018. The same article reported that the Social Security trust fund will be exhausted in 2040. The United States will have major social welfare problems if these trusts are allowed to run out of money.⁴

Many professionals deliver social welfare services, but social workers have always been prominent welfare service providers. In fact, they have played such a central role that the terms of *social welfare* and *social work* have been interchanged over the years. In 1970 according to the U.S. Bureau of the Census, there were 216,000 social workers in the United States—136,000 female and 80,000 male. In 1995 there were more than 500,000 social workers in the United States, two-thirds of whom were women. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) estimates that there are currently some about 600,000 people who hold social work degrees. It predicts the profession will grow by 30 percent by 2010.⁵

Social welfare includes the basic institutions and processes related to facing and solving social problems—problems that affect large numbers of people and that require some kind of concerted group effort to resolve. In this sense, social welfare includes not only qualified social workers but also untrained personnel employed in public welfare, probation, and other areas where social problems are being faced and resolved. Minimum traditional standards required a Master of Social Work (MSW) degree for the professional social worker, with at least two years of work experience under adequate supervision.

However, action by NASW, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE), and schools of social work has provided for recognition of undergraduate programs in social work; students who have completed these programs satisfactorily are recognized as the first level of “professional” social workers. Their training includes supervised field experiences as well as classes in methodology and basic knowledge. In addition, many two-year programs have been introduced in community and other colleges that provide two-year certificates in social services and training for paraprofessionals as social work technicians or aides to help people with problems.

A glance into the history of social welfare reveals that services have been provided across the centuries for disadvantaged persons and groups. Examples of such services include the care of the sick and the poor administered by the early Christian Church, and the provisions of the Elizabethan Poor Laws of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Social services came first, and methods of social work developed out of social welfare. At the turn of the twentieth century, social work was becoming more formalized, and within the next several decades emerged into a profession—a specialized, modern segment of the totality of social welfare.

SOCIAL WORK

The next question that follows is, “What is social work?” Social work is a profession that has been developed to administer the very large and complex human service system put in place by society. It is a scientific discipline but still requires a creative and artful approach to work with individuals, families, groups, and communities that are struggling with problems.

A much-used historical definition of social work appeared in the 1959 Curriculum Study sponsored by CSWE: “Social work seeks to enhance the social functioning of individuals, singly and in groups, by activities focused upon their social relationships which constitute the interaction between man and his environment. These activities can be grouped into three functions: restoration of impaired capacity, provision of individual and social resources, and prevention of social dysfunction.”⁶

The underlying assumptions of social work are:

1. Social work like all other professions has problem-solving functions.
2. Social work practice is an art with a scientific and value foundation.
3. Social work as a profession came into being and continues to develop because it meets human needs and aspirations recognized by society.
4. Social work practice takes its values from those held by the society of which it is a part. However, its values are not necessarily or altogether those universally or predominantly held or practiced in society.



Professional Identity

Critical Thinking Question:
Who decides when a profession becomes a profession?

5. The scientific base of social work consists of three types of knowledge: (a) tested knowledge, (b) hypothetical knowledge that requires transformation into tested knowledge, and (c) assumptive knowledge (or “practice wisdom”) that requires transformation into hypothetical and thence into tested knowledge.
6. The knowledge needed for social work practice is determined by its goals and functions and the problems it seeks to solve.
7. The internalization of professional knowledge and values is a vital characteristic of the professional social worker since he is himself the instrument of professional help.
8. Professional skill is expressed in the activities of the social worker.⁷

The basic functions of social work—restoration, provision of resources, and prevention—are intertwined and interdependent. Restoration of impaired social functioning may be subdivided into curative and rehabilitative aspects. Its curative aspects are to eliminate factors that have caused breakdown of functioning, and its rehabilitative aspects, to reorganize and rebuild interactional patterns. Illustrations of restoration would include assistance in obtaining a hearing aid for a partially deaf child or helping a rejected lonely child to be placed in a foster home. The rehabilitative aspect might be helping the one child to psychologically accept and live with the hearing aid and supporting the other child as he or she adjusts to the new foster home.

Provision of resources, social and individual, for more effective social functioning may be subdivided into developmental and educational. The developmental aspects are designed to further the effectiveness of existing social resources or to bring to full flower personal capacity for more effective social interaction. An example would be the services of a Family Service Society that help Mr. and Mrs. X, through individual and conjoint interviews, to understand each other better and to open the channels of meaningful communication between them. The educational spectrum is designed to acquaint the public with specific conditions and needs for new or changing social resources. Again, this could be illustrated by public talks given by staff members of a Family Service Society, in which counseling services are described as a resource in alleviating marriage and family problems.

The third function, prevention of social dysfunction, involves early discovery, control, and elimination of conditions and situations that potentially could hamper effective social functioning. The two main divisions are the prevention of problems in the area of interaction between individuals and groups and, second, the prevention of social ills. Premarital counseling would be an example of an attempt to prevent individual and social problems in relation to social functioning. It is hoped that through this process couples will be able to anticipate possible difficulties in marital interaction and, through adequate consideration and understanding, avoid the problems that might ensue otherwise. Prevention of social ills ordinarily falls within the area of community organization. An example of this function is the Community Services Council approach to the reduction of juvenile delinquency through the utilization of all community organizations and economic resources (for example, to build a new youth center and provide it with a professionally trained staff to work with boys and girls who are near-delinquent or who live in “delinquency areas”). An overall conclusion in the 1959 Curriculum Study states that “the focus on social relationships, however, is suggested as the *distinguishing characteristic* of the social work profession.”

The basic functions of social work—restoration, provision of resources, and prevention—are intertwined and interdependent.



Social worker developing a relationship

Harriet Bartlett claims that social work is “a configuration of elements none of which is unique but which, in combination, represents a contribution quite distinct from that rendered by any other profession.”⁸ The 1992 CSWE Curriculum Policy Statement indicates that “the profession of social work is committed to the enhancement of human well-being and to the alleviation of poverty and oppression. The social work profession receives its sanction from public and private auspices and is the primary profession in the provision of social services.” The 1995 edition of *The Social Work Dictionary* defines social work as “the applied science of helping people achieve an effective level of psychosocial functioning and effecting societal changes to enhance the well-being of all people.”⁹

A Current Definition

Social work may be defined as an art, a science, and a profession that helps people solve personal, group (especially family), and community problems and attain satisfying personal, group, and community relationships through social work practice (see Figure 1.1). Social work practice today is often generic, involving all three of the traditional methods. The major focus is on reducing problems in human relationships and on enriching living through improved human interaction.

Certainly the main focus of the social worker is on helping people improve their social functioning, their ability to interact and relate to others. On the other hand, there are many in the related helping professions who also assist with interactional problems. In addition, social workers sometimes help individuals solve individual and personal problems.

Social work is an art; it requires great skills to understand people and to help them to help themselves. It is a beginning science because of its problem-solving method and its attempt to be objective in ascertaining facts and in developing principles and operational concepts. It is a profession because it encompasses the attributes of a profession.

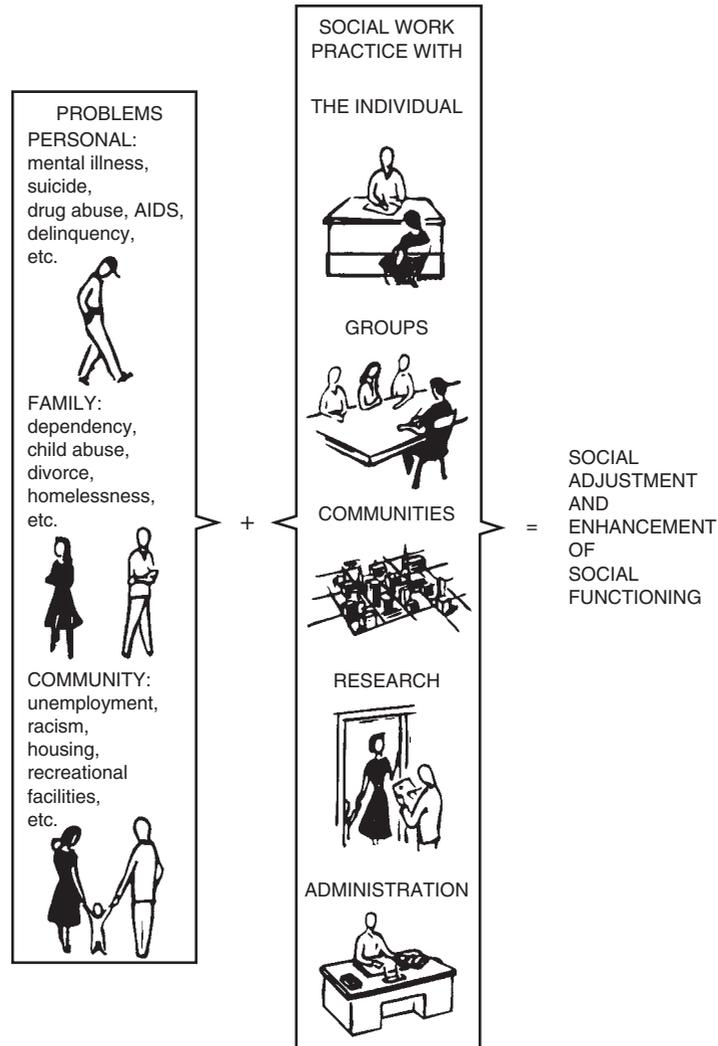


Figure 1.1
What Is Social Work?

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL WORK



Ethical Practice

Critical Thinking Question:

How does a profession attempt to monitor ethical practice?

Comprehension of social work may be enhanced by considering its distinguishing characteristics that follow

1. Focus is on the wholeness and totality of the person—encompassing the person, environmental factors, and behavior. Social work stresses the total person in the total environment.
2. Emphasis is on the importance of the family in molding and influencing behavior. Social workers attempt to understand the principles underlying family interaction and to work with the family as the basic unit for improving social functioning, recognizing that most social problems inhere in inadequate or imbalanced family relationships. The family is often regarded as the *case* in

social work. Although the modern family is changing and many new forms of marital and family living have appeared, the family is still the basic institution in society and as such is a focal factor in social work.

3. Utilization of community resources in helping people solve problems is very important. Social workers have a comprehensive knowledge of community resources and are able to tap them to meet the needs of their clients. They help get “Mr. or Mrs. Jones to the clinic,” to the agency that can help the most in the solution of his or her particular problems. Making referrals is a major service of social workers. They also make significant contributions to the larger community, utilizing their skills in planning and organizing, helping governmental and private organizations and agencies be more effective.

4. Use of the supervisory process provides for guidance and direction of inexperienced workers and for continuing growth of the experienced. Both in academic study and in practice, social work provides supervision by qualified, professional personnel to help the worker continue to grow professionally and acquire increased understanding and skill. The supervisor is available regularly to help the worker do a better job and increase his or her understandings and skills in working with people. This process is particularly important because social workers themselves are the tools in helping troubled persons, and they need to grow professionally, keeping abreast of new knowledge and skills.

Patterns of supervision have been changing so they are less rigid today than previously. The general trend is toward more self-direction and less formalized supervisor–supervisee relationships. Participatory supervision, self-supervision, and peer supervision are being used extensively.

5. Social work has a unique educational program involving classwork and practical field work experience, which go hand in hand. To obtain an MSW degree requires two years of graduate training—or its equivalent—in one of the 168 (2004) Master of Social Work Education programs in the United States. This program includes both academic classes and live field experiences working with clients, which gives an integrated combination of theory and practice.

Provision has been made for undergraduate programs in social work and/or social welfare to be accredited by CSWE. Thus, graduates in these programs with a Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) degree are recognized as beginning social workers, qualified to start in professional practice.

6. Traditional social work emphasizes three basic processes: clinical work, group work, and community organization. Clinical work involves a close, face-to-face relationship—mainly on an individual-to-individual basis—in working with people and their problems. Group work utilizes the group as the tool to bring about desired changes in social functioning with troubled persons. Community organization is the intergroup approach toward facing and solving social pathologies. It aims to increase understanding of community needs and helps provide for them. Social workers often play an advocate role to strengthen and improve community resources and bring desired social changes.

Some social workers believe there is only one social work process—that of problem solving related to social relationships. They state that the method is basically the same whether working with individuals, groups, or communities. This new approach is called *generalist social work practice*.

7. Social work has distinctive professional bodies: the NASW and the CSWE. NASW was established in 1955, after careful study, and brought

together several smaller professional social work groups in a unified, dynamic organization. Its membership has increased rapidly, and in 2004, it enrolled more than 150,000 social workers. This organization is doing much to raise the standards of social work practice, recruit qualified persons for professional training, and interpret practice and values of social work to the public. CSWE, which originated in 1952, is helping improve training facilities, standards, and programs as well as helping with recruitment, public relations, and strengthening social work practice.

8. The *relationship* is the key in the social work process. Everything that is a part of the interview is important, but to the social worker, the feeling tones between the worker and client are particularly important. The social worker attempts to make it possible for the client to face and solve his or her problems by sharing knowledge and helping with understanding and acceptance in an emotionally supportive relationship.

9. Social work has an orientation in psychiatric concepts and places considerable stress on understanding people. The social worker is particularly interested in how clients feel about themselves and their relationships with others. The social worker possesses considerable understanding of the basic knowledge and concepts of psychiatry and dynamic psychology that assist him or her in dealing with human behavior.

10. The *social* in social work emphasizes stress on social interaction and resultant social functioning and malfunctioning. Significant principles from sociology and social psychology, as well as from group dynamics, are woven into the artful fabric of social work, and are utilized in understanding relationships of people and in helping them resolve their conflicts.

11. Social work recognizes that social problems and human behavior inhere to a considerable degree in the social institutions of humanity. To understand these problems and behavior, it is necessary to understand the institutions of humans. Social problems may be reduced by working with individual personalities or by changing social institutions. For example, a particular boy may be helped to turn from delinquent behavior through individual therapy; on the other hand, social work recognizes that perhaps thousands of delinquent acts may be prevented through sensible changes in political or economic institutions.

12. Most social workers are employed in agency settings. Although the number of social workers in private practice is increasing, most social workers operate within the framework and policies of agencies; this gives them structural backing and support that strengthens their services in many ways. Supervision, consultation, and collaboration, inherent in agency settings, provide many positive resources for the workers.

13. The basic aim of social work is to help clients help themselves or to help a community help itself. Contrary to what many people believe, the social worker does not listen to a client and then prescribe a “social-psychological pill”—even though many clients ask for this. The social worker endeavors to help a person improve his or her understanding of oneself and relationships with others and tap his or her own and community resources in solving personal problems. The social worker operates under the premise that most people have the ego strength to solve their own problems when they really bring them out into the open and understand what they are. Whereas several professions are primarily concerned with pathological problems, social work

endeavors to stress and utilize strengths—both individual and community—to effect desired changes. Social work also makes a major thrust to understand community resources and to help solve community problems, thereby bringing desired changes.

14. Because most social workers are employed in agencies and are on fixed salaries, fees are utilized for the welfare of the agency rather than for increased incomes for the workers.

15. Traditionally, social workers have provided services and therapy for individuals and families. For the past two decades, prevention has received considerable emphasis, and recently, a focus on enrichment in living, for all people, has surfaced.

16. A social worker is particularly effective in developing and using the team approach and in bringing about coordination of services and activities. Many professional workers regard the social worker as the catalyst who has the ability and responsibility to help the professional team work together and function in optimal fashion. The social worker often acts as coordinator and integrator for the team effort.

SOCIAL WORK CAREERS

Social workers are employed in a number of practice settings. Many of the jobs are found in the health care field. With the new health care reform act being passed, it is possible that more social workers will be needed to facilitate meaningful community health programs. As the aging population continues to grow, more social workers will be needed in assisted living centers, nursing homes, hospices, and public health departments. Social workers are also needed to help in the planning and development of social service programs for the elderly.

The traditional social work careers in child welfare services and school social work will continue to attract many social work graduates. One of the main functions of the social work profession is to protect children and support and strengthen families. Every state has a child welfare service agency.

Social workers will continue to play a major role in mental health, substance abuse, and addictions. The United States seems to be having increased problems in this area and major treatment efforts will need to be addressed by our society. Some of the mental health efforts have been handicapped by the poor economy, but as the economy grows so will the opportunities for social work careers in these very important service areas.

Two relatively new social work career paths are found in forensic and international social work. Social workers are employed in all areas of the juvenile and adult justice system. They serve in many different roles including counselors, probation officers, and court administrators. The international social work arena offers opportunities in foreign adoptions, refugee resettlement, and immigration matters. The international outreach of the social work profession continues to grow.

As the profession of social work has been maturing, social work practitioners are moving into policy planning and management/administration. Social work practitioners make excellent planners and administrators because of their frontline social service experiences. Schools of social work would do well to prepare them for these vital social welfare roles.¹⁰

SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK

How are sociology and social work related to each other? Admittedly, they share much in common but are also different in many ways. Sociology has been defined by early American sociologists as follows: L. F. Ward defines it as the “science of society” and F. H. Giddings as “the scientific study of society.” A. W. Small said that sociology “is the study of men considered as affecting and as affected by association.”

Sociology and social work are both interested in people, their interactions, and understanding these interactions. The sociologist is particularly concerned about the *how*, *when*, and *why* people behave as they do in association with others. He or she aims to pinpoint the social problems, conduct research, and do everything possible to understand interaction in human associations. The sociologist is particularly interested in the *why* of human interaction.

The social worker is interested in understanding people and how they behave in association with others; he or she is particularly concerned about helping these same people solve the problems they have and improving their social functioning. Whereas the sociologist generally spends most of his or her time in study and in ferreting out the facts, the social worker tries to understand the client or the community, to make an appropriate diagnosis, and to proceed with treatment, thereby helping solve the problems and change the situations to bring about better adjustment.

PSYCHIATRY AND SOCIAL WORK

The roles of the social worker and psychiatrist are different but are of coordinate status. The psychiatrist and the social worker are frequently both members of the same professional team, and each has unique contributions to make.

The founding of the American Psychiatric Association, first known as the Association of Medical Superintendents of American Institutions for the Insane, took place in 1844. Great strides have been made during the intervening years, and today, more than 40,000 psychiatrists practicing in the United States are making significant contributions in increasing understanding of the dynamics of family life, of human personality and how it functions, and in helping many individuals with various kinds of personal and emotional disturbances.

One psychiatrist states that the major difference between psychiatry and social work is that the psychiatrist deals with the treatment of illness and the medical model whereas the social worker focuses on problems and strengths in human relationships. The psychiatrist places stress on intrapersonal dynamics, often delving into and handling unconscious motivation and related factors, whereas the social worker utilizes environmental and community resources, usually operating within the conscious level of behavior.

Psychiatry and social work have many things in common. Both professions involve work with people who possess personal and social problems. Both help people improve their relationships with others. Both have considerable interest and sensitivity in the ability to understand and direct feelings and emotions.

Several differences stand out between social work and psychiatry. The social worker tends to utilize the total community resources, sometimes tapping many material resources, economic and otherwise, in improving social relationships. The psychiatrist deals with patients on a medical basis, prescribes medication and hospitalization, if needed, and tends to focus on the

unconscious, intrapsychic factors, working particularly with individual personality reorganization. With the advent of new drugs, drug therapy has become common to the psychiatrist in the treatment of people with emotional illness. The social worker often works with the marriage and/or family as a whole, rather than just the individual. Ordinarily, serious mental disturbances are handled by the psychiatrist; yet social workers use psychiatric understandings in diagnosis and treatment, and sometimes work directly with individuals and families who are seriously disturbed.

Psychiatry tends to focus on pathology and the healing of illness; social work concentrates on individual strengths and the development of potential. The psychiatrist is particularly interested in the internal dynamics of individual and group behavior. The social worker is especially concerned about social functioning involving social and community factors and interactions.

PSYCHOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK

The psychologist and social worker are often members of the same professional team, particularly in treatment clinics and related settings. Nevertheless, many people raise questions about the overlapping and the differences between the two.

Psychology is the science of the mind; it seeks to study, explain, and change behavior of people. The psychologist is particularly interested in understanding the individual and his or her behavior.

Psychology and social work operate on some common grounds. Both are interested in the behavior of people, particularly in their interactional patterns, although the psychologist focuses mainly on individual behavior and the social worker on social functioning. They both seek the thinking and feeling processes of people.

In regard to differences, psychologists have an area entirely unto themselves in the field of testing and measurements. Psychologists study biological factors as well as social factors related to individual behavior. The psychologist is particularly interested in the individual attributes of people and aims to understand their characteristics and behavior. On the other hand, some psychologists, particularly clinical psychologists, go beyond the study phase and work directly with people in the helping process. These activities overlap some with social work, and yet the focus seems to be different when considered as a totality. The psychologist usually works with individuals on a rather intensive basis and sometimes becomes a psychotherapist. Conversely, the social worker is particularly interested in the social functioning and relationships of clients and in utilizing community resources to meet clients' personal and social problems.

A clarifying tribute was paid to social work by a graduate student who reported:

It may sound naive, but I was most impressed by the philosophy underlying the principles used in social work. I am in psychology, and while I am certain psychology operates from the same philosophy, this had never been spelled out. What I am referring to is emphasis on human worth and dignity which would seem to stem from a Judeo-Christian ethic and also the belief in democratic processes and an attempt to make this work at the community level—not only in community organization, but in case and group work as well.

COUNSELING AND SOCIAL WORK

Some people confuse the role and functions of the counselor with that of the social worker. There are many kinds of counselors, but only three are discussed here: the school counselor, the marriage counselor, and the rehabilitation counselor.

The school counselor is usually trained in educational psychology. He or she ordinarily works with students on a short-term basis, helping them particularly with vocational choices and academic problems. The school counselor and the social worker share much in common. The social worker tends to be more intensive, works with the client longer, focuses more on the family constellation, and utilizes community resources. The school counselor may also use testing to better understand the student and his or her situations.

The marriage counselor may receive basic training from any of several graduate fields of study, only one of which is social work. He or she is then required to have clinical experience under supervision. In one sense, then, social work is a part of marriage counseling. In another sense, marriage counseling is one particular emphasis in social work. The differences arise across the variations in graduate training and professional experiences.

The rehabilitation counselor is one who usually is trained in educational psychology, is skilled in the use of testing, and focuses attention and abilities on the individual and his or her immediate problems of vocational rehabilitation. In situations where both a counselor and a social worker are part of the team in rehabilitation, the counselor ordinarily helps with the testing, the short-term counseling, and related activities. The social worker usually assists with the emotional and/or family problems, has fewer cases, and works with clients more intensively.

SOCIAL WORK IN THE WORLD TODAY

Social work is emerging as an important profession in the modern world. As we noted earlier, the NASW has 150,000 members. In December 1961, provision was made for professionally trained and experienced social workers to become members of the Academy of Certified Social Workers, which gave them additional professional status; more than 20,000 qualified. By 2004, some 64,000 were certified.

Social work today is utilized in a variety of settings and agencies. Some of the important ones are psychiatric, medical, marriage, and family counseling; the school; rehabilitation; corrections; public welfare; workplace; drug abuse; and child welfare. Schools of social work train a student to work in any agency, giving him or her generic understandings, skills, and attitudes that make it possible to function adequately.

Social work is becoming more important because thousands of persons are benefiting from its services and are telling their friends and associates who also have problems of its many values and services. People are not only being helped with personal and family problems but also with neighborhood, national, and even international difficulties. A prominent American, on returning from a trip abroad, made the statement that what the United States needs most of all to improve its foreign policy and relations is to have trained social workers as State Department attachés where each of the official government representatives works and lives. Trained social workers in foreign countries



Human Rights & Justice

Critical Thinking Question:

What is the connection between human rights and justice and international social work?

would understand the local people and work with them where they are, helping them help themselves and interpret the United States in a much more favorable light than in the past.

One area in which social work services are expanding is in international social work. For many years, the social work profession has been an important part of both the American Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross. International social work services have been an important part of the United Nations' efforts to rehabilitate war-torn Kosovo and to bring aid and comfort to sub-Saharan Africa and their fight against AIDS. Social work services are also becoming an even more important part of international adoption services. Starting in 2004, the State Department is requiring all foreign adoption agencies to have full-time social workers on their staffs before the State Department will certify these agencies and permit them to provide adoptive services to American citizens.

This expansion in international social work services provides new and challenging opportunities for the social work profession. For the past decade, the University of Utah College of Social Work and the American University in Bulgaria have been working together to improve the quality of social work services at the Bulgarian campus. By utilizing in-service training, educational workshops, consultation, and faculty and student exchanges, the quality of social work services has been improving at the American University in Bulgaria. One of the more unique and challenging components of this joint program has been creating summer field placements in Bulgaria for students from the University of Utah College of Social Work. These summer internships have enriched the programs of both universities and helped establish a student counseling center at the American University in Bulgaria.

International social work provides a new challenge for schools of social work. At the University of Utah College of Social Work, student interest has increased to the point that a practice emphasis in international social work has been created for second-year MSW students. The international social work practice emphasis requires students to complete six semester hours of course work that focuses on international social work along with an optional practicum or internship in a social service agency that works with international clients and their families. One such social service agency is the Hartland Partnership Center in Salt Lake City, Utah, that serves 1,000 apartment residents including adults and children, 75 percent of whom are nonnative English speakers and half of whom are refugees from all over the world including Eastern Europe, Africa, and Asia. MSW students also have the option of completing a summer practicum or internship in a number of international settings including Bulgaria, Japan, Mexico, Nicaragua, Romania, Scotland, South Africa, Botswana, and the Czech Republic.

Current evidence indicates that social work is here to stay and that in the decades ahead it will likely grow and expand its services, helping more people with personal, family, and community problems, especially related to adequate social functioning.

SUMMARY

However fast-moving and uncertain today's world may be, people are still at its core. People have problems that invite professional assistance: personal, family, and community. Social welfare is an important aspect of the modern

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way of life. Social work is a profession that focuses particularly on helping people solve their personal, family, and community problems through enhancing social functioning. It emphasizes human values and the intrinsic worth of all people.

The basic functions of social work are (1) restoration of impaired social functioning, (2) provision of social services, and (3) prevention.

Social work shares some knowledge and skills with sociology, psychiatry, psychology, and counseling, but it possesses distinguishing characteristics that set it apart from these disciplines.

Social work is moving ahead as a progressive profession in the helping services arena.

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CHAPTER REVIEW



Log onto **www.mysocialworklab.com** and answer the questions below. (*If you did not receive an access code to MySocialWorkLab with this text and wish to purchase access online, please visit www.mysocialworklab.com.*)

1. Watch the core competency video dealing with professional identity, “Professional Roles and

Boundaries.” How does a social worker elicit information from a client?

2. Why is it important for a social worker to tell a client what his/her role is as a social worker?

PRACTICE TEST The following questions will test your knowledge of the content found within this chapter. For additional assessment, including licensing-exam type questions on applying chapter content to practice, visit **MySocialWorkLab**.

1. Which of the following statements is incorrect?
 - a. Social work has a problem-solving function.
 - b. Social work practice is an art with a scientific and value foundation.
 - c. The knowledge needed for social work practice is determined by its goals.
 - d. None of the above.
2. Psychiatry and social work have much in common. One major difference between the two professions is that psychiatric practice is focused more on:
 - a. The use of medications.
 - b. Unconscious behavior.
 - c. Dream interpretation.
 - d. Cognitive therapy.
3. According to the NASW, how many people currently hold social work degrees?
 - a. 300,000.
 - b. 400,000.
 - c. 500,000.
 - d. 600,000.
4. Which of the following concepts do most social workers emphasize as the basic building block of the profession?
 - a. Research.
 - b. Relationship.
 - c. Catharsis.
 - d. Psychological testing and evaluation.
5. Discuss some of the characteristics that make social work a unique profession.

ASSESS YOUR COMPETENCE Use the following scale to rate your current level of achievement on the following concepts or skills associated with each competency presented in the chapter:

1	2	3
I can accurately describe the concept or skill	I can consistently identify the concept or skill when observing and analyzing practice activities	I can competently implement the concept or skill in my own practice

- _____ Differentiate between the terms *social work* and *social welfare*.
- _____ Identify at least eight of the sixteen distinguishing characteristics of the social work profession.
- _____ Discuss the differences between social work and the other helping professions, namely sociology, psychiatry, psychology, and counseling.