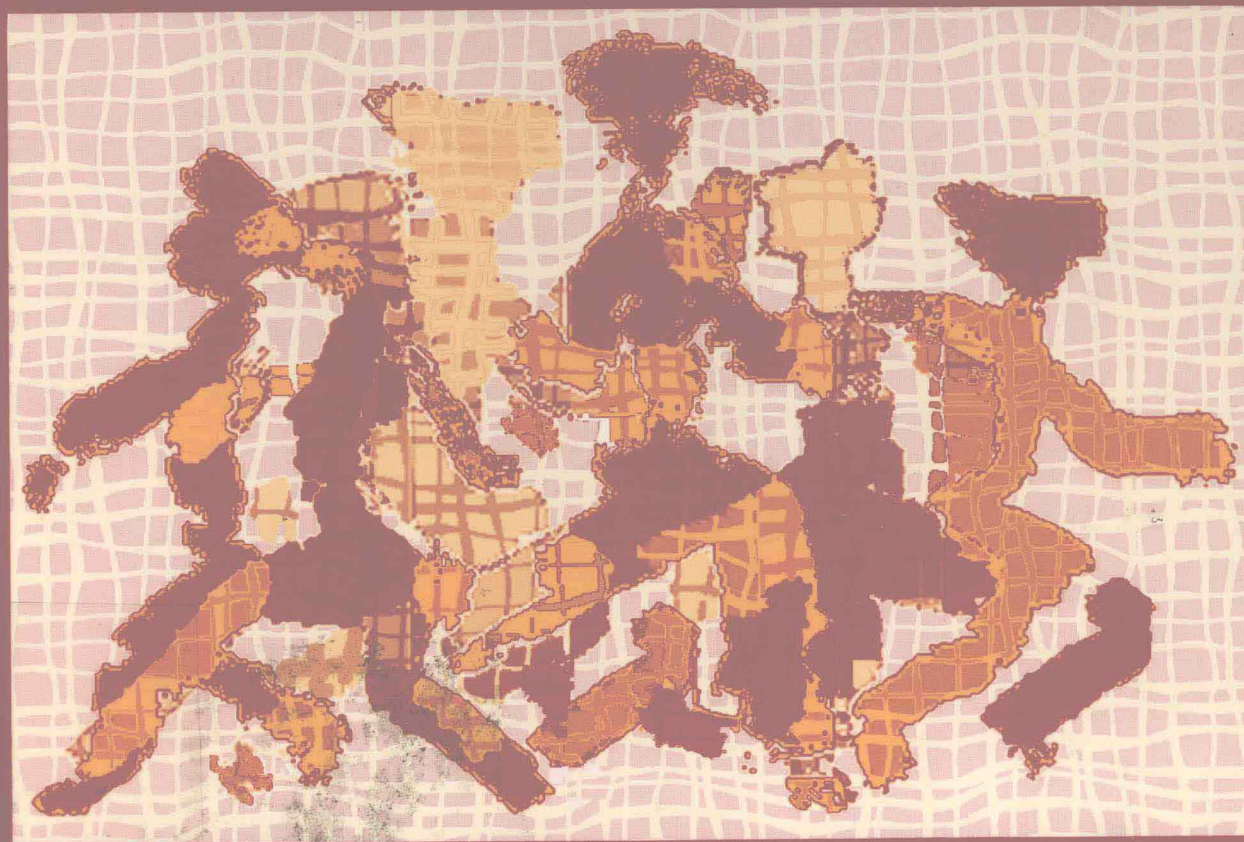


SECOND EDITION

HUMAN BEHAVIOR AND THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

SHIFTING PARADIGMS IN ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE
FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE



JOE M. SCHRIVER

second edition

Human Behavior and the Social Environment

*Shifting Paradigms in Essential
Knowledge for Social Work Practice*

Joe M. Schriver

University of Arkansas, Fayetteville

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This edition is dedicated to Geraldine R. Schriver.
A most non-traditional woman living in a most traditional world.
In appreciation for her unfailing support throughout my life.

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Preface to Second Edition

Since completing the first edition of this book, the need for an inclusive conceptual framework for approaching the Human Behavior and the Social Environment (HBSE) foundation area of social work education has become increasingly apparent and urgent to me. It has also become increasingly apparent to me that because it is the location within the social work curriculum charged with presenting and integrating a tremendous amount of multidisciplinary knowledge upon which to build social work practice skills and wisdom, HBSE has received far too little attention. The conceptual framework built around the notions of traditional and alternative paradigms presented in this book, provides one means for addressing this need and for expanding our attention to this essential social work foundation area. This framework is intended to provide room to integrate within HBSE the more recently articulated social work education foundation areas: social and economic justice, values and ethics, diversity and populations at risk. In addition, it is intended to help the student and practitioner gain access to an ever-increasing number of tools for carrying out effective culturally competent social work research and practice.

This edition retains the original chapter titles and organization. However, within this structure substantive changes have been made. The illustrative readings have been updated and are placed in chapters more evenly. The readings have also been placed at the end of chapters to create a more uninterrupted flow of text narrative. A number of knowledge/content areas have received increased attention in this edition. Both traditional (positivistic) and alternative (postmodern, naturalistic, heuristic) research approaches for building knowledge of HBSE have been expanded. There is considerably more content dealing with persons with disabilities. Significant content has been added in the area of spirituality. Additional attention is also given to such alternative theories as chaos and complexity theory and to other systems-related approaches such as Gaia. Content has been added on specific approaches to alternative research such as heuristic and naturalistic research. Additional attention has been given to specific assessment approaches, both traditional and alternative, to assist the reader in connecting knowledge of human behavior and the social environment to application of this information in the practice of social work. This has been done through the use of the notion of “tools” for social workers. This is especially the case in the expansion of content on strengths-based approaches.

This edition includes increased attention to the complexity and richness of human diversity, especially in the areas of diversity within diversity and multiple diversities. The multiple and complex meanings attached to the concepts of culture, race

and ethnicity are explored more extensively. Whiteness and development of white identity receives attention in this edition. Content on emerging technology and its impact on human behavior and the social environment at multiple levels has been added. This edition, for example, includes new content on virtual communities and each chapter includes internet search terms the reader can use to explore the vast information about HBSE available through the world wide web.

Preface to the First Edition

Social workers have too often interpreted integration of knowledge from other disciplines as synonymous with reducing that knowledge to the lowest common denominator. We have also used a limited number of disciplines from which we integrate knowledge for informing our practice and thinking. We have neglected important sources of knowledge and processes for gaining knowledge outside the narrow confines of the social and behavioral sciences. Even in these areas we have limited ourselves to only a few disciplines, primarily sociology and psychology. We have failed to recognize, appreciate, and use the full range of the arts and sciences. In so doing, we have cheated ourselves out of some of the most current, exciting, and challenging streams of thought. What is more problematic, we are denying the people with and for whom we work important new avenues for defining, pursuing, and resolving many of the problems with which we must deal.

Not a small part of this conundrum has been oversimplification, resulting from reliance on only one or a few traditional paradigms from which to pursue understanding and action. This is the case not only in social work; a positivistic, hierarchical, Eurocentric, patriarchal paradigm has dominated and held power over virtually all fields of knowledge, from physics to history to the arts. This unfortunately has led too often to a belief in only one route to only one answer rather than many routes to many answers.

Unlike many other disciplines, including the natural sciences, mathematics, the arts, and the humanities, social work, with a few and notable exceptions, has not moved far into the ambiguous waters of new paradigms for creating, communicating, and expanding knowledge-creation processes. This presents special difficulties for social workers, because paradigms that appreciate ambiguity and change can be especially beneficial to a field devoted to working with constantly changing and ever ambiguous humans. The concept of ambiguity is used here in a very positive sense. Ambiguity is intended to imply a presence, a richness, a source of understanding, rather than an absence, a poverty, a source of unhappy confusion.

Alternative paradigms for creating knowledge and for perceiving the world around us offer exciting and largely untouched possibilities. Alternative ways of viewing the world such as interpretive, consensual, non-Eurocentric, and feminist perspectives can add much to what we know and what we need to know to *do* social work. They require us, however, to drop some comfortable stances and instead to embrace uncertainty, ambiguity and, yes, even chaos. Such a change requires us to critically examine some long-held and cherished paradigms. While traditional paradigms have offered much guidance and assistance in addressing important issues, they often

have been taken as givens, as comprehensive, as timely and timeless ways of knowing the worlds around us. These paradigms have become hegemonic and have largely gone unexamined, uncriticized, unchallenged.

The existing dominating paradigms have not been closely examined for their underlying assumptions, values, and politics. They often have, in fact, been assumed to be beyond values and politics. New and alternative paradigms recognize the inherent nature of values and of politics in any world view. They are explicit about the poetic and political nature of world views and the systems of knowledge that emerge from those world views. They are explicit not only about presences but about absences within the systems of knowledge that are built, communicated, and upon which human action is based.

To achieve equity between traditional and alternative paradigms as the foundations upon which we build social-work practice requires risk taking, relinquishing privileges (for many of us), and transferring power in its many and complex forms. This book offers but a beginning in this exciting and, I believe, absolutely essential adventure. It presents some existing efforts to challenge traditional paradigms, and it attempts to illuminate some new and alternate ways of knowing and understanding human behavior and the social environment. It also presents traditional paradigms and theories of human behavior and the social environment that flow from traditional worldviews. I hope that this book will serve as a series of bridges and avenues over which we might travel to new ways of knowing and doing. Our task here is to embark on a journey that will take us to many different perspectives and disciplines by which we might arrive at more holistic understandings of human behavior and the social environment.

A NOTE ABOUT BIAS AND THE AUTHOR

I should make explicit, though it is no doubt obvious from the above discussion, that I am biased. I recognize the contributions of traditional perspectives and approaches to creating and valuing knowledge, but I believe that we as humans will not realize our collective (and I believe individual) potential for well-being as long as we do not embrace alternative perspectives and worldviews such as those described in this book. Therefore, while traditional perspectives and paradigms are presented in this book, the reader should keep in mind that the author generally finds these perspectives lacking. This author believes that the perspectives used to define and describe “normal” or “optimal” human behavior and experience too often represent the beliefs and realities of only a privileged few. This privileged few too often includes only those who have the power, the good fortune, the gender, the color, the wealth, or the sexual orientation consistent with and reflected in traditional perspectives and worldviews.

The reader should also be aware that, though in many respects this book is a critique of traditional paradigm thinking, this author is a product of the traditional institutions that create and enforce those traditional perspectives and worldviews.

This author, too, shares many of the characteristics of the “privileged few.” Therefore, writing this book has been an effort to question, to examine and to expand my own worldview.

PLAN OF THE BOOK

This book begins with a presentation of the basic purposes and foundations of social work and social work education. Principles, and fundamental concepts necessary for acquiring and organizing knowledge about human behavior and the social environment (HBSE) are also presented. Next, a conceptual framework for thinking about both traditional and alternative ways in which knowledge is created and influenced is outlined. This conceptual framework is accompanied by discussion of some widely used approaches and fundamental themes guiding social workers in the selection, organization, and use of knowledge about human behavior and the social environment. The book then uses the notions of traditional and alternative paradigms to organize and present a variety of models, theories and concepts concerning HBSE.

At least one full chapter (two chapters are included on individual behavior and development) is devoted to content about each of the social system levels required of professional social work education by the Curriculum Policy Statements (CPS) of the Council on Social Work Education. Knowledge for practice with individuals, families, groups, organizations and communities as well as content on the interaction among these systems are presented.

Throughout the book a series of “Illustrative Readings” is provided to give additional depth and perspective in a variety of areas. These readings are also intended to extend content in the text emphasizing the importance of including the widest possible range of different human voices and experiences in our efforts to more fully understand HBSE.

In Chapter 1 broad concepts, core concerns, and basic assumptions addressed in the book are presented. This chapter addresses the place of “Human Behavior and the Social Environment” as one of the essential foundation areas of social work education. It outlines the fundamental assumptions underlying the content of the book. The concept of paradigm is defined along with discussion of its implications for social workers. The core values and purposes of social work outlined in the Curriculum Policy Statements of the Council on Social Work Education are summarized and placed in the context of this book. Guidance is offered in this chapter for analyzing paradigms from the perspective of social work values. The importance of critical thinking and historical perspective when thinking about worldviews and the dynamics of social change is discussed. This chapter emphasizes the importance of understanding the complex and multiple meanings of such fundamental concepts as culture, ethnicity and race. The interconnections of these concepts with those of power and empowerment are also addressed.

Chapter 2 provides a conceptual framework for organizing a wide range of knowledge for social work practice. This framework is built upon the foundations

of traditional and alternative paradigms for creating and using knowledge for practice. Traditional and alternative paradigms are outlined according to five basic dimensions of each paradigm. The traditional paradigm is presented through discussion of five processes and products that characterize the “ways of knowing” and major influences determining what is “worth knowing” in traditional paradigm thinking. These five dimensions are: 1) Positivistic, scientific, objective, and quantitative approaches to creating and valuing knowledge; as well as the powerful influences of 2) Masculinity/Patriarchy; 3) Whiteness; 4) Separateness, impersonal, competitive perspectives; and 5) Privilege. The alternative paradigm is presented using five processes and products that characterize “ways of knowing” and major influences determining what is “worth knowing” in alternative paradigm thinking. These five dimensions are: 1) Interpretive, intuitive, subjective, qualitative approaches to creating and valuing knowledge; as well as the significant influences of 2) Feminism; 3) Diversity; 4) Interrelatedness, personal and integrative perspectives; and 5) Oppressions.

Chapter 3 incorporates content on some of the fundamental issues, concerns and tools important to social workers in efforts to develop and use knowledge for practice. This chapter attempts to integrate some of the themes of alternative paradigm thinking with existing and emerging perspectives and tools in social work. This chapter addresses the importance of metaphor, the appreciation of ambiguity, the significance of language and words, the interrelatedness of personal and political issues, and the importance of inclusiveness in gaining a social work perspective. This chapter emphasizes the importance of assessment in social work as the process of using or applying knowledge of HBSE in social work practice. It outlines a number of traditional, mid-range, and alternative theoretical approaches to understanding HBSE.

Chapters 4 and 5 are devoted to presenting and examining traditional and alternative theories and models of individual development. Chapter 6 presents content on familiness from traditional and alternative perspectives. Chapter 7 is devoted to content on small group systems and functioning from both traditional and alternative standpoints. Chapter 8 focuses on organizational and management theories, both traditional and alternative. Chapter 9 addresses traditional and alternative notions of community. Chapter 10 presents implications for using alternative paradigm thinking as a means of integrating all the foundation areas of social work education—HBSE, Practice, Policy, Research, Field, Social and Economic Justice, Values and Ethics, Diversity and Populations at Risk.

The book is intended for use in one or two course HBSE sequences in baccalaureate or graduate social work programs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Since the first edition was completed I have had the good fortune to meet many colleagues who have either used the text or found its approach interesting enough to attend one of several sessions I have conducted on the conceptual framework used in the book at CSWE APM and BPD Annual Conferences during the past four

years. Through these discussions of both the strengths and limitations of the book I have undoubtedly learned more than I have taught. For the privilege of these exchanges I am extremely grateful. I hope the benefits I received are shared through this edition.

There are a number of people who have positively influenced my life and my work over the years through their support and/or their modeling of the values and principles central to social work. Among these people (I am no doubt inadvertently leaving someone out) are: Doug Burnham at Eastern Kentucky University, Carol Deanow at Salem State College, Lorrie Greenhouse Gardella at St. Joseph College, Patty Gibbs at West Virginia University, John Hill at University of Arkansas at Little Rock, Grafton Hull, Jr. at Indiana University, Mit Joyner at Westchester University, Gary Lowe at East Carolina University, Patricia Lockett at University of Tennessee, Noreen Mokuau at University of Hawaii, Judy Noel at Northeast Louisiana University, Bernie Newman at Temple University, Wilhelmenia Rembert at Winthrop University, Andrea Stewart at University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff, Anne Summers at Southwest Missouri State University, Rebecca Turner at Jacksonville State University, and Scott Wilson at the Council on Social Work Education.

I am especially indebted to my students over the past twenty years and especially to the students in my classes at the University of Arkansas. You have had the patience and the intellectual curiosity to struggle with me through the complexities and ambiguities of the human condition. You have taught me a great deal and the book is stronger as a result. I hope you have gained from the adventure as well. My colleagues at the University of Arkansas, Betty Guhman, John King, Wanda Wahnee Priddy, Debby Hall, Glenda House and Bev Steimla provided both encouragement and a sympathetic ear throughout the process. I am especially appreciative of the hard work and constructive criticism provided by Gina Bennett. Gina, a former student and now a colleague, worked as research assistant for this edition and provided crucial consultation to me and the editors on both content and visual elements of the book.

I am appreciative of the work of the reviewers for both the first and this edition: Carol Deanow at Salem State College, Gary R. Lowe at East Carolina University, Doris Perry at Grand Valley State University, Pamela Higgins Saulsberry at Northeast Louisiana University, Rebecca Schilit at the University of Phoenix, Gregory R. Versen at James Madison University, M. Jenise Comer at Central Missouri State University, Gregory Hungerford at West Virginia University, and M. Jane Kvetko at Simpson College.

I noted in the first edition that my son, Andrew, who was approaching two years old at the time had taught me more about human behavior and the social environment than anyone else. Andrew, you continue to be the best of teachers as you share your curiosity and wonder about humans and our worlds. I have had two other significant teachers since the first edition. While Andrew has taught me so much about the wonder of unfolding and boundless human potential at the beginning of the life span, I have learned very directly through the deaths of my father-in-law, Elery Winton Owens, and my father, Edward Martin Schriver, a great deal about the challenges, growth potential and intense human emotions associated with the completion of the circle of life.

My editors, Judy Fifer and Karen Hanson, and my production editor, Myrna Breskin, have been incredibly understanding, supportive and flexible, especially as I struggled through the final phases of revision at the same time as the illness and death of my father. I am most appreciative.

My partner for twenty-three years, Cathy Owens Schriver, as with the first edition, through her endless patience, encouragement and hard work, has been more central to the completion of this project than I can express in words. I am truly grateful.

JMS

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