Human Behavior

A Multidimensional Approach

Elizabeth D. Hutchison

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Chapter Outline

Learning Objectives
Case Study 1.1: Joshua, Making a New Life
Human Behavior: Individual and Collective
A Multidimensional Approach
Personal Dimensions
Environmental Dimensions
Time Dimensions
Diversity, Inequality, and the Pursuit of Justice: A Global Perspective
Diversity
Inequality
Advancing Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice
Knowing and Doing
Knowledge About the Case
Knowledge About the Self
Values and Ethics
Scientific Knowledge: Theory and Research
Theory
Empirical Research
Critical Use of Theory and Research
Organization of the Book
Implications for Social Work Practice
Key Terms
Active Learning
Web Resources

Learning Objectives

1.1 Recognize one's own emotional and cognitive reactions to a case study.

1.2 Outline the elements of a multidimensional person-in-environment approach to human behavior.

1.3 Advocate for an emphasis on diversity; inequality; social, economic, and environmental justice; and a global perspective in social work's approach to human behavior.

1.4 Summarize four ingredients of knowing how to do social work.

1.5 Analyze the roles of theory and research in guiding social work practice.

(Continued)

Copyright ©2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

(Continued)

1.6 Apply knowledge of the multidimensional person-in-environment framework; diversity; inequality; and the pursuit of human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice to recommend guidelines for social work engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation.

CASE STUDY 1.1

JOSHUA, MAKING A NEW LIFE

Joshua spent the first 10 years of his life in the city of Uvira in the South Kivu Province of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), formerly Zaire. He is the fourth oldest child in a family that included 11 children. He is of the Banyamulenge ethnic group, and his family spoke Swahili, Kinyamulenge, and French while living in Uvira. He was raised Christian in the United Methodist Church. Joshua's family lived comfortably in Uvira. His mother owned a boutique that sold clothes, shoes, lotions, accessories, and petroleum. His father bought cows, had them butchered, and then sold the meat.

Of his life in Uvira, Joshua recalls that a typical day included getting up for breakfast and spending the day at school. After school, he did chores and sometimes helped his mom in her boutique. Then he played soccer until dinner. It was a good life.

All of that changed sometime in 2003. The long-standing Congo civil war was getting closer to his family's home in Uvira. Joshua recalls hearing gunshots about 15 miles away. His family left their home in Uvira in the middle of the night by foot and walked across the Burundi border to the nearby Gatumba Refugee Camp run by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). They were joined on the walk and in the camp by a lot of other people from Uvira. Life was hard in the crowded camp where people slept in tents, with mosquitos buzzing around. Sometimes there was not enough water or food for the whole camp. The hygiene in the camp was not good, and a lot of people were sick. Joshua lost a lot of friends and family in the camp. He recalls that the children were not able to attend school in the camp.

A terrible thing happened on August 13, 2004. There was a heinous massacre at the Gatumba Refugee Camp, killing 166 refugees and seriously wounding over 100 more. News reports indicate that refugees who were members of the Banyamulenge ethnic group were the specific target of the massacre. Joshua's mom died of gunshot wounds, and his 8-year-old sister's body was never found. The whole camp was burned down, and Joshua's family was separated. Joshua, who was 11 years old at the time, ran with his 7-month-old sister. They were first in the hospital and then taken in by a stranger with whom they stayed for several weeks before finding their father and other siblings. Their father had been shot during the massacre and was taken to the hospital. Two of Joshua's siblings were also found in the hospital. Other siblings had found safety a few miles away at a makeshift camp. After finding his father and siblings, Joshua and his 7-month-old sister stayed with an extended family relative in Bujumbura, Burundi, for about 4 months. His father went to a hospital in Kenya, and some siblings were in an orphanage. At some point, Joshua and some older siblings went back to Uvira in the DRC. They stayed in the house where they had lived before they fled and were able to go to school again, but not right away.

In 2006, Joshua's father was discharged from the hospital; came back to Uvira; and took all the family back to Bujumbura, Burundi, where he filed for refugee status. Joshua and his siblings went to a few interviews for the refugee status application, but mostly the process was handled by his father, and Joshua doesn't know much about it.

In May 2007, Joshua's family, consisting of a single father and 10 children, arrived in Boise, Idaho. Joshua was almost 14 years old, and he felt excited and eager to begin school. He was also struck by how cold the weather was. Joshua's father received Supplemental Security Income (SSI) because of disability related to wounds from the massacre. His father also had to continue with treatment for his wounds, was hospitalized from time to time, and continues to receive periodic treatment. His father is now ordained as a pastor in a local African church and currently serves on a committee for the local African community. He received his citizenship in 2013.

The language issue was really hard at first for Joshua, but it was even harder for his older siblings and father. Joshua graduated from high school in 2011, from community college in 2013, and from university in May 2017. He received citizenship in September 2017

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

and was married in October 2017. He coaches local Nations United and Boys & Girls Club soccer teams and works as the employment specialist and donations manager at the Agency for New Americans, the refugee resettlement agency that sponsored his family during their resettlement. All of Joshua's surviving siblings still live in Boise. Unfortunately, his oldest sister died in November 2016. She had been shot in the head during the massacre, and her injuries left her paralyzed on the left side of her body. She had gotten married after the family arrived in Boise and left six children behind when she died. Joshua says the family misses her very much.

Story provided by Agency for New Americans, Boise, Idaho

Human Behavior: Individual and Collective

As eventful as it has been, Joshua's story is still unfolding. As a social worker, you will become a part of many unfolding life stories, and you will want to have useful ways to think about those stories and effective ways to be helpful to people like Joshua, his family, and other refugees from the DRC, as well as the many other people you will encounter in your social work journey. This book and its companion volume, *Dimensions of Human Behavior: The Changing Life Course*, provide ways for you to think about the nature and complexities of human behavior—the people and situations at the center of social work practice. To begin to do that, we must first clarify the purpose of social work and the approach it takes to individual and collective human behavior. This is laid out in the 2015 *Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards* of the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE):

> The purpose of the social work profession is to promote human and community well-being. Guided by a person-in-environment framework, a global perspective, respect for human diversity, and knowledge based on scientific inquiry, the purpose of social work is actualized through its quest for social and economic justice, the prevention of conditions that limit human rights, the elimination of poverty, and the enhancement of the quality of life for all persons. (p. 5)

The CSWE was formed in 1952 to bring the accreditation of social work education under a single body, bringing together separate accrediting bodies for medical social work, psychiatric social work, and generalist practice to accredit both undergraduate and graduate social work education programs. Three years later, in 1955, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) was formed by consolidating seven existing organizations, the American Association of Social Work plus specialized associations of psychiatric social workers, medical social workers, school social workers, group workers, community organizing social workers, and social work researchers. Both the newly formed CSWE and NASW were dedicated to identifying what was common to all social work practice. The CSWE immediately set to work to develop curriculum policy and accreditation standards for a social work education that could prepare students for all practice settings and social work roles.

In these early efforts to identify the common base of social work, presenters of one workshop at the 1952 meeting of the American Association of Schools of Social Work, a forerunner of CSWE, argued that "knowledge and understanding of human behavior is considered an indispensable base for social work education and for all social work activity" (Social Welfare History Archives, 1952, p. 1). I agree wholeheartedly with that statement. Whether we are concerned about

- how an individual client can get better control of emotions and implicit cognitive biases;
- how a family can improve its communication patterns;
- how a group can become more cohesive;
- how to maximize the benefits of increasing diversity in an organization;
- how a community can become empowered to solve problems;
- or the most effective ways to organize for human rights and social, economic, and environmental justice;

we are concerned about human behavior.

In the first working definition of social work practice after the formation of CSWE and NASW, in 1958

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

Harriet Bartlett linked the person-in-environment perspective on human behavior to the definition of social work (Kondrat, 2008). That connection has endured for 6 decades. In discussion of social work competencies, the CSWE 2015 curriculum policy statement notes that social workers "apply knowledge of human behavior and the social environment, person-in-environment, and other multidisciplinary theoretical frameworks" to engage with, assess, intervene with, and evaluate practice with "individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities" (CSWE, 2015, pp. 8–9).

As you think about Joshua's story, you may be thinking, as I was, not only about Joshua but also about the different environments in which he has lived and the ways in which both Joshua and his environments have changed over time.

In this book, we use the language of "person and environment" rather than "person-in-environment" because the emphasis is not always on the individual person. Although the person-in-environment (person and environment) construct noted in the CSWE educational policy is an old idea in social work, it still is a very useful way to think about human behavior—a way that can accommodate such contemporary themes in human life as the emotional life of the brain, human–robot relationships, social media, human rights, economic globalization, and environmental justice. This book elaborates and updates the person and environment construct that has guided social work intervention since the earliest days of the profession. The element of time is added to the person and environment construct to call attention to the dynamic nature of both people and environments. This is important in rapidly changing societies around the world. Early social workers could not have imagined television and air travel, much less cell phones, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Tumblr, or online courses. And, no doubt, the world 50 years from now would seem as "foreign" to us as the United States seemed to Joshua and his family when they first arrived here.

As they live their lives in the natural environment, humans join with other humans to develop physical landscapes and structures, technologies, and social systems that form the context of their lives. These landscapes, structures, technologies, and systems are developed by collective action, by humans interacting with each other. Once developed, they then come to shape the way humans interact with each other and their natural environments. Structures, technologies, and systems can support or deter individual and collective well-being. Usually, they benefit some individuals and groups while causing harm to others. Social workers are concerned about both individual and collective behavior and well-being. When I talk about human behavior, I am referring to both the individual and collective behavior of humans. Sometimes we focus on individual behavior, and other times we are more concerned about the social systems created by human interaction.

This book identifies multiple dimensions of both person and environment and draws on ongoing scientific inquiry, both conceptual and empirical, to examine the dynamic understanding of each dimension. Special attention is paid to globalization; diversity; human rights; and social, economic, and environmental justice in examination of each dimension. In this chapter, a multidimensional approach to person and environment is presented, followed by discussion of diversity, inequality, and the pursuit of social justice from a global perspective. After a brief discussion of the process by which professionals such as social workers move from knowing to doing, the chapter ends with a discussion of how scientific knowledge from theory and research informs social work's multidimensional understanding of human behavior.

A Multidimensional Approach

Social work's person and environment construct has historically recognized both person and environment as complex and **multidimensional**, that is, as having several identifiable dimensions. A **dimension** refers to a feature that can be focused on separately but that cannot be understood without also considering other features. This last piece is really important: Although we can focus on one dimension of a human story to help us think about that dimension more clearly, no one dimension can be understood without considering other dimensions as well. We are walking a treacherous path here by separating out the dimensions to explore each in some depth. The fear is that by doing so, we will reinforce the human tendency to think of these dimensions as things that are separate and unrelated rather than recognizing how they are all utterly intertwined. As neuroscientist Robert Sapolsky (2017, p. 5) warns "It's human behavior. And, it is indeed a mess, a subject involving brain chemistry, hormones, sensory cues, prenatal environment, early experience, genes, both biological and cultural evolution, and ecological pressures, among other things." In a similar vein, writing about child development, Arnold Sameroff (2010, P. 7) writes that "it is both child and parent, but it is also neurons and neighborhoods, synapses and schools, proteins and peers, and genes and governments." Think about

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

Joshua. What comes quickly to your mind as you think about the factors that influence his current behavior?

If we were writing a book focusing on only one type of behavior, such as aggression as Sapolsky (2017) writes about, we could demonstrate how all the elements of person and environment are intertwined to create that one type of behavior. Because, instead, we are writing a book that covers the wide range of human behaviors, both individual and collective behaviors, we organize the book around various dimensions of person and environment and do our best to illustrate how those dimensions are related to each other. For example, the chapter on cultures includes discussion of the neuroscience of prejudice as well as discussion of gene–culture co-evolution. We encourage you to pay particular attention to these discussions of the way in which different dimensions of person and environment are intertwined.

With an explosion of research across a number of disciplines in the past few decades, the trend has been to expand the range of dimensions of both person and environment folded into the person and environment construct. Time too can be thought of as multidimensional. Let's look at some of the dimensions of person, environment, and time in Joshua's story.

If we focus on the *person* in Joshua's story, we think about the conditions in the refugee camp that threatened his biological systems. We think about how he survived while many others died in the camp, where hygiene was poor and water and food were scarce. We also think about the biological damage done to members of his family at the time of the massacre and are reminded how humans often carry biological reminders of physically and emotionally traumatic situations. Joshua appears to have emotional resilience and good problem-solving skills, having had the discernment to run from the massacre with his baby sister, the fortitude to survive the perilous days while the family waited to be resettled in the United States, and the flexibility to adapt to a new life once he arrived in the United States. He was able to learn a new language and culture and plan for the future. Their Christian faith has been a source of comfort for him and his family as they adapted to a new environment.

If we focus on the *environment*, we see many influences on Joshua's story. Consider first the physical environment. Joshua lived a comfortable life in the city of Uvira, where he spent his days in school and was able to be outside playing soccer after chores were done. From there, he took a short walk across the Burundi border to a crowded and primitive refugee camp where he has memories of being attacked by mosquitoes. After the massacre, he, his father, and his siblings lived where they could—in camps, hospitals, and other people's homes. They were finally resettled in a city about the size of his original city of Uvira but where the climate was much colder. They were surrounded by mountains as they had been in Uvira. Joshua is once again able to be outside playing soccer.

Culture is a dimension of environment that exerts a powerful influence in Joshua's story. Ethnic culture clash was a large part of the Congo civil war, and Joshua and his family were of the Banyamulenge ethnic group that had been targets for ongoing discrimination and exclusion since the colonial period. Such cultural conflict is not new; historical analysis suggests that intercultural violence has actually declined in recent times (Pinker, 2011), but it continues to be a source of great international upheaval and the driving force behind refugee resettlement. As is true in many parts of the world, ethnic conflict is intertwined in the Congo with control over a natural resource, in this case coltan, a metallic ore used in electronics such as computers and cell phones (McMichael, 2017).

Joshua's story has been powerfully influenced by the geopolitical unrest that marked his young life in Africa. His relationships with social institutions have changed over time, and he has had to learn new rules based on his changing place in the social structure. Even though his country was engaged in civil war during much of his young life, it did not reach his city until he was 10 years old. Before that, his family lived in relative comfort and peace. His family was relieved to get to the United Nations refugee camp, but life there was hard, and ultimately the war followed them there, even though the camp was supposed to be protected by the Burundi government. Once they arrived in the United States, Joshua and his siblings were able to go to school again, to make their way economically, and to work toward citizenship in their adopted country.

Another dimension of the environment, family, is paramount to Joshua. He has suffered family loss and endured time when members of his family were separated before resettling in the United States. He has been lucky, however, to have his father and surviving siblings living nearby. Many refugee families end up spread across several continents, and that may be true for Joshua's extended family. Joshua now has a wife to count as family.

Small groups, organizations, and communities have been important forces in Joshua's life, but he has had little direct contact with social movements. His soccer teams are important small groups in the life he has created in Boise. He participates in small groups at church and in the African community in Boise. He is a member of the small staff group at the refugee resettlement agency.

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

Several organizations have been helpful to Joshua and his family since they fled Uvira. The refugee camp was an organization that brought initial safety but ultimately trauma and loss. Joshua's association with other organizations has been much more positive; he did well in several school organizations and has returned to work for the refugee resettlement agency that sponsored his family and assisted them to make a successful resettlement. The African Christian church where his father is a minister is a source of close relationships, spiritual connectedness, and continuity with life in Uvira.

Joshua and his family have needed to adapt their behavior to live in three different types of communities. In Uvira, they were surrounded by extended family, long-term friends and neighbors, and a church community. In the crowded refugee camp, disease and despair were common, and Joshua was not able to go to school. That community was split, with some being targeted for massacre while others were not. Now he lives in a city in southwestern Idaho in proximity to other refugees from the DRC and worships with many of them.

We don't know if Joshua is aware that the Gatumba Refugees Survivors Foundation (2018) has spearheaded a social movement to undertake inquiry about the Gatumba massacre, to return the Banyamulenge refugees to the DRC, and to develop memorial services for those who were killed and maimed in the massacre in cities across North America where the Banyamulenge refugees have resettled. We don't know how Joshua would feel about the goal to repatriate the Banyamulenge refugees, given that he has been living in Boise since he was 13 years old and seems to have put down deep roots there. The Boise community of Banyamulenge refugees might appreciate a memorial service in Boise, however, as they heal from the trauma of that massacre.

Time is also an important part of Joshua's story. His story, like all human stories, is influenced by the human capacity to live not only in the present time but also in past and future times. Escape, crowded camps, massacre, family loss and separation, and resettlement are past events in his family's life and can be vividly recalled. There were times in the family's life when they needed to focus on future possibilities with such questions as "Will our father get better?" and "Will we be granted refugee status, and if so when and where will we go?" This future thinking has had an enormous impact on the current circumstances of the family's lives. In the interview for this case study, Joshua engaged in thinking about his past life in Uvira and the refugee camp, as well as the massacre event, but for the most part, he lives largely in the present while imagining possibilities for the future with his wife, siblings, and father.

Joshua's story is also influenced by the historical times in which he has lived and is living. He has lived in a time of violent ethnic discord in his home country, and the civil strife continues in the DRC (Human Rights Watch, 2017). He is lucky to have lived in an era of international support for refugees, but in his personal life as well as his work at the refugee resettlement organization, he has seen hostility to refugees grow in the last political cycle. The times in which we live shape our behaviors in many ways.

Another way to think about the role of time in human behavior is to consider the way in which age, or life stage, influences behavior. Joshua notes that although learning English was difficult for him, it was much easier for him at age 13 than it was for his father and his older siblings. He finds this stage of his life, with school behind him and a new marriage, to be an exciting time with a future stretching out before him.

As suggested, social work has historically recognized human behavior as an interaction of person with environment, although the relative emphasis on different dimensions of person and environment has changed over time (see Kondrat, 2008). Today, a vast multidisciplinary literature is available to help us in our social work efforts. The good news is that the multifaceted nature of this literature provides a broad knowledge base for the varied settings and roles involved in social work practice. The bad news is that this literature is highly fragmented, scattered across a large number of fields. What we need is a structure for organizing our thinking about this multifaceted, multidisciplinary, fragmented literature.

The multidimensional approach provided in this book should help. This approach is built on the person–environment–time model described earlier. Although in this book we analyze specific dimensions of person and environment separately, including information on how our understanding of these dimensions has changed over time, keep in mind the earlier caution that *dimension* refers to a feature that can be focused on separately but cannot be understood without considering other features. The dimensions identified in this book were traditionally studied as detached or semidetached realities, with one dimension characterized as causing or leading to another. In recent years, however, behavioral science scholars have collaborated across disciplines, leading to exciting new ways of thinking about human behavior, which the contributing authors and I share with you. I emphasize again that I do not see the dimensions analyzed in this book as detached realities, and I am not presenting a causal model. I want instead to show how these dimensions work together, how they are interwoven with each other, and how many

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

possibilities are opened for social work practice when we think about human behavior in a multidimensional way. I am suggesting that humans engage in **multidetermined behavior**, that is, behavior that develops as a result of many causes. As Sapolsky (2017, p. 8) says, "It is impossible to conclude that behavior is caused by *a* gene, *a* hormone, *a* childhood trauma"—because all these factors and many others interact in one individual to produce unique results—"you have to think complexly about complex things" like human behavior. Exhibit 1.1 is a graphic overview of the dimensions of person, environment, and time discussed in this book. Exhibit 1.2 defines and gives examples of each dimension.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS 1.1

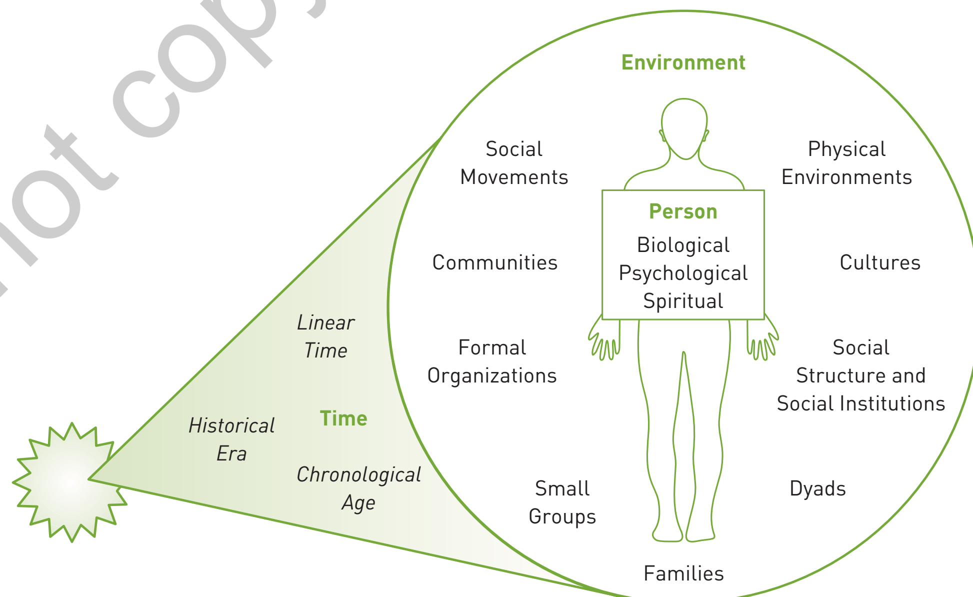
What courses have you taken that added to your understanding of human behavior? How does content from any of these courses help you to understand Joshua's story and how a social worker might have been helpful to Joshua and his family at any time during their resettlement? Do you agree that the person and environment construct is still useful for social work? Explain your answer.

Personal Dimensions

Any story could be told from the perspective of any person in the story. The story at the beginning of this chapter is told from Joshua's perspective, but it could have been told from the perspectives of a variety of other persons such as a member of a different ethnic group in the DRC, Joshua's father or one of his siblings, a staff member at the Gatumba refugee camp, the family in Burundi who took Joshua and his baby sister in, or the case manager at the refugee resettlement agency. You will want to recognize the multiple perspectives held by different persons involved in the stories of which you become a part in your social work activities.

You also will want tools for thinking about the various dimensions of the persons involved in these stories. In recent years, social work scholars, like contemporary scholars in other disciplines, have taken a *biopsychosocial approach* that recognizes human behavior as the result of interactions of integrated biological, psychological, and social systems (see Melchert, 2013; Sameroff, 2010; Sapolsky, 2017). In this approach, psychology—personality, emotion, cognition, and sense of self—is seen as inseparable from biology. Emotions and cognitions affect the health of the body and are affected by it (Smith, Fortin, Dwamena, & Frankel, 2013). Neurobiologists are identifying the brain circuitry involved in thoughts and

EXHIBIT 1.1 ● Person, Environment, and Time Dimensions



Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

EXHIBIT 1.2 ● Definitions and Examples of Dimensions of Person, Environment, and Time

Dimension	Definition	Examples
Person		
Biological	The body's biochemical, cell, organ, and physiological systems	Nervous system, endocrine system, immune system, cardiovascular system, musculoskeletal system, reproductive system
Psychological	The mind and the mental processes	Cognitions (conscious thinking processes), emotion (feelings), self (identity)
Spiritual	The aspect of the person that searches for meaning and purpose in life	Themes of morality; ethics; justice; interconnectedness; creativity; mystical states; prayer, meditation, and contemplation; relationships with a higher power
Environment		
Physical	The natural and human-built material aspects of the environment	Water, sun, trees, buildings, landscapes
Culture	A system of knowledge, beliefs, values, language, symbols, patterns of behavior, material objects, and institutions that are created, learned, shared, and contested by a group of people	Values, ideology, symbols, language, norms, subcultures, countercultures
Social structure and social institutions	Social structure: a set of interrelated social institutions developed by human beings to provide stability to society and order to individual lives Social institutions: stable, organized, patterned sets of roles, statuses, groups, and organizations that provide a basis for behavior in particular areas of social life	Social structure: social class Social institutions: government, economy, education, health care, social welfare, religion, mass media, and family
Dyads	Two persons bound together in some way	Parent and child, romantic couple, social worker and client
Families	A social group of two or more persons, characterized by ongoing interdependence with long-term commitments that stem from blood, law, or affection	Nuclear family, extended family, chosen family
Small groups	Two or more people who interact with each other because of shared interests, goals, experiences, and needs	Friendship group, self-help group, therapy group, committee, task group, interdisciplinary team
Formal organizations	Collectivities of people, with a high degree of formality of structure, working together to meet a goal or goals	Civic and social service organizations, business organizations, professional associations
Communities	People bound either by geography or by network links (webs of communication), sharing common ties, and interacting with one another	Territorial communities such as neighborhoods; relational communities such as the social work community, the disability community, a faith community, a soccer league
Social movements	Consciously organized and sustained attempts by ordinary people working outside of established institutions to change some aspect of society	Civil rights movement, poor people's movements, disability movement, gay rights movement, environmental justice movement

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

Dimension	Definition	Examples
Time		
Linear time	Time in terms of a straight line	Past, present, future
Historical era	A discrete block of time in human history	Progressive Era, the Great Depression, 1960s
Chronological age	Age of a person measured in years, months, and days from the date the person was born; may also be described in terms of a stage of the human life course	Six months old (infancy), 15 years old (adolescence), 80 years old (late adulthood)

emotions (Davidson & Begley, 2012; Sapolsky, 2017). They are finding evidence that the human brain is wired for social life (Lieberman, 2013). They are also finding that the social environment has an impact on brain structure and processes and environments actually turn genes on and off. Environments influence biology, but the same environment acts on diverse genetic material (Hutchison, 2014). This can help us understand how some people survived and some did not before the massacre in the Gatumba refugee camp. Two people with the same genetic makeup and biological characteristics can have very different behavioral outcomes, and two people with very different genetic makeup and biological characteristics can have the same or similar behavioral outcomes. In addition, two people with the same or similar experiences with the environment can have very different behavioral outcomes, and two people with very different experiences with the environment can have the same or similar behavioral outcomes (Sameroff, 2010).

In recent years, social work scholars and those in the social and behavioral sciences and medicine have argued for greater attention to the spiritual dimension of persons as well (Pandya, 2016). Beginning in the late 20th century, a group of U.S. medical faculty and practitioners initiated a movement to reclaim medicine's earlier spiritual roots, and content on spirituality and health is now incorporated into the curricula of over 75% of U.S. medical schools (Puchalski, Blatt, Kogan, & Butler, 2014). Developments in neuroscience have generated new explorations of the unity of the biological, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of the person. For example, recent research has focused on the ways that emotions and thoughts, as well as spiritual states, influence the immune system and some aspects of mental health (Davidson & Begley, 2012). One national longitudinal study examined the role of spirituality in physical and mental health after the collective trauma of the 9/11 attacks and found that high levels of spirituality were associated with fewer infectious ailments, more positive emotions, and more immediate processing of the traumatic event in the 3 years following the attacks (McIntosh, Poulin, Silver, & Holman, 2011). Spirituality and religious affiliation appear to be a source of resilience for Joshua, his family, and the Boise African community. In this book, we give substantial coverage to all three of these personal dimensions: biological, psychological, and spiritual.

Environmental Dimensions

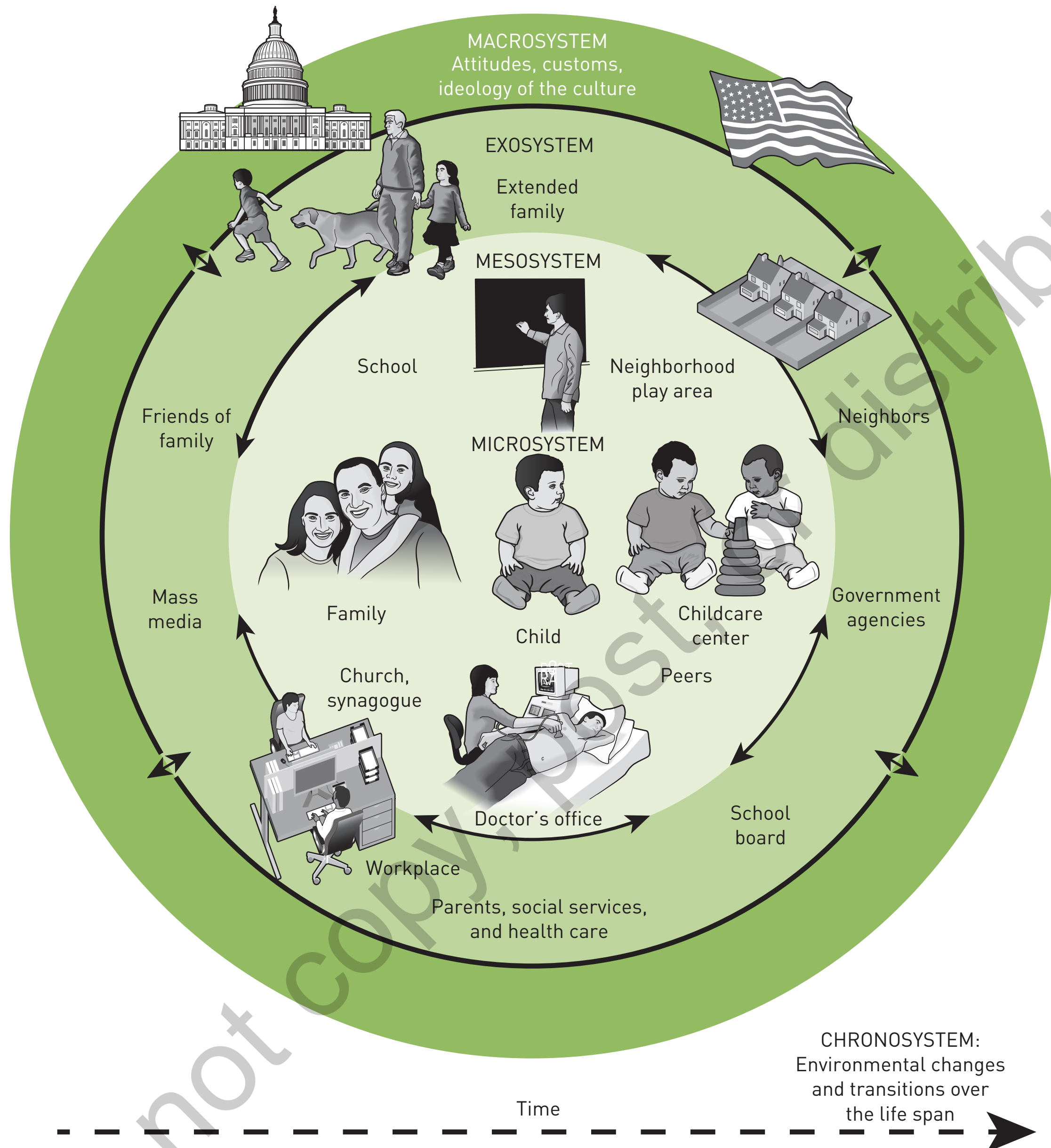
Social workers have always thought about the environment as multidimensional. As early as 1901, Mary Richmond (1917) presented a model of social work case coordination that took into account not only personal dimensions but also family, neighborhood, civic organizations, private charitable organizations, and public relief organizations. Several models for classifying dimensions of the environment have been proposed since Mary Richmond's time. Social workers (see, e.g., Ashford, LeCroy, & Williams, 2018) have been influenced by Uri Bronfenbrenner's (2005) ecological perspective, which identifies the five interdependent, nested categories or levels of systems presented in Exhibit 1.3. You might notice some similarities between Bronfenbrenner's model and the one presented in Exhibit 1.1. By adding chronosystems in his later work, Bronfenbrenner was acknowledging the importance of time in person–environment transactions, but this book presents a more fluid, less hierarchical model of person and environment than presented by Bronfenbrenner. Some social work models have included the physical environment (natural and built environments) as a separate dimension (see Norton, 2009). There is growing evidence of the impact of the physical environment on human well-being and growing concern about environmental justice issues in the physical environment.

To have an up-to-date understanding of the multidimensional environment, I recommend that social workers have knowledge about the eight dimensions of environment described in Exhibit 1.2 and presented as chapters in this book: the physical environment, cultures, social structure and social institutions, families, small groups, formal organizations, communities, and social movements. We also need knowledge about

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

EXHIBIT 1.3 ● Five Categories or Levels of Systems as Presented by Uri Bronfenbrenner



Source: Adapted from Bronfenbrenner and Morris, 2006.

Do not copy, post, or distribute

dyadic relationships—those between two people, the most basic social relationship. Dyadic relationships receive attention throughout the book and are emphasized in Chapter 5, which focuses on the psychosocial person. Simultaneous consideration of multiple environmental dimensions provides new possibilities for action, perhaps even new or revised approaches to social work practice.

These dimensions are neither mutually exclusive nor hierarchically ordered. For example, family is sometimes referred to as a social institution, families can also be considered small groups or dyads, and family theorists write about family culture. Remember, dimensions are useful ways of thinking about person–environment configurations, but we should not think of them as detached realities.

Copyright ©2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

Time Dimensions

When I was a doctoral student in a social work practice course, Professor Max Siporin began his discussion of social work assessment with this comment: "The date is the most important information on a written social work assessment." This was Siporin's way of acknowledging the importance of time in human behavior, of recognizing the ever-changing nature of both person and environment. The importance of time in human behavior is reflected in the 2006 finding that *time* is the most commonly used noun in print in the English language; *person* is the second most common (BBC News, 2006).

There are many ways to think about time. Physics is generally seen as the lead discipline for studying time, and quantum physics has challenged much about the way we think about time. Various aspects of time are examined by other disciplines as well, and there are a number of different ways to think about time. In this book and the companion volume *Dimensions of Human Behavior: The Changing Life Course*, we examine three dimensions of time that have been studied by behavioral scientists as important to the understanding of human behavior: linear time, historical era, and chronological age.

Linear time—time ordered like a straight line from the past through the present and into the future—is the most common way that humans think about time. Although it is known that people in some cultures and groups think of time as stationary rather than moving (Boroditsky, Fuhrman, & McCormick, 2011), contemporary behavioral science researchers are interested in what they call "mental time travel," the human ability to remember events from the past and to imagine and plan for the future (Eacott & Easton, 2012). The research on mental time travel has focused on the conscious processes of reminiscence and anticipation, but there is also considerable evidence that past events are stored as unconscious material in the brain and the body and show up in our thoughts and emotions (see Davidson & Begley, 2012; Sapolsky, 2017). Traces of past events also exist in the natural and built environments, for example, in centuries-old buildings or in piles of debris following a hurricane or tornado.

Sapolsky (2017) uses the perspective of linear time to demonstrate how different dimensions of person and environment influence a specific behavior. When a behavior occurs, we can think about the multiple influences on that behavior in the context of time:

1. *A second before the behavior*: What went on in the person's brain a second before the behavior?
2. *Seconds to minutes before the behavior*: What sensory input reached the brain?
3. *Hours to days before the behavior*: What hormones acted hours to days earlier to change how responsive the person was to particular sensory stimuli?
4. *Days to months before the behavior*: What features of the environment in the days and months before the behavior changed the structure and function of the person's brain and thus changed how it responded to hormones and environmental stimuli?
5. *Early development*: What genetic codes were created at the time of conception, and what elements of the fetal and early childhood environment shaped the structure and function of the brain and body and affected gene expression?
6. *Centuries to millennia before the behavior*: How has culture shaped the behavior of people living in that individual's group? What ecological factors, including the physical environment, helped shape that culture?

Linear time is measured by clocks and calendars. When I think of time, I tend to think of clocks, calendars, and appointments. And I often seem to be racing against time, allowing the clock to tell me when an event should begin and end. This is the way most people in affluent countries with market economies think of time. This approach to time has been called *clock time* (Zimbardo & Boyd, 2008). However, this approach to time is a relatively new invention, and many people in the contemporary world have a very different approach to time. In nonindustrialized countries, and in subcultures within industrialized countries, people operate on *event time*, allowing scheduling to be determined by events. For example, in agricultural societies, the most successful farmers are those who can be responsive to natural events—sunrise and sunset, rain, drought, temperature—rather than to scheduled events (Zimbardo & Boyd, 2008). That is the way my grandfather lived in rural Tennessee.

Clock time cultures often use the concept of **time orientation** to describe the extent to which individuals and collectivities are invested in the three temporal zones—past, present, and future. Research indicates that cultures differ in their time orientation. In most cultures, however, some situations call for us to be totally immersed in the present, others call for historical understanding of the past and its impact on the present, and still others call for

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

© John Foxx/ Stockbyte/ Thinkstock

PHOTO 1.1 Three dimensions of human behavior are captured in this photo—person, environment, and time.

attention to future consequences and possibilities. Psychologists Philip Zimbardo and John Boyd (2008) have been studying time orientation for more than 30 years and have identified the six most common time perspectives held in the Western world:

- the *past-positive*: invested in the past, focused on its positive aspects
- *past-negative*: invested in the past, focused on its negative aspects
- *present-hedonistic*: invested in the present and getting as much pleasure as possible from it
- *present-fatalistic*: invested in the present, sees life as controlled by fate
- *future*: invested in the future, organizes life around goals
- *transcendental-future*: invested in the future, focuses on new time after death

Zimbardo and Boyd's research using the Zimbardo Time Perspective Inventory (ZTPI) in a number of Western societies indicates that human well-being is maximized when people in these societies live with a balance of past-positive, present-hedonistic, and future perspectives. People with biases toward past-negative and present-fatalistic perspectives are at greater risk of developing physical and mental health problems. Zimbardo and Boyd's (2008) book *The Time Paradox* suggests ways to become more past-positive, present, and future oriented to develop a more balanced time orientation. You might want to visit www.thetimeparadox.com and complete the ZTPI to investigate your own time orientation.

Zimbardo and Boyd have carried out their research in Western societies and acknowledge that the ZTPI may not accurately reflect time orientation in other societies. They make particular note that their description of present-hedonistic and present-fatalistic does not adequately capture the way Eastern religions think about the present. Recently, Western behavioral scientists have begun to incorporate Eastern mindfulness practices of being more fully present in the current moment (present orientation) to help people buffer the persistent stresses of clock time and goal monitoring (future orientation) (Davidson & Begley, 2012). Research also indicates age-related differences in time orientation, with older adults

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

© Comstock/Thinkstock

PHOTO 1.2 Time is one of the three elements outlined in this text for studying human behavior. It recognizes that people and environments are ever changing, dynamic, and flowing.

tending to be more past oriented than younger age groups (Yeung, Fung, & Kam, 2012). Women have been found to be more future oriented and men more present oriented (Zimbardo & Boyd, 2008). Researchers have found that trauma survivors who experienced the most severe loss are more likely than other trauma survivors to be highly oriented to the past (see Zimbardo, Sword, & Sword, 2012). Zimbardo and colleagues (Zimbardo & Boyd, 2008; Zimbardo et al., 2012) suggest that trauma survivors may need assistance to think in different ways about past trauma and to enhance their capacity for past-positive, present, and future thinking. With this goal in mind, they have developed what they call *time perspective therapy* for working with people with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Sword, Sword, Brunskill, & Zimbardo, 2014). This approach might be useful to some members of the refugee community of which Joshua is a part. It is something to keep in mind when we interact with refugees, military men and women who have served in war zones, and other groups who have an increased likelihood of having a history of trauma. It is also important for social workers to be aware of the meaning of time for the individuals and communities they serve.

Two other dimensions of time have been identified as important to the understanding of human behavior. Both dimensions are aspects of linear time but have been separated out for special study by behavioral scientists. The first, *historical era*, refers to the specific block or period of time in which individual and collective lives are enacted. The historical era in which we live shapes our environments. The economies, physical environments, institutions, technologies, and geopolitical circumstances of a specific era provide both options for and constraints on human behavior. We can see what impact the historical era in which Joshua spent his childhood has had on his life trajectory. In an earlier time, he might have continued to live peacefully in Uvira. How would his life have been different or the same? The second time dimension, *chronological age*, seems to be an important variable in every society. How people change at different ages and life stages as they pass from birth to death has been one of the most enduring ways of studying both individual and collective behavior. Historical era is examined throughout this book and its companion book *The Changing Life Course*, and chronological age is the organizing framework for *The Changing Life Course*.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS 1.2

How would our understanding of Joshua's story change if we had no knowledge of his prior life experiences in the DRC and the Gatumba refugee camp—if we only assessed his situation based on his current functioning? What personal and environmental dimensions would we note in his current functioning?

Diversity, Inequality, and the Pursuit of Justice: A Global Perspective

The Council on Social Work Education requires that social work educational programs provide a global perspective to their students. I think this is a great idea, but what exactly does it mean, and why is it valued? We are increasingly aware that we are part of an interconnected world, and Joshua's story is one reminder of this. But just how connected are we? In her book *Beyond Borders:*

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

Thinking About Global Issues, Paula Rothenberg (2006) wrote, "A not so funny, but perhaps sadly true, joke going around claims that people in the United States learn geography by going to war" (p. xv). Certainly, we learned something about the maps of Afghanistan and Iraq in the past 2 decades, but what do we know about the map of the DRC? A global perspective involves much more than geography, however. Here are some aspects of what it means to take a global perspective:

- To be aware that my view of the world is not universally shared, and others may have a view of the world that is profoundly different from mine
- To have a growing awareness of the diversity of ideas and cultural practices found in human societies around the world
- To be curious about conditions in other parts of the world and how they relate to conditions in our own society
- To understand where I fit in the global social structure and social institutions
- To have a growing awareness of how people in other societies view my society
- To have a growing understanding of how the world works, with special attention to systems and mechanisms of inequality and oppression around the world

We have always been connected to other peoples of the world, but those connections are being intensified by **globalization**, a process by which the world's people are becoming more interconnected economically, politically, environmentally, and culturally. It is a process of increased connectedness and interdependence that began at least 5 centuries ago but has intensified in recent times and is affecting people around the world (C. Mann, 2011). This increasing connectedness is, of course, aided by rapid advancements in communication technology. There is much debate about whether globalization is a good thing or a bad thing, a conversation that is picked up in Chapter 9 as we consider the globalization of social institutions. What is important to note here is that globalization is increasing our experiences with social diversity and raising new questions about inequality, human rights, and social justice.

Diversity

In its statement of social work competencies, the CSWE (2015) identifies Competency 2: Engage Diversity and Difference in Practice. The description of this competency states that "social workers understand how diversity and difference characterize and shape the human experience and are critical to the formation of identity. The dimensions of diversity are understood as the intersectionality of multiple factors including but not limited to age, class, color, culture, disability and ability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, immigrant status, marital status, political ideology, race, religion/spirituality, sex, sexual orientation, and tribal sovereign status" (p. 7). To understand who Joshua is we would want to think of him in relation to many of these factors.

Diversity has always been a part of the social reality in the United States. Even before the Europeans came, the Indigenous people were divided into about 200 distinct societies with about 200 different languages (Parrillo, 2009). Since the inception of the United States of America, many waves of immigration have established the multiethnic, multicultural character of the country. We value our nation's immigrant heritage and take pride in the ideals of equality of opportunity for all who come. However, there have always been tensions about how we as a nation handle diversity. Are we a *melting pot* where all are melted into one indistinguishable model of citizenship, or are we a *pluralist society* in which groups have separate identities, cultures, and ways of organizing but work together in mutual respect? Pioneer social worker Jane Addams (1910) was a prominent voice for pluralism during the early 20th century, and that stance is consistent with social work's concern for human rights.

Even though diversity has always been present in the United States, it is accurate to say that some of the diversity in our national social life is new. Clearly, there is increasing racial, ethnic, and religious diversity in the United States, and the mix in the population stream has become much more complex in recent years (Parrillo, 2009). The United States was 87% White in 1925, 80% White in 1950, and 72% White in 2000; by 2050, it is projected that we will be about 47% White (Taylor & Cohn, 2012). It is important to note, as you will read in Chapter 8, Cultures, that the meaning of *White* has been and continues to be a moving target in the United States. But why is this demographic change happening at this time? A major driving force is the demographic reality that native-born people are no longer reproducing at replacement level in the wealthy postindustrial nations, which, if it continues, will lead to a declining population skewed toward advanced age. One solution used by some countries, including the United States, is to change immigration policy to allow new streams of immigration. The current rate of foreign-born persons in the United States is lower than it has been throughout

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

most of the past 150 years, but foreign-born persons are less likely to be White than when immigration policy, prior to 1965, strictly limited entry for persons of color. With the recent influx of immigrants from around the globe, the United States has become one of many ethnically and racially diverse nations in the world today. In many wealthy postindustrial countries, including the United States, there is much anti-immigrant sentiment, even though the economies of these countries are dependent on such migration. Waves of immigration have historically been accompanied by anti-immigrant sentiment. There appear to be many reasons for anti-immigrant sentiment, including fear that new immigrants will dilute the "purity" of the native culture, racial and religious bias, and fear of economic competition. Like other diverse societies, we must find ways to embrace the diversity and seize the opportunity to demonstrate the human capacity for intergroup harmony.

On the other hand, some of the diversity in our social life is not new but simply newly recognized. In the contemporary era, we have been developing a heightened consciousness of human differences—gender and gender identity differences, racial and ethnic differences, cultural differences, religious differences, differences in sexual orientation, differences in abilities and disabilities, differences in family forms, and so on. This book intends to capture the diversity of human experience in a manner that is respectful of all groups, conveys the positive value of human diversity, and recognizes differences *within* groups as well as *among* groups.

As we seek to honor differences, we make a distinction between heterogeneity and diversity. We use **heterogeneity** to refer to individual-level variations—differences among individuals. For example, as a social worker who came in contact with Joshua's family at the time they were resettled in Boise, you would want to recognize the ways in which they are different from you and from other clients you serve, including other clients of Banyamulenge heritage. An understanding of heterogeneity allows us to recognize the uniqueness of each person and situation. **Diversity**, on the other hand, is used to refer to patterns of group differences. Diversity recognizes social groups, groups of people who share a range of physical, cultural, or social characteristics within a category of social identity. As a social worker, besides recognizing individual differences, you will also want to be aware of the diversity in your community, such as the distribution of various ethnic groups, including those of Banyamulenge heritage. Knowledge of diversity helps us to provide culturally sensitive services.

I want to interject a word here about terminology and human diversity. As the contributing authors and I attempted to uncover what is known about human diversity, we struggled with terminology to define identity groups. We searched for consistent language to describe different groups, and we were dedicated to using language that identity groups would use to describe themselves. However, we ran into challenges endemic to our time related to the language of diversity. It is not the case, as you have probably observed, that all members of a given identity group at any given time embrace the same terminology for their group. As we reviewed literature from different historical moments, we recognized the shifting nature of terminology. In addition, even within a given historical era, we found that different researchers used different terms and had different decision rules about who composes the membership of identity groups. Add to this the changing way that the U.S. Census Bureau establishes official categories of people, and in the end, we did not settle on fixed terminology to consistently describe identity groups. Rather, we use the language of individual researchers when reporting their work, because we want to avoid distorting their work. We hope you will not find this too distracting. We also hope that you will recognize that the ever-changing language of diversity has both constructive potential to find creative ways to affirm diversity and destructive potential to dichotomize diversity into *the norm* and *the other*.

Inequality

Attending to diversity involves recognition of the power relations and the patterns of opportunities and constraints for social groups. If we are interested in the Banyamulenge community in our city, for example, we will want to note, among other things, the neighborhoods where they live, the access to community resources and quality of the housing stock in those neighborhoods, the comparative educational attainment in the community, the occupational profile of the community, the comparative income levels, and so on. When we attend to diversity, we not only note the differences between groups but also how socially constructed hierarchies of power are superimposed on these differences.

Recent U.S. scholarship in the social sciences has emphasized the ways in which three types of categorizations—gender, race, and class—are used to develop hierarchical social structures that influence social identities and life chances (Rothenberg, 2016; Sernau, 2017). This literature suggests that these social categorizations create **privilege**, or unearned advantage, for some groups and disadvantage for other groups. In a much-cited article, Peggy McIntosh (2016) has pointed out the mundane daily advantages of White privilege that are not available to members of groups of color, such as assurances "that

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race," and "Whether I use checks, credit cards, or cash, I can count on my skin color not to work against the appearance of financial reliability." We could also generate lists of advantages of male privilege, age privilege, economic privilege, heterosexual privilege, ability privilege, Christian privilege, and so on. McIntosh argues that members of privileged groups benefit from their privilege but have not been taught to think of themselves as privileged. They take for granted that their advantages are normal and universal and are often resistant to attempts to point out the privilege of their social locations. For survival, members of nonprivileged groups must learn a lot about the lives of groups with privilege, but groups with privileged status are not similarly compelled to learn about the lives of members of nonprivileged groups.

Michael Schwalbe (2006) argues that those of us who live in the United States also carry "American privilege," which comes from our dominant position in the world. (I would prefer to call this "U.S. privilege," because people living in Canada, Ecuador, and Brazil also live in America.) According to Schwalbe, among other things, American privilege means that we don't have to bother to learn about other countries or about the impact of our foreign policy on people living in those countries. For example, we don't have to learn about how our society's romance with computers and cell phones helps to drive conflict over the natural resource of coltan in the Congo. Perhaps that is what Rothenberg (2006) was thinking of when she noted ignorance of world geography among people who live in the United States. American privilege also means that we have access to cheap goods that are produced by poorly paid workers in impoverished countries. As Chapter 9 shows, the income and wealth gap between nations is mind-boggling. Sernau (2017) reports that the combined income of the 25 richest Americans is almost equal to the combined income of the world's poorest 2 billion people. In 2016, the average per capita income in the DRC was $6,700 in U.S. dollars, compared with $57,400 in the United States (Central Intelligence Agency, 2017a). Economic conditions in the DRC have been hurt by continuous war for many years. It is becoming increasingly difficult to deny the costs of exercising American privilege by remaining ignorant about the rest of the world and the impact our actions have on other nations.

As we strive to provide a global context, we encounter current controversies about appropriate language to describe different sectors of the world. Following World War II, a distinction was made between First World, Second World, and Third World nations, with *First World* referring to the Western capitalist nations, *Second World* referring to the countries belonging to the socialist bloc led by the Soviet Union, and *Third World* referring to a set of countries that were primarily former colonies of the First World. More recently, many scholars have used the language of First World, Second World, and Third World to define global sectors in a slightly different way. *First World* has been used to describe the nations that were the first to industrialize, urbanize, and modernize. *Second World* has been used to describe nations that have industrialized but have not yet become central to the world economy. *Third World* has been used to refer to nonindustrialized nations that are considered expendable in the global economy. This approach has lost favor in recent years because it is thought to suggest some ranking of the value of the world's societies. Immanuel Wallerstein (1974, 1979) uses different language but makes a similar distinction; he refers to wealthy *core* countries, newly industrialized *semi-periphery* countries, and the poorest *periphery* countries. Wallerstein is looking not to rank the value of societies but to emphasize the ways that some societies (core) exploit other societies (periphery). Other writers divide the world into *developed* and *developing* countries (McMichael, 2017), referring to the level of industrialization, urbanization, and modernization. Although scholars who use those terms are not necessarily using them to rank the value of different societies, the terms are sometimes used that way. Still other scholars divide the world into the *Global North* and the *Global South*, calling attention to a history in which the Global North colonized and exploited the people and resources of the Global South. This system of categorization focuses specifically on how some societies exploit other societies. And, finally, some writers talk about the *West* versus the *East*, where the distinctions are largely cultural. We recognize that such categories carry great symbolic meaning and can either mask or expose systems of power and exploitation. As with diversity, we attempted to find a respectful language that could be used consistently throughout the book. Again, we found that different researchers have used different language and different characteristics to describe categories of nations, and when reporting on their findings, we have used their own language to avoid misrepresenting their findings.

It is important to note that privilege and disadvantage are multidimensional, not one-dimensional. One can be privileged in one dimension and disadvantaged in another; for example, I have White privilege but not gender privilege. As social workers, we need to be attuned to our own *social locations*—where we fit in a system of social identities, such as race, ethnicity, gender and gender identity, social class, sexual orientation, religion, ability/disability, age, and citizenship. We must recognize how our own particular social locations shape how we see the world, what we notice, and how we interpret what we "see."

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

It is important for social workers to acknowledge social inequalities because our interactions are constantly affected by inequalities of various types. In addition, there is clear evidence that social inequalities are on the rise in the United States. Although income inequality has been growing in all of the wealthy nations of the world over the past 2 decades, the United States gained the distinction as the most unequal wealthy nation in this period, and the gap has continued to widen since the deep economic crisis that began in 2008 (Sernau, 2017).

Advancing Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice

There is another important reason why social workers must acknowledge social inequalities. The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) Code of Ethics identifies social justice as one of six core values of social work and mandates that "Social workers challenge social injustice" (NASW, 2017). The third social work competency identified by the CSWE (2015) is to "Advance Human Rights and Social, Economic, and Environmental Justice" (p. 7). The statement of this competency specifies that every person has "fundamental rights such as freedom, safety, privacy, an adequate standard of living, health care, and education" (p. 7). To challenge injustice, we must first recognize it and understand the ways it is embedded in a number of societal institutions. That is the subject of Chapter 9 in this book.

Suzanne Pharr (1988) provides some useful conceptual tools that can help us recognize injustice when we see it. She identifies a set of mechanisms of oppression, whereby the everyday arrangements of social life systematically block opportunities for some groups and inhibit their power to exercise self-determination. Exhibit 1.4 provides an overview of these mechanisms of oppression. As you review the list, you may recognize some that are familiar to you, such as stereotyping and perhaps blaming the victim. There may be others that you have not previously given much thought to. I have often found that the concept of internalized oppression is new to students, but it quickly becomes

EXHIBIT 1.4 ● Common Mechanisms of Oppression

Mechanism	Description
Economic power and control	Limiting of resources, mobility, education, and employment options to all but a few
Myth of scarcity	Myth used to pit people against one another, suggests that resources are limited and blames people (e.g., poor people, immigrants) for using too many of them
Defined norm	A standard of what is good and right, against which all are judged
The other	Those who fall outside "the norm" but are defined in relation to it, seen as abnormal, inferior, marginalized
Invisibility	Keeping "the other's" existence, everyday life, and achievements unknown
Distortion	Selective presentation or rewriting of history so that only negative aspects of the other are included
Stereotyping	Generalizing the actions of a few to an entire group, denying individual characteristics and behaviors
Violence and the threat of violence	Laying claim to resources, then using might to ensure superior position
Lack of prior claim	Excluding anyone who was not originally included and labeling as disruptive those who fight for inclusion
Blaming the victim	Condemning the others for their situation, diverting attention from the roles that dominants play in the situation
Internalized oppression	Internalizing negative judgments of being the other, leading to self-hatred, depression, despair, and self-abuse
Horizontal hostility	Extending internalized oppression to one's entire group as well as to other subordinate groups, expressing hostility to other oppressed persons and groups rather than to members of dominant groups
Isolation	Physically isolating people as individuals or as a "minority" group
Assimilation	Pressuring members of minority groups to drop their culture and differences and become a mirror of the dominant culture
Tokenism	Rewarding some of the most assimilated others with position and resources
Emphasis on individual solutions	Emphasizing individual responsibility for problems and individual solutions rather than collective responsibility and collective solutions

Source: Adapted from Pharr, 1988.

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

a concept that helps them think differently about the client groups they encounter. You may also recognize, as I do each time I look at the list, that although some of these mechanisms of oppression are sometimes used quite intentionally, others are not so intentional but occur as we do business as usual. For example, when you walk into your classroom or other public room, do you give much thought to the person who cleans that room, what wage this person is paid, whether this is the only job this person holds, and what opportunities and barriers this person has experienced in life? Most likely the classroom is cleaned in the evening after it has been vacated by teachers and students, and the person who cleans it, like many people who provide services that make our lives more pleasant, is invisible to you. Giving serious thought to common mechanisms of oppression can help us to recognize social injustice and think about ways to challenge it.

In recent years, social workers have expanded the conversation about social justice to include *global* social justice. As they have done so, they have more and more drawn on the concept of *human rights* to organize thinking about social justice (see Mapp, 2014; Wronka, 2017). In the aftermath of World War II, the newly formed United Nations (1948) created a Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) that spelled out the rights to which all humans were entitled, regardless of their place in the world, and this document has become a point of reference for subsequent definitions of human rights. Cox and Pawar (2013) identify eight philosophical values suggested by the UDHR: life (human and nonhuman); freedom and liberty; equality and nondiscrimination; justice; solidarity; social responsibility; evolution, peace, and nonviolence; and relationships between humankind and nature.

A number of theories of social justice have been proposed. Probably the most frequently cited theory of social justice in the social work literature is John Rawls's (1971, 2001) theory of justice as fairness. In the past decade or so, some social work scholars (Banerjee & Canda, 2012; Carlson, Nguyen, & Reinady, 2016; Morris, 2002) have recommended the capabilities approach to social justice, originally proposed by Amartya Sen (1992, 2009) and revised by Martha Nussbaum (2011). The capabilities approach draws on both Western and non-Western thinking. In this approach, capabilities are, in simplest terms, opportunities and freedoms to be or do what we view as worthwhile; justice is served when people have such opportunities and freedoms. Nussbaum carries the capabilities approach a step further and identifies 10 core capabilities that all people in all societies must have to lead a dignified life. She asserts that promotion of social justice involves supporting the capabilities of people who are denied opportunities and freedoms related to any of the core capabilities. See Exhibit 1.5 for an overview of the core capabilities identified by Nussbaum.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS 1.3

What impact is globalization having on your own life? Do you see it as having a positive or negative impact on your life? What about for Joshua? Do you think globalization is having a positive or negative impact on his life? Do you agree with Martha Nussbaum that it is important for all people to have opportunities and freedoms in relation to the 10 core capabilities she identifies? How do you see Joshua in relation to these core capabilities?

EXHIBIT 1.5 ● Nussbaum's 10 Core Capabilities

Capability	Definition
Life	To live to the end of a normal life course
Bodily health	To have good physical health and adequate nourishment and shelter
Bodily integrity	To exercise freedom of movement, freedom from assault, and reproductive choice
Senses, imagination, and thought	To have pleasant sensory experiences, pain avoidance, adequate education, imagination, free self-expression, and religious freedom
Emotion	To experience a full range of emotion and to love and be loved
Practical reason	To think critically and make wise decisions
Affiliation	To live with others with empathy and compassion, without discrimination
Concern for other species	To show concern for animals, plants, and other aspects of nature
Play	To laugh and play and enjoy recreational activities
Control over one's political and material environment	To participate freely in the political process and have equal access to employment and property

Source: Adapted from Nussbaum, 2011.

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

Knowing and Doing

Social workers, like other professional practitioners, must find a way to move from knowing to doing, from "knowing about" and "knowing that" into "knowing how to" (for fuller discussion of this issue, see Hutchison, Charlesworth, Matto, Harrigan, & Viggiani, 2007). We *know* for the purpose of *doing*. Like architects, engineers, physicians, and teachers, social workers are faced with complex problems and case situations that are unique and uncertain. You no doubt will find that social work education, social work practice, and even this book will stretch your capacity to tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty. That is important because, as Carol Meyer (1993) has suggested, "There are no easy or simple [social work] cases, only simplistic perceptions" (p. 63). There are four important ingredients of "knowing how" to do social work: knowledge about the case, knowledge about the self, values and ethics, and scientific knowledge. These four ingredients are intertwined in the process of doing social work. The focus of this book is on scientific knowledge, but all four ingredients are essential in social work practice. Before moving to a discussion of scientific knowledge, I want to say a word about the other three ingredients.

Knowledge About the Case

I am using *case* to mean the situation at hand, a situation that has become problematic for some person or collectivity, resulting in a social work intervention. Our first task as social workers is to develop as good an understanding of the situation as possible: Who is involved in the situation, and how are they involved? What is the nature of the relationships of the people involved? What are the physical, societal, cultural, and community contexts of the situation? What are the contextual constraints as well as the contextual resources for bringing change to the situation? What elements of the case are maintaining the problematic situation? How have people tried to cope with the situation? What preferences do the involved people have about the types of intervention to use? What is the culture, and what are the social resources of the social agency to whose attention the situation is brought? You might begin to think about how you would answer some of these questions in relation to Joshua's family when they arrived in Boise and were assisted by the refugee resettlement agency.

It is important to note that knowledge about the case is influenced by the quality of the relationship between the social worker and client(s). There is good evidence that people are likely to reveal more aspects of their situation if they are approached with commitment, an open mind, warmth, empathic attunement, authentic responsiveness, and mutuality (Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, & Strom-Gottfried, 2017). For example, as Joshua became comfortable in the interview, feeling validated by the interviewer, he began to engage in deeper reflection about what happened in the DRC and Burundi. He had never put the story together in this way before. This can be an important part of his grieving and adjustment process. The integrity of knowledge about the case is related to the quality of the relationship, and the capacity for relationship is related to knowledge about the self.

But knowledge about the case requires more than simply gathering information. We must select and order the information at hand and decide if further information is needed. This involves making a series of decisions about what is relevant and what is not. It also involves searching for recurring themes as well as contradictions in the information. For example, family loss is a consistent theme throughout Joshua's story, as is his strength and commitment to move forward to adjust to new situations. Listening to his story, you notice that the Gatumba massacre is mentioned very early in the story telling, and this alerts us to the possibility that other Banyamulenge refugees may need to reflect on the Gatumba massacre.

To assist you in moving between knowledge about the case and scientific knowledge, each chapter in this book begins, as this one does, with one or more case studies. Each of these unique stories suggests what scientific knowledge is needed. For example, to work effectively with Banyamulenge refugees like Joshua, you will want to understand some things about the DRC, the Banyamulenge ethnic group, grief reactions, the acculturation process, challenges facing immigrant families, and cross-cultural communication. Throughout the chapters, the stories are woven together with relevant scientific knowledge. Keep in mind that scientific knowledge is necessary, but you will not be an effective practitioner unless you take the time to learn about the unique situation of each person or collectivity you serve. It is the unique situation that guides what scientific knowledge is needed.

Knowledge About the Self

In his book *The Spiritual Life of Children*, Robert Coles (1990) wrote about the struggles of a 10-year-old Hopi girl to have her Anglo teacher understand Hopi

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

spirituality. Coles suggested to the girl that perhaps she could try to explain her tribal nation's spiritual beliefs to the teacher. The girl answered, "But they don't listen to hear *us*; they listen to hear themselves" (p. 25, emphasis in the original). This young girl has captured, in a profound way, a major challenge to our everyday personal and professional communications: the tendency to approach the world with preconceived notions that we seek to validate by attending to some information while ignoring other information (Kahneman, 2011). The capacity to understand oneself is needed in order to tame this very human tendency.

Three types of self-knowledge are essential for social workers: understanding of one's own thinking processes, understanding of one's own emotions, and understanding of one's own social location. We must be able to think about our thinking, a process called *metacognition*. We all have biases that lead to thinking errors, and it is very difficult to get control of our biases. In addition, both anger and stress can lead us to think less critically and make erroneous judgments (Sapolsky, 2017). As Daniel Kahneman (2011) suggests in his book *Thinking Fast and Slow*, constant questioning of our own thinking can become tedious and immobilize us. The best we can do, therefore, is to understand the types of situations in which we are likely to make mistakes and slow down and use multiple sources of information to help correct for our biases. We also must be able to recognize what emotions get aroused in us when we hear stories like Joshua's and when we contemplate the challenges of a given situation, and we must find a way to use those emotions in ways that are helpful and avoid using them in ways that are harmful. Although writing about physicians, Gunnar Biorck (1977) said it well when he commented that practitioners make "a tremendous number of judgments each day, based on inadequate, often ambiguous data, and under pressure of time, and carrying out this task with the outward appearance of calmness, dedication and interpersonal warmth" (p. 146).

In terms of social location, as suggested earlier, social workers must identify and reflect on where they fit in a system of social identities, such as race, ethnicity, gender and gender identity, social class, sexual orientation, religion, ability/disability, age, and so on. A strong personal identity in relation to important societal categories, and an understanding of the impact of those identities on other people, is essential for successful social work intervention across cultural lines. This type of self-knowledge requires reflecting on where one fits in systems of privilege.

Values and Ethics

The CSWE (2015) indicates the importance of values and ethics for social work practice by making it number one in its identification of social work competencies: Competency 1: Demonstrate Ethical and Professional Behavior (p. 7). Knowledge about the self is critical to ethical and professional social work practice. To engage in such practice, we must "use reflection and self-regulation" (p. 7) to manage our personal values and our very human cognitive biases and emotional reactions. That is why the first learning objective for each chapter in this book and the companion volume *Dimensions of Human Behavior: The Changing Life Course* is to recognize one's own cognitive and emotional reactions to the case studies that introduce the chapter.

The process of developing knowledge about the case is a dialogue between the social worker and client system, and social workers have a well-defined value base to guide the dialogue. Six core values of the profession have been set out in a preamble to the Code of Ethics established by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) in 1996 and revised in 2017. These values are service, social justice, dignity and worth of the person, importance of human relationships, integrity, and competence. The value of social justice was discussed earlier in the chapter. As demonstrated in Exhibit 1.6, the Code of Ethics articulates an ethical principle for each of the core values. Value 6, competence, requires that we recognize the science available to inform our work. It requires understanding the limitations of the available science for considering the situation at hand but also that we use the strongest available evidence to make practice decisions. This is where scientific knowledge comes into the picture.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS 1.4

If you were the social worker at Joshua's refugee resettlement program when he first arrived in the United States, what knowledge about the case would you like to have? What information would you find most important? What emotional reactions did you have to reading Joshua's story? What did you find yourself thinking about his story? Where do you see Joshua fitting in systems of privilege? Where do you see yourself fitting? How might any of this impact your ability to be helpful to Joshua and his family?

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

EXHIBIT 1.6 ● Core Values and Ethical Principles in the NASW Code of Ethics

1. Value: Service
   Ethical principle: Social workers' primary goal is to help people in need and to address social problems.
2. Value: Social justice
   Ethical principle: Social workers challenge social injustice.
3. Value: Dignity and worth of the person
   Ethical principle: Social workers respect the inherent dignity and worth of the person.
4. Value: Importance of human relationships
   Ethical principle: Social workers recognize the central importance of human relationships.
5. Value: Integrity
   Ethical principle: Social workers behave in a trustworthy manner.
6. Value: Competence
   Ethical principle: Social workers practice within their areas of competence and develop and enhance their professional expertise.

Source: National Association of Social Workers, 2017.

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Scientific Knowledge: Theory and Research

The CSWE (2015) notes that social work practice is guided by "knowledge based on scientific inquiry" (p. 5). Ethical social workers are always searching for or recalling what is known about the situations they encounter, turning to the social and behavioral sciences for this information. Scientific knowledge serves as a screen against which the knowledge about the case is considered. It suggests **hypotheses**, or tentative statements, to be explored and tested, not facts to be applied, in transactions with a person or social group. Because of the breadth and complexity of social work practice, usable knowledge must be culled from diverse sources and a number of scientific disciplines. **Science**, also known as scientific inquiry, is a set of logical, systematic, documented methods for answering questions about the world. Scientific knowledge is the knowledge produced by scientific inquiry. Two interrelated approaches to knowledge building, theory and empirical research, fit the scientific criteria of being logical, systematic, and documented for the public. Together, they create the base of knowledge that social workers need to understand commonalities among their clients and practice situations. In your coursework on social work research, you will be learning much more about these concepts, so I only provide a brief description here to help you understand how this book draws on theory and research.

Theory

As we discuss in Chapter 2, the CSWE (2015) notes that "social workers understand theories of human behavior and the social environment, and critically evaluate and apply this knowledge" (p. 6). Social workers use theory to help organize and make sense of the situations they encounter. A **theory** is an interrelated set of concepts and propositions, organized into a deductive system, that explains relationships among aspects of our world. As Elaine Leeder (2004) so aptly put it, "To have a theory is to have a way of explaining the world—an understanding that the world is not just a random series of events and experiences" (p. 9). Thus, theory gives us a framework for engaging with, assessing, and planning interventions with client systems. It seems to be human nature to develop theories to make sense of the world. As social workers we put our personal theories of the world to the test by studying theories proposed by serious scholars of human behavior. I want to emphasize that theories allow us to organize our thinking, but theories are not "fact" or "truth."

Other terms that you will often encounter in discussions of theories are *model*, *paradigm*, and *perspective*. *Model* usually is used to refer to a visual representation of the relationships between concepts, *paradigm* most often means a way of seeing the world, and *perspective* is an emphasis or a view. Paradigms and perspectives are broader and more general than theory. But different scholars use these terms in different ways, and sometimes interchangeably.

Copyright ©2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

If you are to make good use of theory, you should know something about how it is constructed. **Concepts** are the building blocks of theory. They are symbols, or mental images, that summarize observations, feelings, or ideas. Concepts allow us to communicate about the phenomena of interest. Some relevant concepts in Joshua's story are culture, cultural conflict, refugee, resettlement, acculturation, trauma, loss, and grief.

Theoretical concepts are put together to form **propositions**, or assertions. For example, loss and grief theory proposes that the loss of a person, object, or ideal leads to a grief reaction. This proposition, which asserts a particular relationship between the concepts of loss and grief, may help a refugee resettlement social worker understand some of the sadness, and sometimes despair, that he or she sees in work with refugee families. They have lived with an accumulation of losses—loss of land, loss of livelihood, loss of roles, loss of status, loss of family members, loss of familiar language and rituals, and many more.

Theories are a form of **deductive reasoning**, meaning they lay out general, abstract propositions that we can use to generate specific hypotheses to test in unique situations. In this example, loss and grief theory can lead us to hypothesize that refugees are grieving the many losses they have suffered, but we should understand that this may not be the case with all refugees. Theory is about likelihood, not certainty.

Social and behavioral science theories are based on **assumptions**, or beliefs held to be true without testing or proof, about the nature of human social life. Theoretical assumptions have raised a number of controversies, three of which are worth introducing at this point.

1. Do the dimensions of human behavior have an **objective reality** that exists outside a person's consciousness, or is all reality based on personal perception (**subjective reality**)?
2. Is human behavior determined by forces beyond the control of the person (**determinism**), or are people free and proactive agents in the creation of their behavior (**voluntarism**)?
3. Are the patterned interactions among people characterized by harmony, unity, and social cohesion or by conflict, domination, coercion, and exploitation?

The nature of these controversies will become more apparent to you in Chapter 2. The contributing authors and I take a middle ground on all of them: We assume that reality has both objective and subjective aspects, that human behavior is partially constrained and partially free, and that social life is marked by both cohesion and conflict.

Empirical Research

Traditionally, science is equated with empirical research, which is widely held as the most rigorous and systematic way to understand human behavior. Research is typically viewed, in simple terms, as a problem-solving process, or a method of seeking answers to questions. If something is empirical, we experience it through our senses, as opposed to something we experience purely in our minds. The process of **empirical research** includes a careful, purposeful, and systematic observation of events with the intent to note and record them in terms of their attributes, to look for patterns in those events, and to make our methods and observations public. Each empirical research project is likely to raise new questions, often producing more questions than answers. The new questions become grist for future research. Like theory, empirical research is a key tool for social workers. The CSWE (2015) specifies that social workers "use and translate research evidence to inform and improve practice, policy, and service delivery" (p. 8). It is important to understand, however, that empirical research, like theory, informs us about probabilities, not certainties (Firestein, 2012). For example, research can tell us what percentage of parents who were abused as children will become abusive toward their own children, but it cannot tell us whether a specific parent who was abused as a child will become abusive toward his or her children. Social workers, of course, must make decisions about specific parents, recognizing the probabilities found in research as well as considering the knowledge about the case.

Just as there are controversies about theoretical assumptions, there are also controversies about what constitutes appropriate research methods for understanding human behavior. Modern science is based on several assumptions, which are generally recognized as a **positivist perspective**: The world has an order that can be discovered, findings of one study should be applicable to other groups, complex phenomena can be studied by reducing them to some component part, findings are tentative and subject to question, and scientific methods are value-free. **Quantitative methods of research** are preferred from the positivist perspective. These methods use quantifiable measures of concepts, standardize the collection of data, attend

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

only to preselected variables, and use statistical measures to look for patterns and associations (Engel & Schutt, 2017).

Over the years, the positivist perspective and its claim that positivism = science have been challenged. Critics argue that quantitative methods cannot possibly capture the subjective experience of individuals or the complex nature of social life. Although most of these critics do not reject positivism as *a way* of doing science, they recommend other ways of understanding the world and suggest that these alternative methods should also be considered part of science. Various names have been given to these alternative methods. I refer to them as the **interpretist perspective**, because they share the assumption that reality is based on people's definitions of it, and research should focus on learning the meanings that people give to their situations. This is also referred to as a *constructivist perspective*.

Interpretists see a need to replace quantitative methods with **qualitative methods of research**, which are more flexible and experiential and are designed to capture how participants view social life rather than to ask participants to respond to categories preset by the researcher (Engel & Schutt, 2017). Participant observation, intensive interviewing, and focus groups are examples of qualitative methods of research. Interpretists assume that people's behavior cannot be observed objectively, that reality is created as the researcher and research participants interact. Researchers using qualitative methods are more likely to present their findings in words than in numbers and to attempt to capture the settings of behavior. They are likely to report the transactions of the researcher and participant as well as the values of the researcher, because they assume that value-free research is impossible.

In this controversy, it is our position that no single research method can adequately capture the whole, the complexity, of human behavior. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods have a place in a multidimensional approach, and used together they may help us to see more dimensions of situations. This is the view of the CSWE (2015), which states that "social workers understand quantitative and qualitative research methods and their respective roles in advancing a science of social work and in evaluating their practice" (p. 8). This view has much in common with postpositivism, which developed in response to criticism of positivism. **Postpositivism** is a philosophical position that recognizes the complexity of reality and the limitations of human observers. It proposes that scientists can never develop more than a partial understanding of human behavior (Engel & Schutt, 2017). Neuroscientist Stuart Firestein (2012) reminds us that we must learn to live with "unknowable unknowns" (p. 30) and become capable of working with uncertainties. Nevertheless, science remains the most rigorous and systematic way to understand human behavior.

Critical Use of Theory and Research

You may already know that social and behavioral science theory and research have been growing at a fast pace in modern times, and you will often feel, as McAvoy (1999) aptly put it, that you are "drowning in a swamp of information" (p. 19), both case information and scientific information. Ironically, as you are drowning in a swamp of information, you will also be discovering that the available scientific information is incomplete. You will also encounter contradictory theoretical propositions and research results that must be held simultaneously and, where possible, coordinated to develop an integrated picture of the situation at hand. That is, as you might guess, not a simple project. It involves weighing available evidence and analyzing its relevance to the situation at hand. That requires critical thinking. **Critical thinking** is a thoughtful and reflective judgment about alternative views and contradictory information. It involves thinking about your own thinking and the influences on that thinking, as well as a willingness to change your mind. It also involves careful analysis of assumptions and evidence. Critical thinkers also ask, "What is left out of this conceptualization or research?" "What new questions are raised by this research finding?" Throughout the book, we call out critical thinking questions to support your efforts to think critically.

As you read this book and other sources of scientific knowledge, begin to think critically about the theory and research they present. Give careful thought to the credibility of the claims made. Let's look first at theory. It is important to remember that although theorists may try to put checks on their biases, they write from their own cultural frame of reference, from a particular location in the social structure of their society, and from life experiences. As we work in a highly diversified world, we need to be attentive to the possibilities of biases related to race, gender and gender identity, culture, religion, sexual orientation, abilities/disabilities, social class, and so on—as well as professional or occupational orientation. One particular concern is that such biases can lead us to think of disadvantaged members of society or of members of minority groups as pathological or deficient.

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

© iStockphoto.com/Udo Weber

PHOTO 1.3 Theories and research about human behavior are boundless and constantly growing. Active readers must question what they read.

Social and behavioral science scholars disagree about the criteria for evaluating theory and research. However, I recommend the criteria presented in Exhibit 1.7 because they are consistent with the multidimensional approach of this book and with the value base of the social work profession. (The five criteria for evaluating theory presented in Exhibit 1.7 are also used in Chapter 2 to evaluate eight theoretical perspectives relevant to social work.) There is agreement in the social and behavioral sciences that theory should be evaluated for coherence and conceptual clarity as well as for testability and evidence of empirical support. The criterion of comprehensiveness is specifically related to the multidimensional approach of this book. We do not expect all theories to be multidimensional, but critical analysis of a theory should help us identify deterministic and unidimensional thinking where they exist. The criterion of consistency with emphasis on diversity and power arrangements examines the utility of the theory for a profession that places high value on social justice, and the criterion of usefulness for practice is essential for a profession.

Just as theory may be biased toward the experiences of members of dominant groups, so too may research be biased. The results may be misleading, and the interpretation of results may lead to false conclusions about members of minority groups. Bias can occur at all stages of the research process.

- Funding sources and other vested interests have a strong influence on which problems are selected for research attention. For example, there is much controversy about how gun violence research was frozen in the United States in 1996 when Congress, under pressure from the National Rifle Association, passed legislation that banned funding by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention for research that could be used to advocate or promote gun control (American Psychological Association, 2013).
- Bias can occur in the definition of variables for study. For example, using "offenses cleared by arrests" as the definition of crime, rather than using a definition such as "self-reported crime involvement," may lead to an overestimation of crime among minority groups of color, because those are

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

the people who are most often arrested for their crimes (Monette, Sullivan, DeJong, & Hilton, 2014).

- Bias can occur in choosing the sample to be studied. Because there are fewer of them, members of minority groups may not be included in sufficient numbers to demonstrate the variability within a particular minority group. Or a biased sample of minorities may be used (e.g., it is not uncommon to make Black/White comparisons on a sample that includes middle-class Whites and low-income Blacks). Analysis of articles in the major behavioral science journals indicates that most of the samples are drawn almost exclusively from Western, educated, industrialized, and democratic (WEIRD) societies (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). This same analysis concludes that these research participants are different from most other people of the world in important ways. We need to keep this in mind as we review available empirical research.
- Bias can occur in data collection. The validity and reliability of most standardized measuring instruments have been evaluated by using them with White, non-Hispanic male respondents, and their cultural relevance with people of color, women, impoverished persons, or members of other groups is questionable. Language and literacy difficulties may arise with both written survey instruments and interviews. Some groups may be reluctant to participate in research because they don't trust the motives of the researchers.
- Bias can occur in interpretation of the data, because empirical research typically fails to produce uncontestable results (Firestein, 2012).

As with theory evaluation, there is no universally agreed-upon set of criteria for evaluating research. I recommend the nine criteria presented in Exhibit 1.7 for considering the credibility of a research report. These criteria can be applied to either quantitative or qualitative research. Many research reports would be strengthened if their authors were to attend to these criteria.

CRITICAL THINKING QUESTIONS 1.5

If I drew a line on the floor with objective reality at one end and subjective reality at the other end, where would you place yourself on the line to demonstrate your understanding of human behavior?

Objective Reality ———————— Subjective Reality

And if I drew another line with determinism at one end and voluntarism at the other end, where would you place yourself on this line?

Determinism ———————— Voluntarism

And if I drew a third line with harmony, unity, and social cohesion on one end and conflict, domination, coercion, and exploitation at the other end, where would you place yourself on this line to demonstrate your theory about what happens in human social interaction?

Harmony
Unity ———————— Conflict, Domination
Cohesion Coercion, Exploitation

Organization of the Book

In this book, Part I includes two stage-setting chapters that introduce the framework for the book and provide a foundation for thinking critically about the discussions of theory and research presented in Parts II and III. Part II comprises four chapters that analyze the multiple dimensions of persons—one chapter each on the biological person, the psychological person (or the self), the psychosocial person (or the self in relationship), and the spiritual person. The eight chapters of Part III discuss the environmental dimensions: the physical environment, cultures, social structure and social institutions, families, small groups, formal organizations, communities, and social movements.

As noted earlier, presenting person and environmental dimensions separately, as we do in Parts II and III, is a risky approach. I do not wish to reinforce any tendency to think about human behavior in a way that camouflages the inseparability of person and environment. In our work as social workers, we engage in both *analysis* and *synthesis*. Sometimes we need to think analytically, breaking down a complex situation by thinking more critically about specific aspects and dimensions of the situation, whether that is a biological system or a pattern of family relationships. But we also need to be able

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

EXHIBIT 1.7 • Criteria for Evaluating Theory and Research

Criteria for Evaluating Theory
Coherence and conceptual clarity. Are the concepts clearly defined and consistently used? Is the theory free of logical inconsistencies? Is it stated in the simplest possible way, without oversimplifying?
Testability and evidence of empirical support. Can the concepts and propositions be expressed in language that makes them observable and accessible to corroboration or refutation by persons other than the theoretician? Is there evidence of empirical support for the theory?
Comprehensiveness. Does the theory include multiple dimensions of persons, environments, and time? What is included and what is excluded? What dimension(s) is (are) emphasized? Does the theory account for things that other theories have overlooked or been unable to account for?
Consistency with social work's emphasis on diversity and power arrangements. Can the theory help us understand diversity? How inclusive is it? Does it avoid pathologizing members of minority groups? Does it assist in understanding power arrangements and systems of oppression?
Usefulness for social work practice. Does the theory assist in the understanding of person–environment transactions over time? Can principles of action be derived from the theory? At what levels of practice can the theory be used? Can the theory be used in practice in a way that is consistent with the NASW Code of Ethics?
Criteria for Evaluating Research
Corroboration. Are the research findings corroborated by other researchers? Are a variety of research methods used in corroborating research? Do the findings fit logically with accepted theory and other research findings?
Multidimensionality. Does the research include multiple dimensions of persons, environments, and time? If not, do the researchers acknowledge the omissions, connect the research to larger programs of research that include omitted dimensions, or recommend further research to include omitted dimensions?
Definition of terms. Are major variables defined and measured in such a way as to avoid bias against members of minority groups?
Limitation of sample. Does the researcher make sufficient effort to include diversity in the sample? Are minority groups represented in sufficient numbers to show the variability within them? When demographic groups are compared, are they equivalent on important variables? Does the researcher specify the limitations of the sample for generalizing to specific groups?
Influence of setting. Does the researcher specify attributes of the setting of the research, acknowledge the possible contribution of the setting to research outcomes, and present the findings of similar research across a range of settings?
Influence of the researcher. Does the researcher specify his or her attributes and role in the observed situations? Does the researcher specify his or her possible contributions to research outcomes?
Social distance. Does the researcher attempt to minimize errors that could occur because of literacy, language, and cultural differences between the researcher and respondents?
Specification of inferences. Does the researcher specify how inferences are made, based on the data? What biases, if any, do you identify in the inferences?
Suitability of measures. Does the researcher use measures that seem suited to, and sensitive to, the situation being researched?

to put the puzzle pieces back together to see the whole story. That is synthesis. We are always working back and forth between analysis and synthesis. Each chapter in the book attempts to capture some of the complexity of multiple interacting dimensions of behavior.

Implications for Social Work Practice

The multidimensional approach outlined in this chapter suggests several principles for social work engagement, assessment, intervention, and evaluation—for both prevention and remediation services.

- For successful social work engagement, allow people to tell their own stories and pay attention to how they describe the pattern and flow of their person–environment configurations.
- In the assessment process, collect information about all the critical dimensions of the changing configuration of person and environment.

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

- In the assessment process, attempt to see the situation from a variety of perspectives. Use multiple data sources, including the person(s), significant others, and direct observations.
- Use the multidimensional database of information about critical dimensions of the situation to develop a dynamic picture of the person–environment configuration.
- Link intervention strategies to the dimensions of the assessment.
- In general, expect more effective outcomes from interventions that are multidimensional, because the situation itself is multidimensional.
- Pay particular attention to the impact of diversity and inequality on the unique stories and situations that you encounter.
- Allow the unique stories of people and situations to direct the choice of theory and research to be used.
- Use scientific knowledge to suggest tentative hypotheses to be explored in the unique situation.
- Give attention to multiple dimensions of person–environment configurations in practice evaluation.

Key Terms

assumptions 24
concepts 24
critical thinking 25
deductive reasoning 24
determinism 24
dimension 6
diversity 17
empirical research 24
globalization 16
heterogeneity 17
hypotheses 23
interpretist perspective 25
linear time 13
multidetermined behavior 9
multidimensional 6
objective reality 24
positivist perspective 24
postpositivism 25
privilege 17
propositions 24
qualitative methods of research 25
quantitative methods of research 24
science 23
subjective reality 24
theory 23
time orientation 13
voluntarism 24

Active Learning

1. We have used multiple dimensions of person, environment, and time to think about Joshua's story. If you were the social worker at the refugee resettlement agency that sponsored his family's resettlement, you would bring your own unfolding person–environment–time story to that encounter. With the graphic in Exhibit 1.1 as your guide, write your own multidimensional story. What personal dimensions are important? What environmental dimensions? What time dimensions? What might happen when these two stories encounter each other?
2. Select a social issue that interests you, such as child abuse or youth gangs. List five things you "know" about this issue. Think about how you know what you know. How would you go about confirming or disproving your current state of knowledge on this topic?

Web Resources

No doubt, you use the Internet in many ways and know your way around it. I hope that when you find something in this book that confuses you or intrigues you, you will use the incredibly rich resources of the

(Continued)

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.

(Continued)

Internet to do further exploration. To help you get started with this process, each chapter of this textbook contains a list of Internet resources and websites that may be useful to readers in their search for further information. Each site listing includes the address and a brief description of the contents of the site. Readers should be aware that the information contained on websites may not be truthful or reliable and should be confirmed before the site is used as a reference. Readers should also be aware that Internet addresses, or URLs, are constantly changing; therefore, the addresses listed may no longer be active or accurate. Many of the Internet sites listed in each chapter contain links to other sites containing more information on the topic. Readers may use these links for further investigation.

Information on topics not included in the Web Resources sections of each chapter can be found by using one of the many Internet search engines provided free of charge on the Internet. These search engines enable you to search using keywords or phrases, or you can use the search engines' topical listings. You should use several search engines when researching a topic, for each will retrieve different Internet sites. We list the search engines first.

Aol Search: http://search.aol.com

Ask: www.ask.com

Bing: www.bing.com

Google: www.google.com

Yahoo! http://search.yahoo.com

There are several Internet sites maintained by and for social workers, some at university schools of social work and some by professional associations:

Council on Social Work Education (CSWE): www.cswe.org

CSWE is the accrediting body for academic social work programs; site contains information about accreditation, projects, and publications.

Information for Practice: http://ifp.nyu.edu

Site developed and maintained by Professor Gary Holden of New York University's School of Social Work contains links to many federal and state Internet sites as well as journals, assessment and measurement tools, and sites maintained by professional associations.

International Federation of Social Workers: www.ifsw.org

Site contains information about international conferences, policy papers on selected issues, and links to human rights groups and other social work organizations.

National Association of Social Workers (NASW): www.socialworkers.org

Site contains professional development material, press room, advocacy information, and resources.

Society for Social Work and Research (SSWR): www.sswr.org

SSWR is a nonprofit organization devoted to involving social workers in research and research applications. Site contains research news, job postings, and links to social work–related websites.

Do not copy, post, or distribute

Copyright ©2019 by SAGE Publications, Inc.
This work may not be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means without express written permission of the publisher.