Chapter 14 Afterword: Multi-theory Practice and Routes to Integration

Chapter Outline

I. Introduction
   A. Social work has vast knowledge base
      1. Much is borrowed from other disciplines and professions
      2. Needs a way to organize knowledge and guide knowledge users

II. The Concept of Knowledge Integration
    A. Integration - meanings
       1. Synonyms - assemble coordinate, join, assimilate, blend, etc
       2. Antonyms - segregate, differentiate, diverge
    B. Integration and social work education
       1. Practice - personality integration and systems integration
       2. Policy - globalization and economic integration policies
       3. Research - integration of data into problem analysis and evaluation
       4. Field - integrating classroom and field experiences
       5. Diversity - social integration and acceptance versus discrimination and segregation
    C. New area: Integration and HBSE
       1. Theoretical integration - integrate multiple theories into approach to helping work

III. The Challenge of Theoretical Pluralism
     A. Pluralistic Societies and Multitheory Practice Arenas
        1. Pluralistic societies - many different religious groups, professional organizations, ethnic minorities
        2. Pluralists and social integration
           a. Societies benefit from differences
           b. Reality is multiperspectival: different spheres of activity have different languages and different points of view, and members of different spheres have different experiences
           c. Idea of multiverse replaces "universe"
        3. Pluralists and theoretical integration
           a. Science has many disciplines, professions, and communities
           b. Social work knowledge is enriched by integrating contributions from diverse communities
        4. Metaphors for theoretical integration
           a. Grand stew pot of different knowledge; social work chef appreciates all the flavors
           b. Poly vocal and crowded public forum; social work encourages all to tell their stories, and supports scientific deliberations where all have a voice
           c. Multilanguage community with diverse neighborhoods; social work encourages those with different theoretical orientations to interact as peaceful and cooperative neighbors
        5. Summary: Professional helpers (social workers, psychologists, nurses, applied sociologists, and others) constitute an interconnected discursive community but
B. The Potential Benefits of Theoretical Pluralism
1. Social work job is so complex that no single theoretical perspective is adequate
2. Human behavior is situated in time and place; the use of multiple theories helps us understand the ecologically based differences of systems
3. Social work values the holistic stance; the use of multiple theories increases our ability to appreciate all dimensions
4. Social work tries to solve many different personal and public problems: the bigger the knowledge base the more options for understanding and solving these problems
5. Postmodern philosophy of science argues that reality is interpreted, and modern societies include many interpretations; the use and testing of alternative theories increases the likelihood that we can match theories to the viewpoints of focal client groups and help them effectively
6. Theoretical parochialism, a restricted and intolerant stance toward theory; the parochial theory user condemns those with foreign theoretical beliefs is counterproductive and dangerous. The contemporary practice arena requires flexible and open-minded practitioners who can cross intellectual boundaries
7. Sum: Social workers value cultural diversity; social work theory users should value theoretical diversity.

IV. Alternative Maps for Theoretical Integration in a Pluralistic World
A. Introduction - various approaches to dealing with theoretical pluralism; like maps, each with different paths
B. The No Theory or One theory Map - ignore theoretical pluralism
   1. No theory
   2. One theory - language purist, will only speak the pure language; uses a simple map and does not venture into foreign lands; travel across borders prohibited like the Iron Curtain
C. Maps for Multitheory Integration
   1. Introduction - Society for the Exploration of Psychotherapy Integration (SEPI) and movement to foster theoretical integration and go beyond single school approach
   2. Integration via Commonalities: The Common Factors Map
      a. Common factors - elements that foster effective helping processes whatever the theoretical perspective; emphasis on commonalities
      b. Lists of common factors
         1. Rosenzweig - catharsis, worker’s personality, consistent rationale for helping, alternative formulations of problem
         2. Weinberger - positive helping relationship, empathy, non judgmental acceptance, structuring of change process, expectations for change, support
         3. Like search for conceptual universals, concepts shared across languages (I greet you)
      c. Example - transtheoretical approach: all theories focus on similar processes of change while each gives priority to a different process; and all focus on common stages of change while each conceptualizes the stage in its own way
      d. Critics
1. Commonalities exist at abstract level only, great differences among theories when common factor is operationalized ("interpretation" for example)

e. Summary of value -
   1. Directs us to integrate common therapeutic factors into professional toolbox (humanistic worker qualities and facilitative relationship processes)
   2. Breaks down barriers between language speakers from varied theory communities

3. Integration of Techniques: The Eclectic Map
   a. Eclectic approach - effort to assemble techniques that work best from a variety of theories;
   b. Vary in how systematic, planned, conscious, and critical assembly is
      1. Intuitive eclectics - select helping techniques based on life experiences, practice preferences, and hunches
      2. Guided eclectics - accumulate techniques from different approaches based on guidelines provided by each theory (behaviorists’ recommendations for use of systematic desensitization, for example)
      3. Technical eclectics - add techniques that have established efficacy
      4. Systematic eclectics - use explicit logic or framework for selection of technique on basis of client, problem, agency, and other circumstances
   c. Metaphor - identify tools from different nations without concern about the culture or language of the toolmaker
   d. Critics
      1. Tendency to undisciplined selection of techniques
      2. Techniques mixed with little self-awareness
      3. Techniques selected with little evidence for value of techniques
      4. Techniques selected without understanding of suitability for specific clients and so on
      5. Techniques collected despite foundational differences in assumptions and concepts on which techniques were created
   e. Summary -
      1. Guides worker at add many techniques and thus, increase intervention choices including ability to select an intervention preferred by client
      2. Encourages theory users to converse across theoretical boundaries

4. Integration of Theoretical Approaches: The Assimilative Map
   a. Definition - creation of an overarching conceptual framework into which other theories will fit and then, the integration of the other theories into the framework
      1. Integrate certain theoretical perspectives
      2. Attempt to integrate all theoretical schools
   b. Comparisons
      1. Parallels process of socialization of immigrants into a new culture; elements of various immigrant cultures are assimilated into the American culture
      2. Like a master code of discourse and conduct that regulates the behavior of all those with speech practices into the larger community, and facilitates interaction despite differences (like a university and its policy handbook)
3. Like the process of syncretism in language; fusion of different inflected forms into a more homogenous language (Across generations family members speak more and more like mainstream language users)

c. Examples
   1. Ecosystems paradigm of social work practice
   2. Holistic framework for HBSE knowledge
   3. Simon & Aigner’s interactionist role theory integrates knowledge from diverse theories into a framework for understanding and solving 7 common client problems
   4. Slunecko - the subordination of various disciplines and theoretical perspectives into the leading science of medicine with its neurophysiologic explanations

d. Assimilative integration - additive process
   1. Learn a first theoretical language (and maintain allegiance to it)
   2. Identify useful concepts and techniques from other theoretical traditions
   3. Transform the meanings of these concepts according to the dictates of the first language
   4. Incorporate the concepts

e. Premises
   1. Meanings of concepts for importation must be compatible with core assumptions and root metaphors of primary language
   2. Theory users always encounter new theories from an existing theoretical base (theoretical imprinting of first language)
      a. Forte - SI as base and incorporated 10 other frameworks into SI

f. Critics
   1. Integrating new theory into base modifies and reduces its meanings
   2. Some theories are incompatible and can not be assimilated
   3. Very difficult to learn one theoretical language well and then become fluent in many others too

g. Summary: assimilative integration directs worker to collect and integrate various theories into a primary theoretical language

h. Problems with approaches to theoretical integration reviewed so far
   1. Focus on product of knowledge integration not the intellectual and social processes
   2. Approaches developed for one to one therapy not work with larger social systems or use of various helping roles

5. Integration by Communication: The Dialogical Map
a. Overview - dialogical or linguistic map directs workers to look for opportunities for integration and make the best of these episodes
   1. Focus on improving communication between members of different theoretical schools
   2. Metaphor - translation
      a. Like translating across cultures; applied science includes groups that use different languages (symbol systems); theory users must cooperate with those who speak different theoretical languages; and language fluency is the critical skill (like diplomats at United Nations)
      b. Practitioners are directed to increase their mastery of
         1. Diverse theoretical languages
         2. Tools for translating theories
         3. The use of services from theory translators
3. Common language strategy - an effort to find a common integrative vocabulary for therapists from different schools to replace specialized languages (jargon, etc); an Esperanto for practitioners
   a. based on spoken English, committed to defining and operationalizing terms, and development of a vocabulary that does not favor any theoretical approach
   b. Critics - no agreed upon criteria for selecting best concepts; little consensus on the meaning of terms; problems with use of ordinary language (terms have too many meanings already, candidates for common language are not always theory neutral, concepts can’t be pulled out of their theoretical network easily
   c. Social workers use ecosystems as common vocabulary

4. Summary: dialogical map directs workers to learn to converse with those who speak diverse theoretical languages and to take advantage of episodes of integration

V. The Dialogical Approach to Integration and Translation Tools: A Review
   A. Metatheory for theoretical integration
      1. Table 14.1
   B. Theoretical Dialogue about Exemplary Models
      1. Table 14.2
   C. Theoretical Dialogue by Metaphor
      1. Table 14.3
   D. Theoretical Dialogue by Eco-Map
      1. Table 14.4
   E. Theoretical Dialogue by Architectonics: Mapping the Building Blocks
      1. For example, relationship of theory’s assumptions to perceptions and actions at every phase of the planned change process
   F. Theoretical Dialogue by Conceptual Model
      1. Table 14.5
   G. Theoretical Dialogue Based on Universal Standards
      1. General scientific standards of theory construction and use
      2. Social work’s standards for preferred theories
   H. Theoretical Dialogue by Membership
      1. Table 14.6

VI. On the Route to Integration: Travel Strategies for Dialogical Conversation
   A. Introduction
      1. Theoretical language - theoretical orientation as spoken and heard
      2. Theoretical perspective - theoretical orientation as point of view about HBSE
         a. Perspectival knowing is inevitable - humans understand from the perspective of their membership(s)
         b. Perspective- a mental framework or system of perceptions, cognitions, and emotions for making sense of client-environment configuration
   B. Strategies for Dialogical Conversation
      1. Perspective adding - adds successively the contributions of varied perspectives to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of case
         a. contributes to theoretical multilingualism
      2. Perspective challenging - presentation of competing perspectives to illuminate an area of inquiry, followed by focused arguments about the relative value of
the alternative perspectives (consideration of past consequences and likely future consequences
a. In public forums or in private mental deliberations
b. Progress in a field often follows the clash of ideas
c. Perspective challenging increases our awareness of the strengths and limitations of our perspective
3. Perspective comparing - compare perspectives on an area of inquiry, searching for similarities and differences
a. Use of reflecting teams - conversations in front of clients by team practitioners about alternative ideas
b. Multidisciplinary field seminars where students can compare and contrast perspectives of guests from different disciplines
c. Integrative case seminar - moderator asks discussion questions of persons with different theoretical allegiances to promote comparisons
d. Clinical exchanges - experts from various theoretical schools write down their understanding of a case, read each others case formulations, and write comments on similarities and differences
4. Perspective matching - search for theoretical perspectives best matched to the specifics of a helping situation
5. Perspective reversing - the theory users attempt to reverse roles and take the perspective of those from different theory traditions on the case
a. Strangification
b. Like anthropologist taking the perspective of members of a strange culture when culture is contrary to anthropologists own
c. Important at points of unsuccessful translation
6. Perspective sequencing - perspectives on an area of inquiry altered according to a prearranged plan
a. Rotational field supervision - sequenced introduction of team leaders with different perspectives
b. Education for multitheory practice -planned sequence for introducing different perspectives
c. Sequential intervention by one worker - introduction of different theoretical perspectives and their interventions as process markers appears
d. Sequential intervention by multiple workers - lead helper shifts according to expertise in specific phase
7. Perspective synthesizing - merging of different theoretical perspectives on an area of inquiry to generate a new way of conceptualizing the case
a. Multiperspective case formulation - use of varied perspectives to create a grid explaining varied dimensions of case
b. Merging client's theory of problems with worker's grounded theory of case

VII. Multi Theory Dialogical Integration: Goals, Rules, and Forums
A. Philosophy of science influences
1. Social constructionism
2. Postmodernism
3. Pragmatism and neo-pragmatism
B. Participants in dialogical conversation - stakeholders engaged in sense making conversations
1. Groups
2. Individual practitioner
C. Uses of dialogical conversation
   1. Help theory users consider alternative ways of making sense of a case
   2. Remove barriers to theory users who speak different theoretical languages
   3. Advance the development of the profession's knowledge base through productive conversations with diverse theory users
   4. Help the practitioner appreciate theoretical diversity, master different languages, discover new solutions to client problems, improve helping approaches

D. Ground rules and aptitudes for dialogical conversations
   1. Deliberations are democratic; All are equal and deserve a hearing
   2. Exchanges are open and free
   3. Communication is reciprocal (talk and listen)
   4. Appreciate and explore differences including minority or unique perspectives
   5. Focused on specifics of a case, applied theory, not abstractions
   6. Develop aptitudes
      a. Openness to and curiosity about new perspectives
      b. Perspective taking accuracy, depth, and range

E. Forums for dialogical conversation
   1. Private forum - multitheory inner dialogue
   2. Public forums: The helping relationship (Dialogues with clients)
   3. Public forums: Team work

VII. Summary of Discussion and Future Conversations
   A. Book has provided many tools and strategies for translating knowledge for use by social workers