

UNIFIED PSYCHOTHERAPY

Jeffrey J. MAGNAVITA, PhD, ABPP

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Unified Psychotherapy
Jeffrey J. Magnavita

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UNIFIED PSYCHOTHERAPY

June 4 - 5, 2011



Psychotherapy Institute

FOREWORD

Since the time when the first pleas for psychotherapy integration were voiced, it has taken a full century to accumulate the technical and theoretical knowledge that would lead to the phase of unification. In the meantime, the number of techniques to be used in the session room has significantly increased, converging the therapy forms leaning on different theories. This current state has been tempting therapists to explore the opportunities of integration. The realm of psychotherapy, on the one hand, appears to have a fragmentary nature, and on the other hand, witnesses common and similar techniques, even the same techniques under different names. This appearance indicates that the psychotherapy integration is a natural course rather than an adventure taken up by a handful of over-daring men.

In the past, each different school of therapy was like a secret cult where they would strive to use a different language canonized by its followers, and if a known technique was to be included in the theory, it would definitely be given a different name, the reason of which is quite understandable because that technique gains a different nature within that framework. However, this trend continuing for a century has both created a richness and also a seeming chaos. Could anyone claim that this situation makes things easier for novice therapists who are at the beginning of their career?

The efforts for psychotherapy integration necessitate addressing “human” as an open system, not a frozen structure, or a closed and restricted system. Relation should be emphasized over technique. According to Ferenczi, the main ingredient of change is the quality of the therapeutical relationship. According to Sullivan, self is located in the “relational field” rather than in the patient’s mind. This new perspective builds pathology on the interrelationship instead of the disturbed constructs within the individual.

An integration to be built on a relational common ground according to the principles of the “general systems theory” sounds highly exciting in terms of the opportunities it offers because this perspective is open to such approaches as personality theory and developmental

psychopathology already utilized by the therapist while also embracing the rapidly advancing fields of our era like affective and cognitive neuroscience, ecology and cultural anthropology. This approach, thus, seems to be much more promising as it is more outward-oriented (environmental), educative, supportive, relational, and open to the cultural as well as taking along the orthodox science and progressing at peace with the academic community.

Countless scientific data to be obtained from these fields can be adopted for maturation of diagnostic categories and transformed into interventions that we utilize in clinical practice. This way, “the art of psychotherapy” prepares to take its place in the classification of sciences, no longer being a solely speculative field, thanks to the data based on scientific evidence, for which the field has been starving for long years. In order to keep such a great variety of interdisciplinary perspectives, this field surely needs to have a robust evidence base.

The greatest resistance against the unification of psychotherapies arises from the theories’ desire of sterility because theories canonize the boundaries and are often built on irreconcilable principles. Therefore, theoretical orientation may regard integration as impossible. Here the fundamental point is;

We have perfectly working theories, and our problem is that we are not able to apply them in the session room with competency and excellence, is this the case?

Or, are the theories linear and reductionist constructs desperately trying to anticipate the “relationship” which actually occurs in the room mostly through nonverbal communication and affects?

If we think without taking a sectarian attitude, i.e. neither canonizing the form in an Apollonian way nor inclining to an amorphous Dionysian freedom, we can say that integration is a natural consequence of the latter approach.

We cannot thank enough to the Psychotherapy Institute for its sacrifices to give us the chance of listening to one of the pioneers of the integration efforts in this conference.

Ahmet ÇORAK, M.D., Ph.D:

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WORKSHOP PROGRAM

June 4

09:00 – 10:30	Defining Unified Psychotherapy
10:30 – 11:00	<i>Coffee Break</i>
11:00 – 12:30	Evolution of Unified Psychotherapy
12:30 – 14:00	<i>Lunch</i>
14:00 – 15:30	Lines of Converging Evidence
15:30 – 16:00	<i>Coffee Break</i>
16:00 – 17:30	The Foundation of a Unified Framework

June 5

09:00 – 10:30	Theoretical Constructs & Principles
10:30 – 11:00	<i>Coffee Break</i>
11:00 – 12:30	Diagnosis and Pattern Recognition
12:30 – 14:00	<i>Lunch</i>
14:00 – 15:30	Four Domain Levels
15:30 – 16:00	<i>Coffee Break</i>
16:00 – 17:30	Treatment Planning and Formatting

POWER POINT PRESENTATION

Unified Psychotherapy

UNIFIED PSYCHOTHERAPY

Theory, Principles, and Techniques

Two Day Seminar

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Overview of Workshop

- **Defining Unified Psychotherapy**
- **Evolution of Unified Psychotherapy**
- **Lines of Converging Evidence**
- **Theoretical Constructs & Principles**
- **Diagnosis and Pattern Recognition**
- **Four Domain Levels**
- **Treatment Planning and Formatting**

2

DEFINING UNIFIED PSYCHOTHERAPY

3

Definition of Psychotherapy Unification

A comprehensive theoretical meta-framework which depicts how the multiple *interrelated* domains of the human system function and dysfunction, based on the best evidence from clinical science, by enhancing adaptive capacities through the application of methods and principles of psychotherapy.

4

Why Unify Now & Not Wait Until Later?

- Many of the component domains of human functioning such as the attachment system, cognitive-affective-defensive system, dyadic processes, family processes and structures have been fairly well articulated
- Most approaches to psychotherapy are more similar than in the past
- The field of psychotherapy is overly fragmented and clinicians need ways of understanding complexity
- Many of the principles guiding psychotherapy have been articulated

5

“Jousting with Windmills or in Search of the Holy Grail”

- The movement toward unification has been criticized for being an impossible mission
- Various forms of psychotherapy are said to have differing philosophical assumptions so are therefore incompatible
- There will be many systems which will compete and create confusion

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