CHAPTER 1

The Sociohistorical Context of Psychotherapy Integration

Jerold R. Gold

This handbook collects in one place a significant sampling of the most current and important work in psychotherapy integration. Psychotherapy integration is a subspeciality of the ongoing clinical, theoretical, and empirical scholarship in the general areas of psychotherapeutic process, technique, and outcome. It is a specialization and a field of inquiry with a relatively short but highly controversial history. Psychotherapy integration is both a set of ideas and theories and a group of technical procedures and innovations which arise from such academic and scholastic pursuits. In the last decade, the investigation of such constructs and methods of practice has moved from the fringes of respectability and clinical awareness to assume a more legitimate and prominent place in the broader fields of psychotherapeutic research and practice. The publication of this Comprehensive Handbook of Psychotherapy Integration is but one sign of the new respect and relative prominence of these types of efforts. Other signs of this new status are found in the existence of two professional journals devoted exclusively to research concerned with integration. Each journal is published by a professional society whose memberships conduct integrated forms of psychotherapy and study it clinically, theoretically, or empirically. Studies of psychotherapy integration have appeared in increasing frequency in other older and more mainstream journals as well, and the topic of integration has been either the exclusive focus of, or a major agenda item within, many professional meetings and conferences. The number of books concerned with psychotherapy integration (many of them authored by contributors to this handbook) has multiplied enormously as well. In total, it seems that, as Arkowitz (1991) has announced, psychotherapy integration has come of age.

Such hard earned and newly found maturity and legitimacy as a field of inquiry and practice does not mean that all questions have been solved and all problems resolved. As will be apparent in the chapters that follow, psychotherapy integration is an open ended and ever evolving set of constructs and methods which cannot help but be influenced by new ideas and information.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will present a brief history of psychotherapy integration,
and will follow it with discussions of some of the significant issues within the field of psychotherapy that encouraged work in integration. I will conclude with a look at some of the more important social, cultural, and historical developments which surrounded these more microscopic changes in our understanding of psychotherapy, and which perhaps were influential in promoting the growth of interest in psychotherapy integration.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF PSYCHOTHERAPY INTEGRATION

The first studies of psychotherapy which today we may recognize as integrative in nature or intent were concerned with the translation of concepts and methods from psychological or psychotherapeutic systems into the language and procedures of another. In the 1930s and 1940s several papers appeared which took as their task the conversion of Freudian psychoanalytic concepts into the terms of learning theories. Originally, these writers were concerned with the relationship between psychoanalysis and Pavlovian classical conditioning. As noted by Arkowitz (1984), whose fine history of psychotherapy integration has influenced extensively this more concise attempt, perhaps the first paper of this type was written by Ischlondy (1930), and his work was expanded upon by French (1933), and by Kubie (1934). French was concerned with the correspondences between the Pavlovian constructs of inhibition, differentiation, and conditioning; and the analytic concepts of repression, object choice, and insight. Kubie’s expansion of these ideas moved him to consider the possibility of such phenomena as conditioning and disinhibition playing an important role in the relationship between the analyst and the analysand.

In certain subtle but important ways these early pioneers in integration were following a trend introduced into psychoanalysis by Freud (1909). He had noted the importance of compelling the phobic patient to actively face the phobic object—a preview of in vivo desensitization—and also experimented with setting times limits on the treatment in order to promote conflict and to gain access to deeper unconscious material.

As learning theorists began to include operant conditioning principles and organismic and complex psychological variables in their systems, such ideas were applied to the dominant psychotherapeutic approaches of the era. In the 1940s and 1950s such writers as Sears (1944), Shoben (1949), and Dollard and Miller (1950) recast psychodynamic and client-centered therapies in the language and concepts of reinforcement and of the complicated internally mediated forms of learning which had been studied by neobehaviorists such as Hull (1952). These studies emphasized the reinforcement value of the therapist in terms of shaping or inhibiting changes in inner states or in behavior, and led, particularly in the case of Dollard and Miller (1950), to modifications in psychoanalytic technique which emphasized activity and instruction on the part of the therapist. Procedures which today are commonplace in cognitive-behavioral therapy and in many forms of integrative therapy were introduced by Dollard and Miller, and included the use of homework, role playing, and modelling, and active and graded confrontation of fearful situations and internal states. Wachtel (1977) and Arkowitz (1984) have noted that the work of Dollard and Miller was much more influential in general psychology and in learning theory than in psychotherapy studies, and that their direct impact on psychotherapy integration was not felt until much later.

Alexander (1963; Alexander & French, 1946) modified his psychoanalytically oriented approach to therapy by experimenting with active approaches to the induction of change which were informed by the then contemporary learning theories. A point crucial to later developments in psychotherapy integration was his introduction of the idea that insight into unconscious processes often followed behavioral change, rather than exclusively being the antecedent to change. This move away from a unidirectional view of change was highly influential in the thinking of many later students of integration.

A highly important trend in the study of psychotherapy which was occurring throughout the same period as the work just discussed was the search for generic change factors which were common to all psychotherapies. Although not aimed at integration or theoretical translations in themselves, these studies were crucial in breaking down barriers between adherents of specific theories and methods. Among the more important works of this type were the comparative therapeutic studies carried out by Fiedler (1950), who demonstrated that observers were unable to dif-