

Chapter 2 Tools for Translating and Practical Theorizing: Models and Metaphors

Chapter Outline

- I. Tools for translating and practical theorizing
 - A. Scientific practitioners engage in self talk during private deliberations about practice challenges
 1. Consider internalized voices of role models
 - B. Social workers should become cooperative knowledge users
 1. Cooperation is essential to practice
 2. The profession borrows knowledge from and cooperates with other disciplines
 3. The use of cooperative talk extends to
 - a. clients
 - b. collaterals (family, friends, and allies of clients)
 - c. colleagues from different disciplines
 - d. colleagues from different professions
 - e. colleagues with different theoretical orientations
- II. Role models: Useful theorists and scholarly practitioners
 - A. Introduction: The professional self, imagination, and problem-solving self talk
 1. Interactionist view of the self = dialogue between I, me, guests
 2. The professional self is inner forum for debate, deliberation, and decision making
 3. significant and internalized others include
 - a. useful theorists
 - b. scholarly practitioners
 - B. The professional self and the constancy of self talk
 1. Inner conversations take many forms
 2. Significant others are those real and imagined people who are influential during inner conversations
 3. Role models = our heroes and heroines, exemplars who we imagine can contribute to inner conversations
 - C. The use of theorists during imagined dialogue
Figure 2.1: A Depiction of Professional Theorizing via Inner Conversation
 - D. The use of mentors during public dialogue
 1. Mentors are persons who guide us and help us realize our potentials
 2. Type of mentors – field instructors, supervisors, teachers, theorists
 3. Types of help with learning to theorize
 - a. mentors can teach theoretical languages
 - b. mentors can model the adept use of theory
 - c. mentors can translate complex theoretical ideas into useful terms related to the planned change process
 - E. Two kinds of exemplary models
 1. Useful theorists – developed knowledge that can be used by social workers
 2. Scholarly practitioners – used practice experiences to generate practice theories, models, and guidelines
- III. The Metaphorical imagination: A tool for learning theoretical languages

- A. Introduction
 - 1. Metaphors are comparisons between objects, ideas, or processes
 - 2. The metaphorical imagination is a mode of theorizing that uses images and words to make comparisons
 - 3. Types of metaphors
 - a. similes
 - b. analogies
 - c. personifications
 - d. symbols
- B. Root metaphor: The sustainer of a theoretical language
 - 1. Foundation on which theoretical framework is built
- C. The use of theoretical metaphors
 - 1. For theoretical synthesis – merging images and ideas to understand better client systems
 - 2. For theoretical knowledge – remembering theories by use of vivid metaphors
 - 3. For theoretical evaluation – identifying strengths and limitations by appraising the utility and the scope of a theory's root metaphor
 - 4. For theoretical application – providing creative insights during assessment and problem solving processes
- D. A preview of theoretical root metaphors
 - 1. Metaphors for major theoretical schools
- E. Strategies for developing the metaphorical imagination
 - 1. Basic strategy: Make connections between source domain and target domain
 - a. Source domain – knowledge based on everyday experience
 - b. Target domain – knowledge formulated as theoretical constructs and propositions
 - 2. Additional strategies
 - a. Relate theoretical concept to everyday context and search for similarities and differences
 - b. Ask whether the theoretical concept makes literal sense
 - c. Extend the implications of the theoretical concept into new images and associations
 - d. Increase understanding of the source domain to understand comparisons deeply
 - e. Create own specific and detailed metaphors related to theoretical concepts
- F. Metaphors of multi theory practitioner
 - 1. Linguist fluent in several languages
 - 2. Carpenter or toolbox user with many tools
 - 3. Actor who has mastered a large repertoire of parts
 - 4. Camera operator who can use skillfully different lens
 - 5. Diplomat who can relate at ceremonies to people from different cultures
 - 6. Map user capable of selecting best map to get to a destination
 - 7. Perspective taker capable of shifting viewpoints
- G. Final thoughts and cautions for metaphorical comparisons
 - 1. Metaphors vary in use
 - a. positive comparisons – similarities between source and target domain
 - b. neutral comparisons – unknown parallels
 - c. negative comparisons – differences
 - 2. Root metaphors are simplifications of a complex theoretical edifice

- IV. Modeling: Translating theoretical languages into guiding conceptions
 - A. Introduction
 - 1. Model = partial representation of something in the world
 - 2. Theoretical model = partial representation of a scientific theory used to facilitate communication about what is important in the theory
 - B. Types of Theoretical Models
 - 1. Scale model – smaller scale version
 - 2. Mathematical model – specification by numbers of the relationship of variables
 - 3. Conceptual model – use of ideas in an organized way to make intelligible some aspect of a practical or theoretical puzzle
 - 4. Research model – conceptual models that identify testable hypotheses
 - 5. Personal practice model – conceptual schemes that guide practice
 - 6. Path model – representation of a temporal or geographic sequence
 - 7. Structural models – depiction of the structure of a system
 - 8. Functional models – description of the relationship of parts to a whole
 - 9. Taxonomies – a classification scheme
 - C. Models and scientific approach
 - 1. Quantitative modeling
 - 2. Qualitative modeling
 - D. The use of modeling for theoretical translation
 - 1. Models help organize experiences and observations
 - 2. Models connect bio, psycho, social factors to situation
 - 3. Models suggest hypotheses
 - 4. Models help identify what should be assessed or measured
 - E. Steps in theoretical modeling for practice purposes
 - 1. Identify concepts most relevant to the practice challenge
 - 2. Organize concepts in terms of their relationships
 - 3. Transform organization of concepts into images for display
 - 4. Test the model's fit to the selected practice challenge
 - 5. Revise model as new knowledge is acquired
 - F. Use agreed upon conventions for model construction
 - 1. Label variables
 - 2. Use symbols (arrows, line length, line thickness, line direction) to depict relationship qualities
 - 3. Use plus sign for positive and minus sign for negative relationship
 - G. Final thoughts and cautions for theoretical modeling
 - 1. Models are not mirror images of reality or of a theory
 - 2. Models are simplifications
 - 3. Modeling conventions vary for different disciplines and over time
- V. A Model for connecting theory and practice
 - A. Identification of the challenging practice situation
 - 1. Thick description – agency and social context, client characteristics, definition of problems worker characteristics
 - B. Identification of potentially useful knowledge
 - 1. Theoretical tradition, theoretical models, theory-based concepts and propositions
 - 2. Previous translations of theoretical elements for use during planned change process
 - C. Translation of knowledge into change strategies

- Table 2.1: Salient Meanings of Contestants in Homeless Sympathy Battle
1. Theory-based conception of client problems (and causes)
 2. Theory-based conception of assessment strategies
 3. Theory-based conception of personal and social change
 3. Theory-based conception of interventions strategies
- D. Application of the theoretical knowledge
1. Use during each phase of helping process
 - a. Goal setting
 - b. Problem formulation
 - c. Selection of alternative interventions and preferred intervention
 - d. Implementation of intervention plan
 - e. Evaluation
- E. Evaluation of the usefulness of knowledge
1. Appraise the utility of the applied theory
 - a. logical connection of guiding conception to results
 - b. effectiveness evidence
 - c. effectiveness compared to other applied theories
- F. Contribution of the lessons about theory application
1. Summarize and share lessons and theory's limitations
- G. Connect theory to practice: The dialogical team approach
1. Create universe of discourse
 2. Agree on goals
 3. Deliberate and discuss alternative theoretical perspectives
 4. Formulate working hypotheses and try them out
 5. Adhere to democratic ideals when dealing with differences during team processes
- VI. Practical suggestions for learning theoretical languages
- A. Learn from theory-specific websites
 - B. Learn from theory-specific books and articles
 1. Sample References: Application of a Single Theory
 2. Sample References: Use of Two or More Theories for a Social Work Purpose
 3. Sample References: Evaluation of the Effectiveness of Theory Application
 - C. Learn from theory-specific workshops and conference presentations
 - D. Learn from theory-specific merchandize
 - E. Learn by using search engines for connecting theory to practice