The Popularity of Integration Models, 1980-1985

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Farnsworth's five integration models were used to categorize integration articles published in the Journal of Psychology and Theology between 1980 and 1985. In addition, the graduate education of article authors was examined to determine if educational background influenced integration approach. Of the 177 articles reviewed, 52 reported research and 76 were considered integration articles. Results of the review indicate that one integration model accounts for nearly 75% of the integration work presented in JPT during this period and that differences in educational preparation do not produce preferences for particular integration approaches.

Since its inception over a decade ago, the Journal of Psychology and Theology (JPT) has stimulated widespread interest in the integration of psychology and theology by serving as an outlet and focal point for discussion. As a result of this expanding interest in integration some authors have felt the need to describe, label, and organize integration styles. The resulting classification systems are seemingly designed to clarify the relationship between psychology and Christianity and give direction to integration efforts. The theorists engaged in these efforts have produced a wide variety of integration models that vary in approach and in the number of categories hypothesized.

Carter (1977) has suggested four integration approaches; “psychology against religion,” “psychology of religion,” “psychology parallels religion” and “psychology integrates religion.” Collins (1981) identified six different approaches to integration. These included “the denial approach,” “the railroad track approach,” “the levels of analysis approach,” and so forth. In 1982, Kirk Farnsworth identified two broad categories of integration: manipulation and correlation. Manipulation models attempt to subsume psychological or theological facts under each other or relabel the other’s concepts. Correlational models focus on the agreement or complementarity of the psychological and theological facts. Farnsworth identified three manipulative integration models (Credibility, Convertibility, Conformability) and two correlational integration models (Compatibility and Complementarity).

Each of these classification systems has its strengths and weaknesses and each reflects to a certain degree the value system of the authors. For example, Carter and Narramore (1979) evaluated each of the four models that they proposed, concluding that the “Against” model has no advantages, the “Of” model is more helpful but still has serious limitations, and the “Parallels” model has several basic strengths but also suffers from serious limitations. Only the “Integrates” model is judged completely sufficient. Similarly, Farnsworth (1982) discussed five approaches to integration and evaluated each as to its strengths and
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weaknesses. In this discussion it becomes clear that some models are to be preferred over others. Farnsworth then concluded his article with a discussion of "Embodied Integration," described as "the culmination of the integration process."

While the preferences of integration modelers are of interest, it would be of equal interest to know which models are preferred by the psychologists and theologians who are actually engaged in the integration process. Farnsworth (1982), in describing the creation of his models, wrote:

Rather than deductively fitting what appears in the literature into prior categories, as some have done (e.g., Carter & Narramore, 1979), it seems more appropriate to observe what categories are revealed in the literature and then inductively incorporate them. This is the manner in which the . . . models described here were developed." (p. 315)

It would seem equally appropriate to then go further and empirically support the existence of the models as suggested and to use the models to demonstrate the nature and scope of each type of integration. Discussions of theoretical models of integration are of endless interest but at some point it is necessary to mix the practice of integration in the trenches with theory.

The purpose of this review, then, was not to join the theoretical arguments over proper approaches to integration, but rather to assess the popularity of integration approaches. While authors of taxonomies will cite examples for each of their integration models, there has been no systematic effort to determine the most often used models. Feedback on how integration is being approached is important for two reasons. First, it bridges the gap between integration theory and integration reality and takes the discussion from what should and shouldn't be done to what is being done. This is vital at some point since theory may have no relation to practice. Second, if through model building theorists intend to monitor or even influence the integration process, it is necessary to eventually establish a baseline from which to judge trends and changes in integration approaches.

After examining the available integration taxonomies, Farnsworth's (1982) five-model approach was selected as the basis of our survey. Farnsworth's models were selected partly because of his claim to an inductive basis for his model system. If the models were indeed based on his observations of what is being published in the literature then the model should lend itself well to the classification task. In addition, Farnsworth clearly specified the criteria for determining which approach researchers are using in their integrative writings.

Farnsworth's Models

Farnsworth (1982) proposed five distinct integration models:

1. Credibility Model: This is a filter model where the Bible is used to filter secular ideas. In this model psychological facts which conflict with the teaching of Scripture are to be rejected. These conflicting psychological facts are to be screened by scriptural teaching regardless of empirical support.

2. Convertibility Model: This is a filter model where theological facts are filtered through secular disciplines, in this case psychology. It is essentially the reverse of the Credibility Model. Theological facts inconsistent with the teaching of psychology are to be rejected.

3. Conformability Model: This model emphasizes the reinterpretation of secular facts. In this model the discipline being integrated is seen through the Christian worldview. While it is similar to the Credibility Model in that it does involve filtering psychology through theology, it does not simply reject inconsistencies. Rather, psychological inconsistencies are reworked to make them theologically acceptable.

4. Compatibility Model: This approach correlates similar secular and theological facts with both sets of facts given equal weight. The emphasis is on identifying those psychological and theological facts that are consistent. Since the focus is on consistency, reworking of either sets of facts is not necessary.

5. Complementarity Model: The discipline is subsumed under the more general category
of theology. Theology and secular disciplines are seen as noncompetitive and answering different kinds of questions. The more general category of theology is used to give psychology a broader perspective. Psychological facts are not altered in this approach and psychological facts need not be lined up against theological facts since they are at different levels.

Our early work with this classification system suggested that Farnsworth's (1982) "Conformability Model" actually contained two subcategories. Farnsworth labeled the Conformability Model as the "Worldview approach" and described this kind of integration as incorporating the discipline of the person within their beliefs. In practice, however, it appears that the integrating person can either use their psychological world view to rework psychology or use their Christian world view to rework theological concepts. Because of this the authors felt it would be of interest to distinguish between the two world view approaches. Conformability (A) refers to those individuals who rework psychological concepts from the Christian perspective and Conformability (B) refers to those individuals who rework theological issues from a psychological perspective.

The Review

Six years of the Journal of Psychology and Theology were surveyed by three raters. In order for an article to be assigned to an integration model two of the three reviewers must have independently assigned the article to that category. The 6 years surveyed included 177 articles. Since the articles contained in JPT include not only integration articles, but also research, comment, response, and so forth, two additional categories were added for those articles that could not be classified according to one of the integration types. One of the categories contained articles we classified as research and the other was a miscellaneous category that contained commentary, articles advocating a particular integration approach but not actually integrating, and articles for which the reviewers could not reach the classification criteria. Of the 177 articles reviewed, 5 could not meet the classification criteria. Some articles in JPT are preceded by the label "research." An article's assignment to our "research" category required the same ¾ agreement and was independent of the presence or absence of the research label.

Journal Content

Our review resulted in 43% of the articles being assigned to the miscellaneous category. Our review also indicates that there has been an increase in the amount of research being published in the Journal. Goldsmith (1983) reported a 15-20% rate of research articles during the first 10 years of the Journal while by our count, which overlapped the Goldsmith count, the last 6 years have produced a 29.3% rate. A look at the percentage of research articles by year indicates growth since 1980. Of the 1980 articles we reviewed, 12% were classified as research; in subsequent years the percentages were 28%, 27%, 38%, 35%, and 43%. The percentage of articles not classified as research or integration decreased during the same period with 50%, 25%, 33%, 32%, 4% and 10%. The percentage of integration articles during this same 6-year period remained relatively stable with 38%, 47%, 40%, 30%, 61%, and 47% respectively.

Integration Categories

Of the 76 articles classified as integration, 36% were judged to be using the Conformability (A) approach, while Conformability (B) accounted for 26% and Compatibility 30% (see Table 1). The Credibility Model accounted for 8% of integration approaches. None of the articles reviewed were judged as using the Convertibility or Complementarity approaches. Farnsworth (1982) indicated that his categories of integration were inductively generated and based on a review of the literature. Our classification, however, finds no article fitting two of Farnsworth's categories—Convertibility and Complementarity. This discrepancy may be due to several factors. First, the literature he surveyed would be the years before the publication of his
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#### Table 1
Summary Table of Integration Articles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Credibility Model</th>
<th>Timpe (1983)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carter (1980) 2</td>
<td>Vitz &amp; Gartner (1984a)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lewis &amp; Lewis (1982)</td>
<td>Vitz &amp; Gartner (1984b)</td>
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<tr>
<th>Compatibility</th>
<th>Talley (1980)</th>
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| Research            | Mellor & Andre (1980) |
|---------------------| Virkler (1980) |
| Furnham (1982)      |                |

1 No articles were classified as using either the Convertability or Complementarity model.
2 Author names are in order of Journal appearance.
article in 1982. We began our review in 1980. Including the normal publication lag there is little overlap in the literature we considered. Second, our integration review is limited to JPT and Farnsworth may have been considering a wider body of literature such as The Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, The Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation, and book publications. It is possible that each of these other sources may have a preference for the approaches less represented in JPT. Third, it is also possible we did not fully understand Farnsworth’s criteria for distinguishing one integration approach from another. While we consider it unlikely that we misconstrued the criteria for the convertibility approach, since it is the reverse of the Credibility Model and we did find articles fitting this approach, we are less certain about the Complementarity category.

In Farnsworth’s (1982) original conception of the integration approaches, the Conformability category was one unified model. Combining our A and B subdivisions of this category produces an integration percentage of 62%. It is interesting that our review places nearly 3/5 of the integration articles published in JPT into the Conformability categories. Since so many integrationists are using this approach, psychologists and theologians interested in integration need to look carefully at this model.

Farnsworth (1982) describes the Conformability model as emphasizing relabeling, reinterpreting, and reconstructing. In our expanded version of his model, psychological facts are reworked to fit the integrator’s theological world view or theological facts are reworked to fit the integrator’s psychological world view. Other theorists have used different labels for this same basic approach. For example, the Conformability (B) model appears to correspond roughly to Carter and Narramore’s (1979) “Of” model which they describe as a “cookie cutter” approach through which “the theories of psychology are pressed onto the dough of Scripture. The dough that fits within the cutter is retained while whatever falls outside is rejected” (p. 89). Lawrence Crabb (1977) describes an approach he labels as “nothing but-ery” (p. 40) which is also similar to Farnsworth’s Conformability model. Collins (1981), in describing Crabb’s approach, writes, “Religion
is ‘nothing but’ a psychologically classifiable concept, or psychology is ‘nothing but’ a restatement of concepts that are already in the Bible” (p. 31). Interestingly, Collins also writes that this approach “appears to be common in psychology” (p. 31).

Our review supports Collins’ (1981) perception that this approach is common and suggests that it is actually dominant. Since 62% of the integration taking place can be categorized as Conformability it appears that integration largely amounts to efforts by those interested in psychology to create a unified world view through active reconstruction and relabeling. Some of these integrationists are using their psychological world view to reconstruct theology while others are using their theological world view to reconstruct psychology. According to our review these integrationists divide roughly in half, with 57% reinterpreting psychological facts from the perspective of theological facts (e.g., Barber, 1984; Benner, 1983; Danco, 1982) and 43% reinterpreting theological facts from the perspective of psychological facts (e.g., Jeske, 1984; White, F.J., 1983; Young, 1981). According to the integration theorists noted above, the principle danger of this approach is that elements of psychology and/or elements of theology may be left out of the newly reinterpreted, reconstructed, integrated world view.

The two filter models account for very little of the actual integration published in JPT. The Credibility version of filtering is described by Farnsworth (1982) as giving theology “functional control over psychology” (p. 315). Psychological facts that conflict with theological facts are to be rejected regardless of their theoretical or empirical support. For example Crabb (1977) recommends that we use Scripture as the “infallible, inspired, inerrant” test of psychology (p. 49). Similarly, Collins (1981) writes, “I am firmly committed to the position that the Bible must be our ultimate source of truth and the conclusions from psychology must be tested against the teachings of Scripture” (p. 129). Farnsworth, however, argues against this “theological imperialism”:

It is contradictory to claim that theological, supposedly God-made (sacred) facts are superior to or automatically “truer” than psychological, merely man-made (secular) facts, regardless of the topic and evidence to the contrary, and then claim with conviction that all truth is God’s truth. (p. 315)

While there are many advocates of the filter approach, only 8% of the integration articles published in JPT were judged to fit this category (e.g., Clark, D.K., 1985; Crabb, 1981; Lewis & Lewis, 1982). Apparently psychologists are unwilling to use theology as a filter. It is interesting to note, though, that those publishing in JPT are even less likely to filter theology through psychology. The Convertibility Model is described by Farnsworth as having the goal of filtering “the theological through the psychological, to remove theological cloaks-of-ignorance” (p. 315). We could find no integration attempts that used psychology as a filter, although other publication outlets may be a better source for this type of integration. A comparison with other publication outlets or conference presentations might help complete the picture of integration approaches.

The remaining 30% of the integration articles were judged to fit the Compatibility approach to integration (e.g., Ashbrook, 1984; McMinn & McMinn, 1983; Propst, 1980; Shepperson, 1981). Farnsworth (1982) described this approach as relating psychological and theological facts that seem to be saying the same thing and giving both kinds of facts equal footing. This approach is described as the “railroad track approach” by Collins (1981) and the “Parallels” model by Carter and Narramore (1979). According to these authors there are positive aspects to this approach but the danger with this model lies in its potential for superficiality. Psychological and theological facts may appear on the surface to be saying the same thing, but a more comprehensive understanding of each may prove that there are significant differences between the secular and Christian concepts identified as parallel. It would be interesting to collect the 23 articles identified as taking this approach and examine them for potential underlying conflict or consonance. The writers
of these articles believed that they were dealing with psychological concepts that were scripturally and theologically sound. If there proves to be no grounds for the suspected superficiality, then Christian psychology may have generated a body of literature that could serve as the core for a true integrated psychology.

Professional Training

In addition to integration approaches, the researchers reviewed the professional training of the authors themselves. It seemed possible that certain integration approaches would appeal to authors with particular training. For example, someone with a completely secular background may prefer the Conformability (B) approach while someone with training from a religious institution would prefer Conformability (A) or perhaps Credibility.

Author information, including degrees and from where obtained, is included at the end of each article in JPT. While some authors reported undergraduate degrees, it was decided to focus only on graduate degrees since most undergraduate programs emphasize a liberal arts education. Three categories were used in the review: (a) did the authors have advanced secular degrees only, (b) degrees from Christian programs only, or (c) degrees from both Christian and secular programs. In situations where there were multiple authors the degrees for all authors were evaluated and only one category assignment made. Our assumption was that all authors contributed to the article and that the secular or religious training of one contributing author would, at least potentially, be reflected in the article.

Three of the six Credibility articles were written by authors with only secular training, two with Christian training, and one with both. Of the Conformability (A) articles, 63% were written by secularly trained scholars, 30% by authors with only Christian training and 7% by those with both kinds of training. Of the Conformability (B) articles, 65% fit the secular training category, 20% the Christian, and 15% the both category. In the Compatibility category, 43% were produced by secularly trained people, 35% by those with Christian training and 22% by people with both kinds of graduate training. In the research category, 60% was produced by authors with secular training only, 17% by authors with backgrounds in Christian programs and 23% with backgrounds in both. Chi-square analysis indicated no significant relationship between type of training and integration model used \( \chi^2(8, N=128)=6.694, p=.57 \).

It is important to note that the overwhelming number of graduate programs offering advanced degrees in psychology are in secular institutions. It is not surprising then that 83% of the research being done is conducted by those with at least some secular training. It is interesting, though, that authors with degrees from Christian programs only are better represented in the integration approaches than in the research. This difference could be a result of many factors including a lack of sufficient research training in Christian programs, the fact that most Christian programs produce practitioners, or that research opportunities are scarcer for those working in Christian institutions.

Certain authors have suggested that part of the failure of integrationists is the lack of theological training for integrationists. For example, Carter and Narramore (1979) cite the “superficial understanding of Christianity” (p. 32) as one barrier to integration. Similarly, Collins (1981) recommends that integration should be done by “trained psychologists” who are also “discerning theologians” (p. 135) and Crabb (1977) believes that integrationists should have “at least as much time spent in the study of the Bible as in the study of psychology” (p. 50). While it is not possible from our review to determine whether those from Christian programs do better integration, it does appear that theological training does not necessarily produce a one right approach to integration. Those with graduate training from Christian institutions were distributed among the integration approaches in the same manner as those without the Christian training.

Summary and Conclusions

Integration theorists have proposed several overlapping systems for classifying integration
work. The number of models depends on the particular system but varies from four approaches to six. In practice, however, two basic approaches to integration dominate in the articles published in JPT. Most of the JPT authors are either attempting to reconstruct psychology or theology using their theological or psychological world view or they are busy lining up secular and theological facts that appear, at least superficially, to be consistent. Few integrationists are willing to filter psychology through theology and none of those publishing in JPT were willing to filter theology through psychology. Although integration theorists have stressed the importance of biblical and theological training for integrationists, the presence or absence of graduate training from a Christian program does not produce consistent preferences for one integration approach over others. However, those with training from Christian programs are not as well represented in research publication as they are in integration writings.

While this review is limited to 6 years of publication in JPT, it appears that those involved in integration have demonstrated a clear preference in approaching integration. Since the existing models of integration seem sufficient for classifying and describing the integration work, it seems time to shift away from theorizing about integration models. A fruitful new direction might be to examine the growing body of integration literature for theologically and psychologically consistent facts or themes that can serve as the basis for building a true Christian psychology.

References


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