

**RELIGION AND PSYCHOTHERAPY**

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## **Introduction**

Psychology and religion have had a notoriously tenuous relationship since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in North America. One reason for this dubious relationship is because of the pressure to disregard unobservable events and move towards empirical testing. As a result of the technological Renaissance and scientific thinking, many academic fields have begun to incorporate ideologies that are congruent with scientific ways of thinking. For example, the scientific method as used in biology, chemistry and physics began to work its way into the softer sciences; sociology, psychology and anthropology. What that meant is that research became more rigid, defined and easier to validate. Although those qualities are important in research, simply relying on observable events leaves little room for experiences that are not quantifiable in traditional ways. In the field of psychology, this meant that major sections of the human experience that once were important; such as the soulful and mystical experiences were being left out of the scope of topics to research in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century up to the present.

This change of focus that happened in psychology has led to incomplete healing for individuals who identify as spiritual or religious. According to Statistics Canada (2001), 84% of Canadians identify themselves as religious or spiritual. Statistics Canada (2013) also states that 17% of Canadians reported a perceived need for treatment of mental health issues. Although 17% may seem minor, that figure translates to be nearly three million people in Canada suffering with mental health issues. The above figures are presented with a purpose to illustrate the importance of both religious identity and mental health in Canada. With such a major section of the population belonging to one or both of these groups, it becomes of utmost importance to psychologists to unfold and understand the religious context their clients may be a part of. If

research is conducted to understand the religious or spiritual contexts in which clients lie, therapists will be able to provide more holistic and empathetic healing.

Where does religion fit into psychotherapy? Where does psychotherapy fit in a religious context? These questions have been asked by various scholars such as Carl Jung, Sigmund Freud, and Albert Reissner over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and will be addressed in this essay. The area of focus for this essay will be regarding the ways in which religion and spirituality intersect with psychotherapy. There are two predominant research questions that will be addressed. The first is: In what ways can religion and psychotherapy theoretically come together in a harmonious way? The second question is: What are the present and potential applied methods for integrating religious aspects into psychotherapy? The first research question will be addressed by breaking down the concepts that are commonly found in the literature such as: the importance of the relationship between clergy and therapist, the need for holistic training programs that acknowledge the soul, and finding a balance between the numinous and rationality in therapy. The second question of application will be addressed using both literature and interview notes from three interviews that were conducted in an attempt to understand the relationship between religion and psychotherapy in an applied way. This section of the paper will focus on current therapies that have been shown to be effective. It will also include opinions and comments from the three interviews that were conducted. This section will then be followed by a discussion of where further research is needed and where the potential for religiously-oriented therapies may lie.

## **A Brief History of the Relationship Between Psychotherapy and Religion**

In order to address where a relationship is headed, it may be worth understanding where it has been in the past. Both religion and psychology have pasts that extend back to ancient epochs. Although it may be worth looking at the ancient roots of both concepts to gain a wide breadth of knowledge, this paper will focus on modern psychological endeavors, beginning with the father of psychoanalysis; Sigmund Freud<sup>1</sup>, and his ideological counterpart; Carl Jung.<sup>2</sup>

During the early 1900's, both Freud and Jung began to blossom as psychologists and unfold theories that highly influenced the way modern psychologists think about human nature. Although there were various similarities between the two giants of psychology, they differed in one major way: their opinions about religion. Freud wrote in his book *The Future of Illusion* (1927) that "Religion is comparable to childhood neurosis." This quote demonstrates the degree to which Freud opposed religion and sheds light on how Freud writes about other psychological phenomena, such as dreaming.<sup>3</sup>

Freud's counterpart; Carl Jung, differs from Freud in that he fully acknowledges the soul, and he writes heavily on the positive impact that religion and spirituality may have on an individual's psyche. In his book *Man and His Symbols* (1964), Jung writes "We have forgotten the age old fact that God speaks ethically through dreams and visions." This quote exhibits quite

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<sup>1</sup> Sigmund Freud (May 6, 1856- September 23, 1939 born in Austria) is widely known as one of the most prominent figureheads of psychology and is often referred to as the 'father of psychoanalysis.' Freud noted that psychoanalysis was not only a tool for investigation of mental processes but also for treatment and a theory of psychic functioning. Freud is also known for his stand against religion and this standpoint is thoroughly documented in his work "future of an Illusion." Freud taught at the University of Vienna from 1883 until he had to move to London in 1938 to escape anti-Semitism. (European Graduate School, 2012)

<sup>2</sup> Carl Jung (July 26, 1875-June 6, 1961 born in Switzerland) is widely known as a very prominent figurehead in psychology and is the father of analytical psychology. He developed theories of personality types, archetypes and collective unconscious. Jung was born as the son of a Protestant Clergyman. Some argue this may be the reason for his religious interest in the field of psychology. (Muskingum University, 1997)

<sup>3</sup> Freud did not believe that dreams held any spiritual value. Freud believed that everyone has repressed desires that are not socially acceptable and in order to relieve oneself of the repression, the desires come out through dreams in the form of symbols. This differs greatly from Jung who acknowledges that dreams may hold spiritual potential.

beautifully Jung's perspective and outlines the contrast between Freud and Jung in regards to the spirit and religion.

As mentioned above, both psychologists have influenced the way psychologists today think about human nature. As a result of this influence of both individuals and their ideological prodigy, psychology has undergone an ideological schism in terms of understanding the role of religion. This ideological split was not of equal value, however. The majority of psychologists resonated with Freud's understanding of religion and as a result, clinical psychology training programs, government funding for research and private practices began to identify with classical psychoanalysis and an empirical approach to research that Freud endowed quite heavily. In one interview, the interviewee commented on what he feels religiously oriented clients may be feeling in terms of going to therapy with religious values. He notes "I think certainly historically Freud's critical view of religion I think a lot of religiously oriented patients, analysands, clients, call it what you like just didn't bring up because they didn't want to be further psychopathologized." (Interview 1, October 22, 2014) This quote demonstrates where psychoanalysis has been and why it ought to be different.

Although empirical research and secular ideas are highly valuable to psychological practice, it does not offer a full contextual picture in which to understand the human mind. As time moves forward, psychologists are beginning to reconsider Freud's ideas about religion and entertain the idea that religious literacy and acknowledging the religious side of clients (if one should exist), is most beneficial for a holistic healing approach.

## **Understanding a Theoretical Basis for the Integration of Spirituality into Psychotherapy**

Imagine you are a therapist. Today you receive news that you will be working with a new client named John. John is an administrative assistant at a local medical office, he has been living in the area for twenty years and after his divorce, John has been given full custody of his two young sons; Albert and Raymond. Once you meet John and you begin to speak about why he has chosen to come to therapy. John begins to unfold that he has a powerful and present relationship with Jesus. He notes that he spends most of his spare time either meditating, praying or thinking about Jesus. As the therapist, you begin to wonder what kind of relationship he may have with his sons. When asked about it, John simply states that he doesn't spend much time with them because he needs to follow the path to righteousness. As a therapist, what do you do? Do you simply tell him he's being irrational and to spend time with his boys? Do you allow him to continue to neglect his relationships because that is what he wants to do?

In the case of John, a psychologist is simply left to do what they feel is right, or simply ignore the religious side but there is a serious lack in true understanding of how to approach a situation like John's. According to the current literature, there are a few ways that psychology as a discipline can move towards a better understanding of religion and spirituality in order to provide truly empathetic and holistic healing. The first way is for psychologists to work as a team with religious leaders to provide what the client needs. The second way is for educational institutions to incorporate religious literacy into clinical and counseling psychology programs. The third way is for the psychologist to maintain a balance between the numinous and rationality in therapy sessions.

### *Therapist and Religious Leaders as Colleagues*

In his article, *Religion and Psychotherapy* (1957), Albert Reissner<sup>4</sup> makes the claim that religion and psychotherapy are not in opposition but are similar enough that they may work together to promote healing and balance in an individual's life. In his writing, Reissner points out that the purpose of religion in psychotherapy is to foster the person's will to live in a positive way. This sentiment is not unlike another scholar by the name of Josef Rudin<sup>5</sup>. In *Psychotherapy and Religion* (1964), Rudin notes that psychotherapy ought not to replace religion, and religion should not replace psychotherapy. A major argument that Rudin makes in his book is that when the therapist does not know enough about the spiritual issue, the therapist should send the client to their respective religious leader. Similarly, if a religious leader comes across a mental issue, or if the attachment to God becomes dangerous or unhealthy, the religious leader should send the individual to the therapist. In one of the interviews that were conducted for this paper, the interviewee said, "Part of all professional training is if it's beyond your level of competency, you need to refer out." (Interview 3, November 20, 2014) This quote demonstrates that Rudin's sentiments are not unshared. The difference between Reissner and Rudin is that Reissner places the onus for a responsible relationship on the therapist, "any existing conflicts are based on the lack of understanding on the part of the psychiatrist." In Rudin's book, he makes note that the psychotherapist is capable of dealing with issues of the spirit, although not in the same totality as the clergy. He then asserts; however, that the clergy is not capable of dealing with any matters of

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<sup>4</sup> Although Reissner is less well known than Freud and Jung, his article *Religion and Psychotherapy* proves to be a helpful text for understanding the place of religion in psychotherapy. His biographical information does not seem to be published.

<sup>5</sup> Similar to Reissner, Rudin is not a famous author but his work *Psychotherapy and Religion* has impacted the way scholars today think about the intersection between psychology and religion. Rudin's biographical information does not seem to be published.

the mind. Following from this idea, Rudin makes it apparent that the clergy should make the effort to know when to send the individual to a psychotherapist.

What is made clear by both Josef Rudin and Albert Reissner is that there is a conversation that needs to take place between religious leaders and psychologists. Issues arise when psychologists are actively ignorant about religion and its role in their client's lives. As was mentioned above, if the issue is far too religiously intense, it may be wise for the therapist to encourage the client to see a religious leader. Although, if the religious aspect of the individual is causing harm psychologically, the therapist ought to understand how to comfortably and thoroughly provide treatment for that issue.

### *Acknowledging the Soul*

In order to speak about the responsibility of the educational institutions for training religious literacy, there is a necessary step that needs to take place; that step is acknowledging that humans have motivators that are not defined by physical, social or cognitive elements. There are many ways to describe this motivation to some it may be called 'The Universe', to others it may be called "life essence." In this paper, it will be called "the soul". The soul is a concept that has been woven into literary works since ancient time. It should be noted that psychology as a discipline comes from two Latin root words "psyche" meaning soul and "ology" meaning the study of. In the truest sense, psychology is the study of the soul. The soul may be defined as the immaterial essence, animating principle or actuating cause of an individual life. (Merriam-Webster, 2014).

The reason why acknowledging the soul is crucial is because without this simple acknowledgment, many soulful practices will quickly become irrational and pointless. What is



the purpose of prayer? Why bother fasting? What point is there to abstaining from sex? If a positivist<sup>6</sup> psychologist asks these questions with the hope that the answer will be factual and empirical, then that psychologist may be setting themselves up for disappointment. How can a psychologist empathize if they do not consider those aforementioned soulful practices legitimate?

Marsha W. Frame<sup>7</sup> has written a book called *Integrating Religion and Spirituality into Counseling* (2003). Frame notes that acknowledging religious and spiritual tendencies in therapy is one of the major ways that a client is able to receive holistic healing. Frame's work will be discussed in detail later on. This sentiment is similar to Josef Rudin who writes in *Psychotherapy and Religion* (1964) that the soul should be identified in any healing practice because it is a major driving force within us.

### *The Responsibility of Educational Institutions*

One theme that comes up often in both the literature and in the interviews is the idea that the current system of training for clinical psychologists lacks religious literacy components. The issue with this lack is clinical psychologists are coming out of school with a wide range of knowledge regarding different therapeutic approach and research but are not prepared to deal with issues that are highly significant to many people, such as their religious identity. In a study

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<sup>6</sup> According to education-portal.com, the definition of positivism may be considered as the term used to describe an approach to the study of society that relies specifically on scientific evidence, such as experiments and statistics, to reveal a *true* nature of how society operates. The term originated in the 19th century, when Auguste Comte described his ideas in his books *The Course in Positive Philosophy* and *A General View of Positivism*.

<sup>7</sup> Marsha Frame has written a book called is an assistant professor of psychology at the University of Colorado, USA. (Frame, 2000) Although Frame is not specifically a psychologist of religion, she has written various works that deal with psychotherapy and religion. One of those works is *Integrating Religion and Spirituality into Counseling* (2003). Marsha Frame's biographical information does not seem to be published.

conducted by Schulte<sup>8</sup> et al. (2002), researchers surveyed various universities in the United States to examine the degree to which each clinical psychology program incorporated religious sensitivity training into the coursework. From the universities that answered back, most said that there was little training on religious sensitivities because it was considered a diversity issue and nothing more. Many went on to say that religious literacy was not important for faculty or supervisors to understand.

It is true that religion may be considered to be a diversity issue. However, another diversity issue such as the way one chooses to dress may not be of the same psychological or interpersonal value. What is important on behalf of the educational institutions is to help potential clinical psychologists understand that the way one organizes hierarchical structures in the mind is of great importance. In reference to the hypothetical case of “John” mentioned above, an atheist psychologist who holds the care of their children above everything else may assume that everyone else would too. In the case of John, he held his relationship with the divine above everything else, including his children. It would be trying for the psychologist to understand John’s issue if not given any tools to unfold what is going on in his mind.

The idea that religious literacy is needed in training programs is not small one. There are many psychologists who agree, a few of which were interviewed. In one interview, when asked about his training, he said that he did not receive any religious literacy training but he thinks every program should at least have one course designated to the understanding of various traditions and the mindsets that are often accompanied with those traditions. (Interview 1,

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<sup>8</sup> Dr. Daniel Schulte is a practicing psychologist in the United States of America. He graduated from Arizona State University in 2002 and is an eclectic psychologist meaning he brings various approaches to a session in order to provide the best healing possible. (Psychology Today, 2015)

October 22, 2014.) An example of this is to examine why most Jains are vegetarian<sup>9</sup> or why some Muslim women wear a hijab and others do not. These are concepts that not only pervade society but it has an impact on the individuals' moral and psychological standing.

In another interview that was conducted, the interviewee spoke in depth about the meaning of truth. He noted that purely empirical research that looks negatively on qualitative methods is only going to find partial truths. "Those people that want to base their views on a partial truth are going to come up with partial value because they have been indoctrinated by mainstream science to do so." (Interview 2, October 22, 2014) This quote demonstrates the current clinical psychology educational system very well. What good is the study of the mind if we are going to simply ignore fundamental parts of what makes many humans motivated? How can psychologists help those who feel burdened with fear and anxiety about going to hell because they have homosexual tendencies, without understanding the religious baggage that they are carrying?

If clinical psychologists were taught religious literacy the same way as Beck's Cognitive Theory of Depression<sup>10</sup>, there would be a wider range of issues psychologists could handle. In addition, clients may feel more comfortable speaking about their religious issues with the therapist. One interviewee noted that by asking his clients if they carry any religious baggage, "It gives them permission to talk about their religion." (Interview 1, October 22, 2014)

### *Balance between the Numinous and Rationality*

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<sup>9</sup> Since Jains believe in non-violence towards all things, they are strictly vegetarian. Some Jains decide to be vegan to further reduce the amount of harm done to living beings. (Wile, 2014)

<sup>10</sup> Aaron Beck is a cognitive psychologist who proposed a theory of depression due to cognitive dysfunction. He proposed that a negative view of oneself and the world will lead to depression and in therapy, if the cognitions are shifted from negative to positive, the symptoms of depression will subside (Allan, 2003)

Marsha W. Frame comments on a yearning for balance on the part of the client. The balance that Frame is speaking of is in regards to rationality and numinous experience. Frame speaks about the motives of the contemporary human living in North America and how that relates to healing. The contemporary mind often desires logic and rationality. The human mind is often uncomfortable with simply accepting irrationality as a way of being, there needs to be workable, logical mindset to give meaning to the rational side of the human mind. The *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* (2013) made note of this idea as well. The contents of the handbook include areas of psychology and how those areas intersect with religion or spirituality. One of the points made in the book was in terms of spirituality and mental health care. There were passages regarding how spirituality may decrease symptoms of depression, anxiety and may help with substance abuse. In addition, there was a large emphasis on the fact that in a world that craves rationality, therapeutic techniques must be empirically validated. However, if the client has a religious orientation, they may request spiritual or religious oriented counseling. In this regard, it is imperative that the therapist be compassionate toward the client and offer therapies that coincide with the spiritual mind. Jung, in his work, *New Paths in Psychology* (1916), wrote a powerful passage that touches on the notion of balance between complete scientism and utter emotionality.

Anyone who wants to know the human psyche will learn next to nothing from experimental psychology. He would be better advised to abandon exact science, put away his scholar's gown, bid farewell to his study, and wander with human heart throughout the world. (Jung, 1916)

This quote demonstrates the necessity of openness to other modes of knowing throughout scientific training because if one remains closed-minded, then there will be little to offer the

client in terms of holistic healing. For Frame, the balance comes with the introduction of understanding spiritual therapies and motivations. One of the motivations Frame speaks of is what is known as intuition. In one interview that was conducted, the interviewee touched upon intuition as another 'way of knowing.' He stated "There are other ways of knowing that are equally as scientific as other approaches we just haven't learned the ways of tapping into that in the same way." (Interview 3, November 20, 2014) In the Merriam-Webster dictionary, intuition is described as the power or faculty of attaining to direct knowledge or cognition without evident rational thought and inference (Merriam-Webster, 2014). Frame notes that although scientific reasoning would allude to the impossibility of acquiring knowledge through means other than sensory stimuli, intuition may be considered a viable way of knowing and understanding. In therapy, a major aspect of healing is understanding how and where one gets their motivation from and understanding the forces that cause behaviour. If the force that caused a behaviour has negative connotations attached to it, the client may be less likely to divulge all information out of fear of sounding irrational or uneducated. By looking at different ways of knowing that are outside of empirical evidence, the therapist may be able to provide more efficient and effective therapy that stems from empirical testing and validation. Doing this provides balance between the rational and numinous mind.

## **Applied Approach: Religiously-Oriented Therapies**

### *Current Literature on Religiously-Oriented Therapies*

This section of the paper will examine religiously-oriented therapies; both existent and potential. In a study conducted by Hook<sup>11</sup> et. al. (2010), researchers studied various empirically tested therapies and integrated religious aspects to form a hybrid therapy for religious clients. Researchers looked at three types of therapy; cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) for depression, classical psychotherapy for depression, and cognitive therapy for anxiety. Each type of therapy has differences based on the aim. For example, the cognitive therapy model for depression is different from the cognitive therapy model for anxiety. What is common; however is the goal of the therapy which is to assess thoughts or cognitions. There have been many studies and years of research dedicated to understanding the efficacy of cognitive therapy for depression. The literature and clinical trials make clear that CBT provides outstanding results for the treatment of depression and anxiety. Hook et. al. built upon this research and knowledge to inquire about the efficacy of religiously-centered empirically-tested therapies for religious clients. The researchers examined Christian Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CCBT) for depression and compared that with regular CBT and assessed the efficacy. The researchers found that for Christian clients, CCBT was more effective than CBT. The reasons for this correlation are unidentified. Perhaps some qualitative measures including interviews and focus groups to discuss the cause of the correlation would be beneficial to this type of research. CCBT was not the only type of religiously-oriented therapy that was examined in the study. Researchers also looked at Muslim classical psychotherapy and Taoist CBT. The Muslim psychotherapy was to

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<sup>11</sup> Joshua Hook is an Assistant Professor in the department of Counseling Psychology at the University of Northern Texas. (University of Texas, 2015) He has published widely on topics such as religion and psychology, humility, and forgiveness. He has co-authored papers such as *Religion and Spirituality* (2011) and *Collectivism, Forgiveness and Social Harmony* (2008)

aid in depressive symptoms. The client spoke with the therapist about their past and present concerns and the therapist framed the therapeutic work into a Muslim framework. This, too proved to be highly effective. The third type of therapy that was looked at was Taoist CBT for anxiety. This type of therapy proved to be effective for many types of religious and spiritual clients because it relies less on doctrine and scripture and more on philosophical standpoints. The Taoist CBT approach allowed the client to let go of excessive control and to flexibly allow one's personality to develop in a Taoist framework. These therapies are examples of how to sculpt an empirically-tested therapy to fit the needs of the clients.

Another study that examined religious therapy was conducted by Avidan Milevsky<sup>12</sup> et. al. (2012). The study; *Spiritually Oriented Treatment with Jewish Clients: Meditative Prayer and Religious Texts* (2012) examined psychotherapy with Jewish Clients. Although similar to the study presented above, this example is much more in-depth and intensive with respect to the religious aspect. Not only did the therapist empathize with the Jewish world-view, scripture, rituals, meditation upon religious figureheads and other modes of religiosity were part of the therapeutic relationship. This type of therapy would seemingly be more fitting for a Rabbi who wanted to conduct psychotherapy than for a psychotherapist who wanted to adapt religious sensitivities into therapy. In this study, the Jewish clients proclaimed their comfort and trust in the therapist because the therapist understood compassionately their world view and ways of thinking.

#### *Potential Future Modes of Integrating Religiously-Oriented Therapies into Psychotherapy*

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<sup>12</sup> Dr. Avidan Milevsky is a Canadian born psychologist who moved to the United States and is currently employed as a Lecturer at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania. He is also an author and practicing psychotherapist. Dr. Avidan Milevsky specializes in sibling relationships and overall psychological well-being. (Kutztown University of Pennsylvania, 2015)

The types of therapies presented thus far are examples of how aspects of religion are beginning to merge with aspects of psychotherapy. Although the therapies presented are empirically validated to have a positive impact on clients, they are simply an example of a current validated form of psychotherapy that includes a religious component. What has yet to be thoroughly investigated are exercises that have religious background that also have merit in the world of mental health. There has been one major movement in this area; however and it has proved to be highly effective. This movement is using *mindfulness meditation* for the reduction of anxiety and depression.

### *Mindfulness Meditation: A Synopsis of Practice and Efficacy*

Mindfulness meditation is an insight meditative practice that has its origin in Buddhism. The aim has remained somewhat constant over the generations; to understand, contemplate and eventually have control over your thoughts. The founder of mindfulness meditation for the purpose of mental healing is named Jon Kabat-Zinn.<sup>13</sup> Dr. Kabat-Zinn appropriated the basic technique used in ancient Buddhism and applied them to modern psychological practice. Dr. Kabt-Zinn uses two secular modes to cultivate mindfulness. The first is called the body scan. This exercise is very closely related to the Buddhist tradition. What is done during a body scan is focusing on your body one aspect at a time. For example, one would focus on breathing, then what they are feeling in every aspect of their physical, and cognitive body. The second exercise is what Dr. Kabat-Zinn refers to as the raisin exercise. This exercise was developed in hopes of

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<sup>13</sup> Dr. Jon Kabat-Zinn is Founding Executive Director of the Center for Mindfulness in Medicine, Healthcare and Society at the University of Massachusetts Medical School. He teaches Mindfulness and Mindfulness- Based Stress Reduction around the world. He is the author of books such as: *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain and Illness* (Delta, 1991); *Wherever You Go, There You Are: Mindfulness Meditation in Everyday Life* (Hyperion, 1994); *Coming to Our Senses: Healing Ourselves and the World Through Mindfulness* (Hyperion, 2005); and *Arriving at Your Own Door: 108 Lessons in Mindfulness* (Hyperion, 2007). (Mindfulnet.org, 2015)



cultivating a sense of presence and full experience. The exercise begins with a raisin (or any food) and the individual contemplates how it feels and smells and what it looks like. Then they eat the raisin and contemplate the flavor on the tongue etc. These exercises are done to facilitate a mindfulness existence. After extensive research, Dr. Kabat-Zinn and many other researchers discovered that mindfulness meditation helps with stress reduction, anxiety and depression.

In a study conducted by Ramell, Goldin, Carmona and McQuaid (2004), researchers assessed the efficacy of an 8 week Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction program on reducing depressive symptoms. One major symptom of depression is rumination. Rumination is characterized by repeated obsessive cognitions about various events that tend to lead to other depressive affects. What was hypothesized was that due to the nature of mindfulness meditation and its effect on cognitions, the 8 weeks course would help subside ruminative behaviours. The results of this study showed that overall, mindfulness meditation decreased ruminative thinking. This study is just one example of many that have demonstrated the efficacy of mindfulness meditation for the purposes of decreasing suffering in a way that is congruent with modern psychology.

In the interviews that were conducted for this paper, two of the interviewees had knowledge regarding mindfulness meditation but one individual in particular had extensive knowledge regarding its use in psychotherapy. He noted in his interview that “mindfulness helps with insight, which is similar to the goals of traditional therapy. It also helps with cognitive issues because it forces you to stop and analyze the negative thoughts that come to the mind.”(Interview 3, November 20, 2014) Mindfulness meditation is different from the therapies that were mentioned prior (Such as CCBT), because it is not adapting a current psychological approach to incorporate religion, it is a religious therapy adapted from Buddhism that is known to have psychological benefits. Mindfulness does allow one to monitor one’s cognitions which

does definitely aid in managing mood disorders, because a major symptom of mood disorders are distorted cognitions. One interviewee noted that “all that mindfulness does is introduce the thought- but thoughts are not facts - thoughts can be experienced just like any other sensations and we can let go- we don't have to grab onto that and say that's me- we can just let it go.” This quote demonstrates a beautiful aspect to mindfulness meditation, and that the practice allows individuals to be at peace with how they feel and think and know. It allows healing to take place and leaves room for self-compassion. These traits are not necessarily due to an intentional psychotherapeutic approach but the by-product of introducing oneself to oneself. Mindfulness meditation is one major example of a traditionally religious practice that helps the psyche, there are many other potential practices that follow the same lines. Yoga, for instance is a physical and mental practice that has been known to reduce stress but there is a sincere lack in research regarding the benefits of such a practice on mental issues in the same way as mindfulness meditation.

## **Conclusions**

Future research in the way of spiritual therapies for psychological healing is certainly warranted. Religious motivation may be understood as being a major aspect of individual's lives. The literature on the topic of psychotherapy and religion seems to emphasize that religion and spirituality are important to understand because even though the therapist or the therapy is not constructed to fit religious thinking, understanding the client's needs and motivations in life is of the utmost importance. Although the overall tone of the literature is laden with ideals that psychotherapy and religion are cooperative in nature, there are still major gaps in the literature that ought to be addressed. One major issue is the fact that most of the discourse literature is not contemporary but is from the early the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. This is an issue now because many of the concepts that permeate those works are no longer thought of as accurate or contemporary. For example, many sources seem to use religion and spirituality interchangeably. This is an issue because religion is not the same as spirituality and both terms are highly complex and are not simple to understand. The older literature seems to ignore that fact and use religion as though it were a simple idea. The second major problem is that not only is religion and spirituality used under the same umbrella, religion, spirituality and Christianity are all used under the same umbrella. This causes problems because the authors are leaving out major religions that have different worldviews than Christianity. Another issue is although current literature is operating under the notion that religion and spirituality are different and are becoming more open to religions other than Christianity, there is still a bias towards the Abrahamic religions. Although certain literature has touched on Eastern religions for example, Taoist CBT and mindfulness meditation, there is still a sincere lack of knowledge in regards to healing practices that were developed out of the Eastern religions. On the note of Eastern religions, there seems to be a

possibility to incorporate Eastern religious practices into psychotherapy without heavily emphasizing the religious standpoint, such as mindfulness meditation as was mentioned above. For those who are Spiritual But Not Religious (SBNR) or who are just curious about spiritual practices that help the mind, there should be knowledge available to them on the part of the therapist.

In addition to limitations being present in the literature, there are also limitations to my research. The first limitation to my research is the fact that it was exploratory. Although exploratory research is the foundation of theories yet to be conceived, it creates difficulty for producing specific conclusions. Many of the sections of this paper would easily be essays in their own right. In addition, the interviewees used created somewhat of a homogenous sample. All individuals were from the same geographical area and had expertise in related fields. In order to gain a more holistic understanding, it may be wise for future researchers to gain knowledge from different kinds of people. The third limitation to my research is with literature. I wish I could have read everything all presented authors have written but it would be a great feat to do so and time simply did not allow for that. If future research were to ensue on the topic, specificity would help in order to read more literature on one specific topic rather than covering a major area.

Although psychotherapy has had a rough relationship with spirituality and religion in the past, the literature that has been presented shows that there is opportunity for cooperation and peace. Psychotherapy could be more balanced and effective if religious sensitivities were acknowledged, and a wider range of therapies were addressed and researched. Similarly, in agreement with Rudin, and the interviewees, some religious leaders would be wise to know when a mental crisis is out of their hands. If both therapists and religious leaders engaged in conversations about healing, there would be opportunity for growth on both sides.

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