

Lecture 1

Psychology of Religion: A General Introduction

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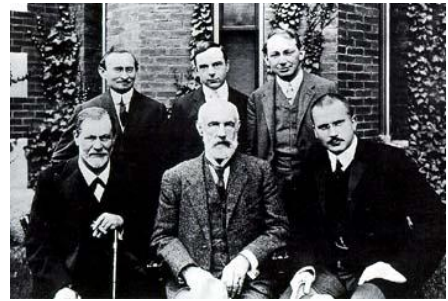
Outline of Lecture 2

- A brief history of the relationship between psychology and religion;
- Different types of relationships between psychology and religion
- What is psychology of religion?
- Areas of concern and methodologies used in the psychological study of religion?

Early psychologists:



A conference at Clark University in 1909 included, in the first row, William James, third from left; Sigmund Freud, fourth from right; and Carl G. Jung, third from right.



Group photo 1909 in front of [Clark University](#).
Front row: [Sigmund Freud](#), [G. Stanley Hall](#), [Carl Jung](#).
Back row: [Abraham Brill](#), [Ernest Jones](#), [Sandor Ferenczi](#).

Early psychologists on religion

- [Freud](#) (1856 –1939): Religion as delusionary;
- [Jung](#) (1875 –1961): Religious symbols as tools that facilitate individuation & wholeness;
- [William James](#) (1842 –1910): systematic study of characteristics of religious experience in his Gifford lectures;
- [Stanley Hall](#) (1844–1924): Christianity as “a purely psychological projection” (Hall, 1924, p. 422).
- [Starbuck](#) (1866–1947): first ever use of questionnaire to study the growth of religious consciousness of individuals.

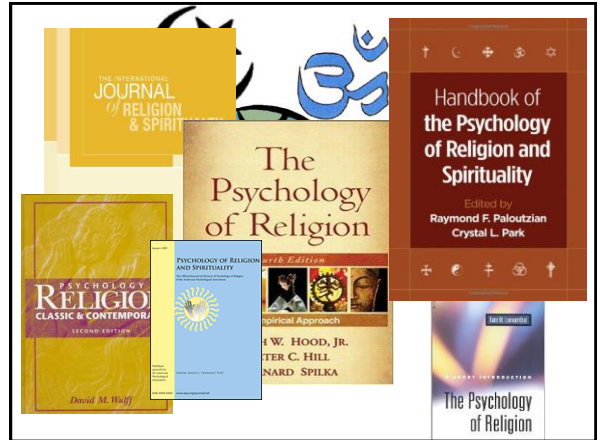
Yet, religion was not mentioned in later psychology text books ..

WHY this dormancy (particularly between the World Wars)?

- Freud’s negative remarks about religion..
- Rise of Behaviourism: religion cannot be measured...; cannot be studied scientifically!
- Increasing separation of the sacred from the secular – religion & society;
- The cautionary reaction against parapsychology: psychic... etc.

Revival of the formal study of Psychology of Religion

- Allport: *The individual and his religion* (1950);
- Contributions from humanistic psychologists;
- Psychology of Religion as Division 36 in APA since 1976. (This had its origins in 1946 with the founding of the American Catholic Psychological Association (ACPA)).
- Increase in Academic courses; journals; textbooks.



Some Important Academic Journals in the field...

1. Psychology of Religion and Spirituality
2. Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion
3. The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion
4. Archive for the Psychology of Religion
5. Pastoral Psychology
6. Psychology and Theology
7. Psychology and Christianity
8. Religion, Culture and Mental Health

Different academic interactions between religion & psychology

DISCUSS:

- Religious psychology
- Pastoral psychology
- Religion, Culture and mental health
- Psychology **and** religion
- Psychology **of** religion

Religious Psychology & Pastoral Psychology

Religious Psychology discusses psychological findings within the discourse of religion – Christianity;

Pastoral psychology as an offshoot of this approach draws insight from psychology for use in 'helping ministry', while also wooing the secular practitioners to pay attention to the role of the spiritual (Hood *et al*, 1996, p.407);

Psychology and/of Religion

- Psychology *and* Religion attempts to facilitate a dialogue between the two fields while maintaining their independent discourses (Hood, 1994);
- Psychology *of* Religion is a branch of psychology that uses the theoretical framework and methods of general psychology to study religious phenomena and their elements, thus seeking an opportunity to contribute to mainstream psychology.

More precisely... Psychology of Religion is

- A branch of psychology that uses the theoretical framework and methodology of psychology to examine religious sentiment and behaviour.
- More precisely, it studies the effect of religiosity and spirituality on human cognitive and affective states, and behavioural systems - collective and individual.

PR's some Areas of Interest:

- Religious traditions and psychotherapy;
- religious experience including anomalous phenomena like visions and glossolalia;
- religious development from childhood to later life;
- religious conversion;
- religion and social behaviour;
- religious influence on personality and vice versa;
- effect of religious practices like meditation and prayer on mental health and wellbeing;
- religion and affective states which include emotional experiences like awe.
- Evolutionary psychology of religion: is the human brain hardwired for religion?

Challenges in the psychological study of religion

- *Measurement approach vs. development of theory*
- *An over-arching meta-theory vs. Mid-level theories*
- *Qualitative vs quantitative methods*
- *Christian vs inter-religious focus*