

***Spiritual Identity and Transformation***  
**Third Annual Canadian Conference  
on Spirituality and Social Work**

June 1-3, 2004  
University of Manitoba, Winnipeg

**Abstracts of Presentations & Workshops**

**Thursday, June 3, 2004, 9:00 AM – 10:30 AM**

**“No Room for Robots”**

Margi Hollingshead, PhD, University of Regina, SK

Nothing is more central to identity than every person's unique capacity to touch the world in new and meaningful ways. Particularly in the helping professions like social work, the ability to respond to oppression and need with compassion and creative resourcefulness is both crucial and beyond the scope of technological advances. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, this personal creativity is a powerful declaration that woman and man are made in the image and likeness of the Creator and daily invigorated by that relationship. As generalist social work practice flourishes, it demands professional engagement that understands new and ever-changing configurations of people and systems. In this environment, social workers are called to be innovative and empowering, rather than only passive receptors of textbook theory or manipulators of data. Keen awareness and exercise of one's creativity is hardly optional for the skilled worker. Grounding that creativity in one's spiritual identity brings energy and purpose, indeed, transformation for both giver and receiver. This academic paper will examine theological and psychological perspectives on personal creativity, will discuss findings from participant observer research with a monastery of several hundred creative, care-giving nuns, and will explore practical applications for direct social work practice.

**“Religious Congregations as a Communitarian Response to a Diminishing Welfare State”**

Colin Bonnycastle, Assistant Professor, University of Manitoba

In moving toward new communitarian welfare arrangements, increased pressure is being placed on the voluntary sector to govern and provide social services. Demographics point out that a large percentage of this voluntary sector involves faith-based and religious congregations. Historically, for Canadians, this has not been too much of a concern. For example, our major Christian churches, when asked to step forward and take a more active role, have promoted a liberal/moderate set of values and attitudes, often associated with social gospel (protestant) and social teaching (catholic) frameworks. Their “spirit of welfarism” mirrored the tenets of a developing liberal welfare state and therefore was easily adapted into the Canadian mix. In today's present context, such relations are changing. With diminishing mainline church attendance and growing numbers of fundamental and conservative religious congregations, there is the potential that we may also be opening the door to a new framework - a new set of values, orientation towards and assumptions about people and society. Unchallenged, this new framework could move Canada further towards mirroring the individualist and market oriented society of the United States. This paper will draw out this new framework and offer some tentative ideas for progressive social workers wanting to resist what the author sees as the negative aspects of its potential.

**“Culture of Silence: Student Experiences of Spiritual Dialogue in Social Work Education”**

Shannon Caldwell, MSW, University of British Columbia, BC  
Susan Cadell, PhD, University of British Columbia, BC

Recent literature concerning the topic of spirituality and social work in North America indicates a growing interest among social work professionals, educators and students to include issues of spirituality in social work education. Social workers in a number of practice settings are finding themselves ill equipped to deal with the diverse and often complex spiritual needs of the people they serve. Practitioners often express dissatisfaction with the lack of attention paid to issues of spirituality in social work education, and call for better opportunities for information and dialogue in this area. To gain insight into this issue, four MSW students in a social work program participated in

in-depth interviews concerning their educational experience concerning spirituality. Findings indicate that there was, in essence, a culture of silence surrounding the topic of spirituality. Dialogue regarding spirituality in social work education requires special care and attention on the part of the school to create an atmosphere of safety. Students look to their professors to offer leadership, establish legitimacy, and facilitate positive group dynamics. This workshop is facilitated by a student and an educator and provides insight from both points of view. Implications for improving spiritual dialogue in social work education will be presented.

### **“Spiritualité–Vieillesse–Travail Social: Un Continuum Incontournable**

Mohammed B.M. Khalid, PhD, Université du Québec en Outouais, QC

Un rapide survol des programmes de formation en travail social révèle que les maisons d'enseignement n'accordent pas d'importance à ce continuum qui constitue pourtant un défi de taille pour les formateurs des travailleurs sociaux. En effet, les intervenants qui se destinent à œuvrer auprès de la population âgée en perte d'autonomie et en phase terminale se sentent impuissants face aux besoins spirituels énormes de ce système-client. L'objectif de cette communication sera de proposer un profil de compétences adéquates et un répertoire de connaissances d'ordre à la fois théorique, méthodologique et pratique en termes de savoir, savoir-faire, savoir-être et savoir-dire pour remédier à ces carences.

### **“Using Spiritually Oriented Music for Social Workers as a Forum for Enhancing Personal Identity and Professional Transformation: A Reflection on 35 years of Professional Experience in the Field” WORKSHOP**

Wilfred Gallant, PhD, University of Windsor, ON

This workshop presentation will demonstrate how the spiritual use of music intervention, proven successful with clients and helping professionals in the field, also holds relevance for social workers in whatever field of practice in which they find themselves. This workshop presentation will help social workers in their own quest toward personal and spiritual fulfilment by incorporating an “inner reflective awareness” of their own gift of agape or spiritual, artistic, accurate empathy. By nurturing their own lives, in faith, hope and love, social workers can, in turn, be a beacon of light and hope to their clients who are often without hope. Combining creative, artistic, accurate empathy and music intervention in a spiritually focussed way, can bridge the gap between worker and client, and in the process be “Good News” for them on their way.

Workshop participants will:

1. Learn ways to use music as a tool for spiritual growth and fulfilment.
2. Be able to articulate the relevance of music intervention using psycho/spiritual themes, support dimensions, and strategic tasks to enhance one's spiritual sense of meaning and identity.
3. Apply the systematic use of the musical, (senses) psycho/spiritual, (support) educational, (problem-solving) and task, (resolution) dimensions to achieve inner peace and serenity and translating the benefits to clients.
4. Consider the direct application of the Music Impact Inventory Scale (MIIS) to themselves and as a transformational tool in their own work with clients.
5. Identify innovative ways to use spiritually-oriented musical themes to inspire clients through “Song Completion Exercises”, and “Creative Prose Writing Exercises”.

**“Using a Spiritual Ecomap in an Undergraduate Social Work Practicum Seminar as a Way to Introduce the Significance of Spirituality in Social Work Education” WORKSHOP**

E. Myrna Pitzel, MSW, Coordinator of Field Education, University of Regina, SK

Exploring spirituality with individuals, couples and families can be challenging without a method of operationalizing salient spiritual beliefs and practices. Social workers exploring spirituality can benefit from having an instrument that can visually depict the various strengths and rituals within their clients current experience that may either help or interfere with their ability to resolve issues. One method of exploration is to develop a spiritual ecomap within the therapeutic relationship. This workshop will focus on utilizing spiritual ecomaps as a tool in conceptualizing family systems and as an instrument for further spiritual exploration with a client system. Participants will be introduced to using a spiritual ecomap from a clinical practice model perspective and will have an opportunity to break into dyads to practice using this useful tool. Furthermore, application of how spiritual ecomaps can be used in assessment, planning and intervention will be discussed.

**“Radical Relatedness: Exploring the Spiritual Horizon of Family Service Work” WORKSHOP**

Michael McKernan, Director of Operations, Catholic Family Service, Calgary, AB

This presentation will explore the research findings conducted in a one year sabbatical, which explored the role of spirituality in non-profit agency practice. This research year took me to many locations around the world and introduced me to a rich array of traditional and non-traditional spiritual perspectives. These have something rich to offer the day-to-day practice of social work. The goal of this presentation will be: I) enhanced understanding of spirituality including its value to social work practice; ii) providing concepts and language to address the emotional and intellectual baggage that has marginalized spirituality in social work; iii) identifying applications to client service and to management and leadership in the non-profit sector; iv) to demonstrate how the globalization of human struggles and experience has resulted in a dramatic rise in public interest in spirituality that has significance for our profession.