

**The Transforming Power of Spirituality:
Breaking Barriers and Creating Common Ground**

The First North American Conference
on Spirituality and Social Work
May 25-27, 2006
Renison College
University of Waterloo
Waterloo, Ontario

Keynote Address:

**SPIRITUAL CONNECTION IN SOCIAL WORK:
BOUNDARY VIOLATIONS AND TRANSCENDANCE**

Edward R. Canda, Ph.D., Professor
The University of Kansas School of Social Welfare
Lawrence, Kansas USA
www.socwel.ku.edu/canda

Text and Slides copyrighted by Edward R. Canda, 2006.

Introduction by Professor John Coates

It's my pleasure to introduce Ed Canda today. In discussions with our organizing committee, we struggled with the issue of who was going to introduce who and who was going to thank who. I lobbied to introduce Ed and then I thought that's not such an easy task. For one, he's familiar to many of us here; and secondly he is the person who put spirituality and social work on the map. So I'm very much awed by that accomplishment that Ed has given us.

Part of the familiarity over the number of years is that I have gotten to know Ed at the various spirituality and social work conferences and through other work together. I am increasingly developing a sense of respect and admiration because he presents as a very humble man, but at the same time he is one of the foremost if not the foremost and important scholar in the area of spirituality and social work. His reputation is international. We're very honored to have Ed with us today.

As I said, many of us are familiar with Ed. We know Ed also because he's got a very strong commitment to learning. One example that I cite often is the website that Ed developed (www.socwel.ku.edu/canda; see the Spiritual Diversity and Social Work Resource Center). I often send students there to check out references and citations. I think Ed regards all of us as learners at various stages of our development and our careers. I think his work around spirituality and social work nurtures that learner in all of us.

Ed Canda's Keynote

We also know Ed as the founder of the Society for Spirituality and Social Work in the United States. We also know that Ed is committed to the development of spirituality and social work throughout the world. He has made major endeavors in parts of Europe, in Korea, and in Canada. In Canada in particular, we feel an attachment to Ed because in 2002, when we held our first Canadian Conference on Spirituality and Social Work, Ed jumped at the opportunity to give the keynote address at that time. Because he's very committed to encouraging as many people as possible to explore and get into the area of spirituality and social work, he really relishes the opportunity to speak internationally.

Another first is Ed's presence today at the First North American Conference of Spirituality and Social Work. I think that it's very appropriate that we've invited Ed to further enlighten us with his experience and his knowledge as one of the keynote speakers at this historic event.

I keep thinking I'm going to 'ad lib' and be cool when I do this, but I really can't do that, so I have to go back and read my notes (Laughter from audience). So I'm going to end now by saying that, as much as we all know Ed,, we want Ed to know that we are very appreciative for his being with us today and for his willingness to share his wisdom and knowledge with us. So, bring Ed Canda forward. Thank you (Applause from audience).

Slide 1. Preliminary Remarks

I feel a very good connection here too, first of all with John and all the organizers. But actually even on the way here I felt a special connection with Canada. When I went to the airport in Kansas City and handed over my passport, along with getting my ticket and seat assignment worked out, the person looked at it and said "Oh your name is spelled wrong. It is supposed to be Canada isn't it?" (Laughter from audience). I am often confused with Canada actually.

But really I feel happy to see all of the wonderful energy and enthusiasm and synergies going on among my Canadian colleagues and friends and to see this conference in particular. It is very historic to connect with The Society for Spirituality and Social Work in the United States. To have those efforts combined is wonderful. This is part of a trend that is happening around the world to various degrees. To me this is one of the most exciting historic points for our profession, because we're still enough at the beginning of an escalating momentum that is moving around the world that there's a lot of opportunity for all of us to get involved and really be part of all of these developments. So I'm honored to be invited here. I very much appreciate it.

What I'm going to do in the presentation is try to address the theme of the conference about breaking barriers, transcending barriers. So I'd like to talk about ways in which spiritual connections in social work can help us to transcend barriers but also mention a few cautions about boundary violations. But I won't dwell on that because I don't want to get you stuck in the negative. But I do think

Ed Canda's Keynote

that it is important to realistically consider some possible pitfalls when addressing spirituality in social work.

Slide 2.

I also want to combine my academic style of presenting ideas with imagery. I've been experimenting more and more with PowerPoint, not just to put up outlines of ideas, but also to have a connection with the images. The technical setup is a little bit odd, but I hope that you can connect both with me as a human and also with whatever images come up on the screen.

Thank you (indicating the First Nations person who sang the opening song) very much for that beautiful prayer song. That was such a wonderful way to come into this.

Let me see if I can first get this to work correctly. As the images come up, they represent a variety of different spiritual traditions, perspectives, and themes. The way I approach this topic is in terms of honoring spiritual diversity including its religious and non religious forms.

Slide 3.

Every once and a while we'll have this piece of Japanese paper come up to serve as a mental pallet cleanser as we shift between sections.

Slide 4.

So to highlight the main topics here, I'd like to talk about some insights from diverse religious and non-religious spiritual perspectives that provide insights for social work about breaking barriers while respecting appropriate boundaries. This has to do also

Ed Canda's Keynote

with understanding the whole person in relation with all people and all beings and with the appreciation for diversity in all of its features.

Let me just mention a couple of things and then go back to this. Optimal human development is an important theme that is not just at the individual level. I'm also interested in considering transcultural and global justice. Along those lines we must be cautious about the dangers of possible boundary violations.

All of this should be considered in the context of our professional mission and values, for example, our overall mission of advancing the fulfillment of all people in the context of social justice; expanding this to consider the whole person in relation with all people and all beings; appreciation for diversity in all of its aspects; and the intersection of spiritual diversity with other kinds of human diversity. To me, it's important for us to be clear and open about our value frameworks in approaching this topic. I try to balance advocacy for very clear value positions with genuine dialogue. Also, I want to be clear that my presentation is coming out of the context of a commitment to the National Association of Social Work Code of Ethics, the educational standards of the Council of Social Work Education, and the International Association of Schools of Social Work's ethics and principles.

Slide 5. The Mandala of Spiritual Diversity in Social Work

To start with this theme of diversity with connectedness, I want to share with you a mandala exercise that I sometimes do in my course on spiritual diversity in social work. Each participant in the class has their own spoke of a mandala pattern. They design it with colors and symbols in any way that expresses who they are at that point, especially showing how they relate to their

Ed Canda's Keynote

sense of spirituality. Each spoke on this mandala relates to a different participant. It acknowledges and honors simply who each of us is without judgment. In addition, there is a centre connecting point that all of us share. I purposely left the centre point of the mandala open, leaving it without any kind of form. This represents an indefinable, formless, and all encompassing reality that can be a common connection point for everyone.

Slide 6.

Also around the middle of the circle there is a set of terms that we developed as a group. We collectively negotiated these key value terms that we share as social workers in dealing with this topic. For that particular class, the eight qualities were knowledge, reverence, acceptance, harmony, understanding, compassion, diversity, and empathy. We collectively talked these values through after we had a number of sessions to get to know each other. So those terms represented how we wanted to be together and how we wanted to relate to the topic of spirituality as professionals. Another important feature of the mandala is that the outer circle encompasses and embraces all of this. That kind of symbolism is very simple but it's also very fundamentally human. The symbolism can connect across many cultures and traditions that use spiritually significant designs such as rose windows, medicine wheels, and mandalas. These designs express the idea that distinctness and difference can connect and be embraced in unity.

Slide 7. Definitions of Spirituality and Religion

I want to move to some definitions of spirituality and social work so at least you know where I'm coming from when I use the terms. But also as probably most of you know, the themes in my definitions are common in use among professional social workers these days. I wouldn't say there's unanimity, but at least these general themes are common.

I want to emphasize that my definitions, or any professional definitions, are primarily for the purpose of professional discourse. They provide a common provisional set of terms and meanings so we can interact around the topic of spirituality. But the terms and definitions always have to be flexible and adaptable to context, to situation, and to communities. In fact, we don't even need to use these words to get at the meanings behind them. These definitions are based on contributions from many social work scholars with different perspectives as well ideas from other fields.

Slide 8. Spirituality as an Aspect of the Person

Let us consider spirituality as an aspect of the person. This is the most common way spirituality is defined. Since social workers are used to thinking about the person in bio-psycho-social aspects, many people now add on spirituality. This images the person as a pie, including a spiritual piece.

First of all, spirituality as an aspect refers to the human search for a sense of meaning, purpose, and morally fulfilling relations with oneself, other people, the universe, and the ground of being however that's understood (such as theistic, non theistic, animistic, combinations of these, and any other ways you can

imagine). Of course, there is an incredible diversity of world views shaping understandings of spirituality.

Spirituality as aspect involves centrally important life-orienting beliefs, values, and practices that may be expressed in religious and/or non religious ways. So for me- as is becoming common in the helping professions- spirituality is a more inclusive and larger concept than religion. Spirituality and religion are not in a dichotomous relationship. Rather, spirituality is a larger concept that can be expressed in religious or non religious ways. Spirituality may be considered private or it may be shared with others. So the way that I am using the term today doesn't imply that spirituality is just an individualistic thing. Spirituality can be shared and, in fact, in some ways it must be shared, because it may impact our relationships and our connectedness with others even in individualistically oriented cultures.

Slide 9. Religion as an Expression of Spirituality

I refer to religion as an institutionalized pattern of centrally important values, beliefs, and practices that relate to spirituality. But of course, religion encompasses many other things as well. For example, religious communities can provide material supports, counseling, advice, social activist organizing, and all sorts of things that interweave with their interest in spirituality. But not everything in a religion is explicitly or only about spirituality.

Religion is shared by a community. By definition, one there is no religion with only one member. A religion might start with one person's insights, but unless he or she can convince more people to say, "Hey that's a good idea" and to

go along with it, it doesn't become a religion. Religions are developed and transmitted over time. But I don't mean to imply that a religion has to be bureaucratic. Religions can be small scale, relatively informal, and very flexible as well.

Many people, especially in Western religions, use the term faith to emphasize two related meanings involved with religion and spirituality. First, faith involves assent to religious precepts or teachings. Second, it refers to the experience of relationship with a personal God or other sacred beings.

Examples from a Course on Spiritual Diversity in Social Work

Since this has been rather abstract so far, I would like to give you a couple of stories about the course. When we approach spirituality together in a class, there is a wonderful opportunity for all of us, including me as the instructor, to work through whatever we need to grow around the topic. In the United States, there's a common saying: if you want to avoid trouble at parties don't talk about sex, politics, or religion. Well, in this course we talk about all of them, so we always get in trouble. I always get in trouble because the topics addressed push peoples' 'buttons' one way or another. Sometimes they are happy buttons, sometimes they're angry buttons. If we can work reactions to challenging topics through in the relatively safe and trusting environment of a class, that becomes wonderful preparation. We can apply the learning in our personal lives. And we can apply the learning when working with clients who are likely to be pushing their own buttons around this topic one way or another.

That reminds me of a situation that made me very nervous when it first erupted. I expected something would happen in a particular class, because I knew, as students introduced their backgrounds, there might be a conflict between two of them. There was one student who identified as an evangelical Christian and another student who identified as a Wiccan practitioner. Up to the point of conflict, they were looking at each other a bit suspiciously, but also very respectfully. Everybody in the class was very respectful. But it often happens that when there's enough of a trust level people for people to open up with challenges, students start to come out with strong comments. Students are reflecting: "Gee what's going on", "What's this about", "You know how do I feel about this?".

There was a point at which the Wiccan student talked about how she was really nervous about that particular student. She expressed her feelings that her spiritual tradition has been put under suspicion and even attacked by Christians. The evangelical Christian student was also expressing questions about this Wiccan student and her spiritual practices. So that was a moment where communication could have degenerated into a dichotomous struggle.

But because they had already committed to the values of honoring where each person was and trying to work conflicts through- not necessarily to agree but to work through issues- they moved past that point. They didn't relate to each other as a label, 'Wiccan' or 'evangelical Christian' or whatever they imagined those things meant, because either could mean lots of different things anyway. They had to get past their labels and their imaginations and their projections onto each other. Once they did that and listened to each other's stories, they were both

able to relate in terms of their real life experiences, learn from each other, and expand from each other. And that was really wonderful.

There was another occasion when a very polite mannered student became suddenly agitated. He had been doing an exercise in one of the chapters of my book (*Spiritual Diversity in Social Work Practice*, by Edward R. Canda and Leola Dyrud Furman, Free Press, 1999). Afterwards, in class he said, "Dr. Canda" as he stood up out of his seat. He said, "That made me so angry that if I had a gun I'd shoot you". I looked around for guns. Well fortunately there were no guns and he said more after that. He said, "This exercise really made me think; it made me confront something that was very hard and painful inside, but I'm doing it". The interesting thing was that by the end of the semester, he was very enthusiastic about the course. Every year I get a card from him. It has been several years now and instead of threats, there are very nice cards saying how the course helped him work some things out and how he really grew a lot.

I don't mean to say everything always works out nicely. But those two stories illustrate the tensions we can encounter around a topic and the possibility of people transforming when they work through the issues.

Slide 10. Spirituality in a Holistic View

If we put the idea of spirituality as an aspect into a larger holistic context, I think, it's helpful to go beyond thinking about a person like four pieces of a pie. Of course people are not pies; we're not really divided up into nice slices. If we thought about human complexity in more detail, we could come up with hundreds

or thousands of slices. But social workers tend to simplify this and say “bio-psycho-social” and now sometimes add “spiritual.”

Yet one of the key qualities of spirituality as an aspect is the theme of seeking integration, integrity, and connectedness. As we work through the search for a sense of meaning and purpose, we're looking at all aspects of our lives at some point over the life course, including the biological. For example, one of the most intensely biological events, death, evokes a great deal of spiritual scrutiny, right? And when people reflect upon the nature of death- what happens if anything after death, dealing with other people's deaths, etcetera- it evokes many deep questions of meaning, soul searching and working through. All of the aspects of a person actually are being interwoven through spirituality.

We can also think of spirituality as the centre of the person. Think about the expression in English, “to be centered.” When you feel centered you literally have a sense of integrity. There is a central connection among aspects of who you are. You're feeling in that moment that all your aspects are oriented and connected around that center. You might pay attention to your center literally through meditation, prayer, or breathing practice where you feel the breath moving through the central channel of the body. Some types of meditation of course focus on energy points that run through the central channel. In Zen meditation, there's a point below the navel which is a central focus point. Reflecting on that point through meditation helps center and clarify the mind.

But even people without those formal practices know intuitively when you feel centered what that's like. When you're not centered it's very hard to be clear

about yourself at that moment. Listening well to clients and relating well with students become very hard as well. So paradoxically, when we get in touch with our true inner center, we become more connected and more open to empathize and relate with others. Centering is not an isolating experience. It's not a narcissistic process. In fact, many spiritual traditions have said that when we go into our true center we connect with the true center of everyone or everything.

Another way of thinking about spirituality is as a wholeness that embraces, includes, and transcends all of our aspects. Carl Jung, the Swiss depth psychologist, emphasized that view of spirituality. He described the life course as a path towards wholeness in which our different aspects become complementary, converged, and embraced. I think that it's helpful to use all three different metaphors for understanding spirituality (i.e. aspect, center, wholeness) to get a more complete view of it. But practically speaking, most researchers and many other social workers are using the aspect definition because you can operationalize it more easily.

Slide 11. Are Spirituality and Religion All Good?

This brings us to an important question. Are spirituality and religion all good? Partly that depends on how you define them. Some people don't like religions so they define religion in terms of 'badness.' Well, if you define religion as badness, it's bad. Or, some people want to think that spirituality is always good, so they define it to mean 'if you're spiritual you're good and everything about it is good'. Those dichotomies are not implied by my definitions.

Of course our biological aspect can go awry or we can abuse our physical selves. This can also happen with spirituality. While spirituality a major theme of spirituality is to connect and to transcend limitations, people can express spirituality in very damaging ways, violating individual and collective boundaries.

One of the most horrible examples on a large scale was the Holocaust. In a very twisted terrible way, the Nazi movement took religious symbols from other traditions and misused them and distorted them to support a massively destructive ideology and force. Unfortunately, any ideology can be twisted that way. Religious ideologies can be used for the purpose of committing or rationalizing violence, war, genocide, or just simply being judgmental in a condescending, harsh, demeaning, moralistic way.

One of the things that amazes me about religious imperialism and colonialism --and this is true not just with Western colonialism but in other cultures from what I've seen at least-- is that military powers commonly go out with economic or resource control powers and religious control powers. All three of them work together to undermine the fundamentals of the culture that they want to colonize. The colonizers condemn the religion, appropriate the resources, and use military force. This is a very sad thing about human history across the world.

Another problematic thing that I see frequently is people applying their secular or religious ideologies in an absolute way, such as, "I am absolutely right", or "Anybody or any culture or behavior that is different is wrong." This can be especially intense when people claim to have divine authority for the

absolute belief and for their efforts to control or oppress. And to me that's another very sad use of spirituality.

Slide 12. Social Work Examples of Boundary Violations

So let's look at it more practically in terms of what some social workers might do, and again, I won't dwell on this too long so. Some social workers think that they are reality experts. I'm joking here and being facetious-- some people think that an MSW means Metaphysical Social Worker (laughter from audience). They are convinced that they understand the nature of reality, that they know for sure when somebody is hallucinating or whether they are having a religious vision, that they know for sure what is moral, right, and proper for clients, and how they should live, etcetera. But I am not quite so confident that I or anybody else really has, or should have, that kind of unquestionable knowledge of what is true.

I think that one way this comes up often is in use of the mental health diagnostic and statistical manual (DSM-IV-TR). Do you do folks in Canada have to use that manual? So that manual has many implicit reality assumptions in it. However, the authors have gotten more careful over the numerous editions to say that you have to take into account cultural and religious context when making a diagnosis.

The idea of applying the manual to classifying hallucinations and delusions is really interesting to me. Sometimes one person's hallucination is another person's profound vision. You really have to sort that out; it's not always

obvious. Maybe we will have time to talk a little more about that later, but that's one situation in which a social worker should really be careful. We are not the absolute authority on what is real or unreal. We should be careful because tools like the DSM or symptom check lists can make us fall into a lazy and superficial way of trying to adjudicate what's real and what's not.

Another problem occurs when a social worker thinks what works for me as a person must be wonderful and great and should work for everybody. I'll give an example of that from many years ago when I was an MSW student and just out of my MSW program. I was working with an unaccompanied minors' refugee resettlement program for youth from Southeast Asia. I received a call from one of my clients, a teenager from Vietnam, and he said "Come, come visit, I need to talk to you".

He was very upset so I went out to the home and visited with his foster parents, who were genuinely sincere and good people and very helpful in many respects. Their prior foster parenting experiences had mainly been with infants, so there wasn't so much a problem with whether they thought the same or what they said to the infant. But in this case, the young man was upset because of tensions between himself as a Buddhist and his foster parents who were very devout, charismatic Christians. This religious difference wouldn't necessarily have been a problem. But the foster parents decided that he should come to their charismatic prayer meetings.

They didn't give him a choice. He came along because he was trying to be respectful, but he didn't understand what was going on there. I mean literally,

he didn't know how to understand the behaviors and the foster parents didn't try to understand where he was coming from spiritually either. The best I could figure out from discussing the situation was that the prayer group was involved in some kind of charismatic prayer that may have involved speaking in tongues and some other signs of the spirit. This foster youth didn't understand what this was about and what was going on. He didn't know what they were saying, but he got the distinct impression that they were spiritually attacking him; they were trying to spiritually control him somehow. He was really upset about this, so he said "I want no part of this."

This was part of a general mutual misunderstanding. Every time the foster son would get a letter from a relative in Vietnam, he'd sit in his room and listen to Vietnamese music, feeling depressed for a long time. The foster parents would say things to him like, "I know you're very depressed, you're very sad about leaving your homeland and the traumatic separation. But really if you just believe in Jesus it will be all ok, you're going to feel good. Just watch TV, eat the meals we provide you, and you will have no more sadness." Well that thinking of the foster parents just didn't get the reality of where he was at. Unfortunately we had to remove him from the home because we couldn't find a match of understanding there. The foster parents were unwilling to modify their behavior and the foster son had lost trust in them.

Slide 13.

In even more extreme cases, social workers are sometimes agents of spiritual assimilation and oppression. A prominent case of that in the US and in Canada was the period in which social workers, along with others, were party to the removal of huge numbers of indigenous children from their families. Many First Nations' children were forced into boarding schools or foster care as part of an assimilation program. In the United States, the Indian Child Welfare Act had to be passed by Congress to stop social workers and other people from doing that. Now American social workers must connect with appropriate governing bodies of First Nations if they're going to be making child welfare decisions. Fortunately we have an act of Congress to stop that, but it's sad that there was the need it.

On a macro or even international social level, sometimes social development efforts of social workers come along with inappropriate worldview assumptions and religious injunctions about how you should think, believe, and act. When that happens, social development and social and relief services can become tied to pressure to convert to a particular religion or spiritual perspective.

These are just a few cautions to be aware of. By the way, when I say "be aware," I am including myself in this reminder. I constantly have to reflect on where I may intentionally or unintentionally be a direct or indirect party to these kinds of harmful practices. Self-reflection and dialogue with people, especially those who have a clear commitment to spiritual growth, are powerful ways to expand our growth. So that brings me to the good news.

Ed Canda's Keynote

Slide 14. Good News

There are wonderfully exciting trends to transcend boundaries through addressing spirituality in social work. Since the 1990s, there has been a great growth of momentum and work on this in the United States, Canada, and other countries.

Slide 15. Historical Trends of the 1990s

Since the 1990s, there has been a rapid increase of research and teaching on spiritual diversity. There have always been faith-based initiatives in social work, but in terms of policy changes with Charitable Choice during the Clinton administration and the faith based initiative of the Bush administration, this connection has been picking up more energy. There is also the growth of transpersonal and eco-philosophical views in social work publications. Within the social work literature and practice, the range of religious diversity of perspectives expressed has grown considerably. Both the National Association of Social Workers and the Council of Social Work Education in various ways formally recognized the importance of religion and spirituality. And international networking started to grow in the 1990s.

Slide 16. Historical Trends since 2000

In this new century, all of those trends have been escalating, including interdisciplinary research because of similar movements in nursing, psychiatry, medicine, and many other fields. Now there are cross connections and cross

fertilizations. There is the development of global and not just nation-centered perspectives on spirituality and social work. I've been involved in activities on spirituality and social work with colleagues in 10 to 15 countries where there is some momentum developing around this. It's very exciting. Also, at least in the social work literature, there has been increasing attention to human/nature connectedness, not just human nature. The Canadian-US collaborations are great examples of these trends.

Slide 17. Spiritual Diversity and Connections

In order to bring these trends to fulfillment, we need to honor our localities and also connect across our differences. We need both to honor specifics, the particulars within boundaries, and also that which transcends boundaries. A really amazing fact is that it's now possible to access resources from most spiritual traditions all over the world. That leads to a lot of creativity and sometimes conflict. This is the first time in human history that spiritual traditions are globally connected on this scale; it's just incredible.

Although most North Americans affiliate with Christian denominations, there are of course hundreds of different religions and worldviews present within North America, including many people with no religious affiliation. So social workers need to be able to respond within North America and across the globe to this tremendous range of diversity in a respectful, knowledgeable, and skillful way.

Slide 18. Amazing Opportunities

This leads to some amazing opportunities: alternative and complementary therapies for example. Religious and spiritual traditions are not simply abstractions. They're tremendous resources of wisdom and skill for helping and healing on micro and macro levels. All spiritual traditions have been developing means of helping as long as they've existed for centuries and even thousands of years. Becoming more aware of what those are and how to connect those into religious dialogue and collaboration for spiritual growth-- this I find very exciting and also challenging. For example, I've led some inter-religious dialogue groups. They can tremendously flop; but if people are willing to find harmony between respecting their own commitments and also respecting others' commitments, and then engage in dialogue, such groups can be really wonderful. Social work has done that some, but I don't think we have tapped inter-religious dialogue nearly as much as possible.

Also, we need to further explore secular/religious partnerships in service. As I mentioned earlier, I was involved in work with Southeast Asian refugees through most of the 80's. Refugee resettlement engaged many different national, international, and local organizations. These organizations were both religious and secular and all had to connect and co-ordinate for resettlement to work well. Very often spiritual diversity was a key issue, because people of different world views and religions had to interact and cooperate.

Another opportunity is to further explore human/nature connectedness. Now in social work, understandably we focus on human societies and on helping

humans. But of course humans don't exist in a vacuum. That's obvious. But it seems weird to me that social work education, practice, supervision, and program design seldom address anything beyond the human in a very narrow scope.

Sometimes when I introduce this idea to students they say, "Well what do you mean? What's nature got to do with it? You know, I'm an autonomous person, I'm a human being. Are we really all that interrelated?"

So I say, "Well try this experiment: take a take a paper bag, put it over your head, and close it down for a while, and find out how long you can remain autonomous." (laughter from audience). I say to them, "Don't really try that at home."

Slide 19. Examples of NASW Practitioners' Opinions about Spiritually Based Helping

Actually, many social workers in the USA are addressing spirituality in practice to some extent. Lee Furman and I did a national survey of NASW members to explore this (Canda & Furman, 1999). Eighty percent or more of the respondents said that appropriate helping activities include: considering spiritual and religious support systems; using spiritual concepts in practice; discussing the role of spirituality and religion in relationships; engaging with spiritual and religiously based reading; discussing ways in which spiritual and religious support systems could be harmful; reflecting on beliefs about after death; helping clients reflect on the meaning and purpose of their situation; using reflective journaling; referring to spiritual and religious support systems; and helping clients to access existing rituals or develop rituals. There were many other helping activities that

some respondents used, but I thought it was interesting that 80% or more agreed that these could be appropriate.

Slide 20. Raising the Topic of Spirituality in Practice

Also, 50% or more agreed with the idea of a social worker raising the topic of spirituality while working with a client for issues of terminal illness, substance abuse, foster parenting, sexual abuse, partner violence, natural disaster, bereavement, chronic mental disorder, job loss, family relations difficulty, and criminal justice. This may be controversial because the worker is bringing up the topic, not necessarily the client. Fifty percent or more agree it is appropriate to raise the topic of religion for issues related to terminal illness, foster parenting, natural disaster, and bereavement. Also most of the respondents said that clients are bringing up issues related to religion and spirituality and they're trying to figure out how to respond to it appropriately.

Slide 21.

By the way, I collected this piece of Japanese paper last summer when I taught a course on spiritual diversity and social work at Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto. This posed interesting challenges. For one, I had to do the entire course through an interpreter and that created new dynamics. Second, I connected with this topic in a very different cultural context from my usual setting. The spiritual situations, the belief patterns, and practice contexts are very different between Japan and America. But, there were similar issues that came up in a broad sense,

Ed Canda's Keynote

such as, how do we connect across diverse religious and non-religious spiritual perspectives in a way that is respectful, knowledgeable and helpful. Those ways would vary by cultural context, of course.

Slide 22. Key Concepts in Transpersonal Theories for Social Work

This photograph of a cross is from Medjugorje, which is a very popular Catholic pilgrimage site in Bosnia Herzegovina. At this site, visionaries reported that Mary the mother of Jesus appeared on a number of occasions. Some of the visionaries continue to receive messages from Mary. So this is to introduce some ideas of transpersonal theory.

What do I mean by transpersonal experiences? These could include experiences related to God, Brahman, Buddha nature, cosmic consciousness, and connections with ancestors, spirit powers of nature, angels, and demons. Other examples are: near death experiences, extra sensory perceptions, and experiences of subtle energies like chi and kundalini. There are just meant to give you a sense of the range of things we are considering. These are all experiences that involve a breaking out of the ordinary sense of being limited to an individual body-ego, which is why they are called trans-egoic or transpersonal.

Slide 23. Peak, Nadir, and Plateau Experiences

Early in the development of transpersonal theory there was an influence from Abraham Maslow. He was a transition figure from humanistic psychology to transpersonal psychology. He developed the terms 'peak, plateau, and nadir'

experiences. A peak is literally rising above-- a sense of transcending-- rising above the ordinary limits of the body and the ego. For instance, if you climb a mountain peak, then come out to a clearing for a vast view, you can have an incredible sense of an expanded vision and an expanded consciousness. This sudden expansion of consciousness can happen when you're sitting by yourself quietly or meditating. It does not require going up a mountain peak. There is a sense that the egg shell of your limited body-ego cracks and you suddenly leap out of it.

A nadir experience is the opposite. It involves dropping into a pit, into the low point, hitting the bottom. Often times, these experiences are relevant when we are working with clients in conditions of crisis. By the very fact that these pit experiences shake up and break the structure of who we think we are and what we think life is about, they open up the possibility of something new. This doesn't guarantee something new will come that's better, but it is an opportunity that we can utilize to leap forward in our spiritual development.

Plateau experiences involve integrating growth, sometimes leaps of growth, into our ongoing functioning so that insights become part of our daily life. Another way Maslow used the term, plateau, referred to subtle but profound openings of awareness to beauty and the preciousness of life.

Slide 24. Wilber's Pre/Trans Egoic Distinctions

Ken Wilber is one of the most influential transpersonal theorists. Actually in the past several years he started referring to himself as an integral theorist to

emphasize the holistic integrating nature of his point of view. I want to highlight a little bit of his thinking because transpersonal theory especially focuses on boundary breaking, boundary transcending kinds of experiences.

Wilber describes spiritual development in much more detail than this, but broadly there are (or can be) three phases in the life cycle. In conventional social work education about the life cycle, we often talk about stage theories that go through pre-egoic and egoic phases. But Wilber suggests that there's also a trans-egoic phase of consciousness development that includes the insight and growth of the prior phases but is no longer limited to them.

Recall that at the egoic phase, according to Piaget, there is the emergence of a more stable sense of identity and the ability to engage in abstract thinking. That thinking ability includes pre-egoic capacity but it also goes beyond them. Trans-egoic consciousness includes those other kinds of abilities developed earlier but goes beyond them. Development is like the emergence of concentric circles getting larger and larger in terms of comprehensiveness and sophistication of consciousness. As people's sense of who they are expands to embrace others and other beings, they tend to expand their sense of compassion and justice. This is because you realize that everyone's well being and justice is intertwined.

Slide 25. Transformation

One of the themes underlying all of this is transformation: literally transcending form; moving; getting unstuck from one form and moving beyond that form. Where does that come from? Many transpersonal theorists like Maslow

and Wilber feel that there is an inherent capacity in human beings to experience this way. We already have the seed of this potential of consciousness within, but actual development unfolds through our experiences, through our choices of actions, and through the nurturance that we receive from the environment.

There also are ideals or spiritual forces that act as the light that draws the plant upward. So what is that light? Of course different traditions have different answers about what that is, such as God or ultimate reality.

Slide 26. Liminal Social Workers Needed

Well, if we're going to be able to address spiritual diversity knowledgably and respectfully, then we must skillfully include the many different contexts of clients' lives and also transcend boundaries between them. That calls for some very special qualities in a social worker. The challenge is like that of multicultural social work. It is important for social workers who cross-cultural boundaries to be competent and comfortable, not only in their primary original cultural context, but also in multiple contexts. That means being able to shift between them.

Now that's by no means easy. When you start shifting out of the cultural context that you grew up in, sometimes other folks in your circle start saying "What is going on with you? Why are you starting to act so weird? Why are you with those folks? Why are you doing this"?

When we break these boundaries, we break norms. It doesn't mean that we have to be disrespectful, but when we break away from the taken-for-granted

assumptions of whatever it is we were programmed into, folks who are still attached to those assumptions are going to get nervous. On the other hand, when you're moving into the other context, folks over there may say, "I'm not too sure we want you over here" or "I'm not going to treat you nicely. I won't treat you well or respectfully".

For people who are doing cross-cultural work, this is a constant challenge. When you connect social work to the context of spiritual diversity and start shifting between these boundaries, you might magnify the challenge because you may be rubbing against people's deeply invested and intense spiritual positions. They might start wondering "Hey I'm not too sure I like this." Some people might have an intense reaction. But that's the risk I think we need to take. I'm not saying everybody needs to do social work this way, but those who want to engage in boundary crossing mediating behavior in order to promote well-being and justice have to risk this. Even diplomats are doing that if they're compassionate diplomats.

I suggest that the quality of liminality would be valuable for social workers dealing with spiritual diversity. The word 'limen' is from Latin and it means passageway or doorway. An anthropologist some decades ago named Victor Turner drew on this term to talk about the quality of in-betweenness.

A liminal or in-between quality is like being in a doorway, such as the gateway entrance to this memorial shrine honoring the Confucian scholar, Cho Kwang-Jo. If you stand right in the middle of the passageway, you are neither inside nor outside. This position is neither here nor there; it's ambiguous, it's

uncertain, and it's in-between. This position gives the option of moving between things. Unless we cross that threshold, we can't enter that sacred space on the other side. Actually that's why in the Confucian tradition these gates are really important. They don't provide so much a functional barrier, because if somebody wished he or she could ram through there easily, even if the gate was closed. When you cross that threshold boundary, you should be mindful of your sincerity, your intention, and you should become aware of moving into that sacred space. Similarly, in many Buddhist temple areas, when you move towards the main temple area you may go through gates. Sometimes, like in South Korea, the gates will have guardian figures for the four directions. One of the meanings of those guardians is to remind you to leave behind all of the mental distractions, preoccupations, confusions, and delusions that you're stuck in and pass into this realm of nirvana in the moment. Passing into that space is really important, because the passing through marks a transition into a clear quality of mind.

So a liminal person is betwixt and between. She or he is comfortable and confident when shifting and transcending contexts. Some of the most inspiring people that I've met as mentors in my personal life are liminal people. For example, my main mentor throughout graduate studies in social work (1980-1986, The Ohio State University) was Daniel B. Lee who is currently a professor at the Loyola University of Chicago. He's a Korean-American who is very clear about his commitment to and devout practice in Christianity, in particular the United Methodist tradition. He has been very active as a lay deacon and leader in the Korean Methodist community. He is also committed to connecting people across

cultural and religious and national boundaries. His energy seems continuous. He's still working at such a fast pace in many countries, it's amazing. Because he is genuinely kind and caring, true to himself, willing to connect with others, and because he has a sincere commitment to continue doing this work connecting people while honoring where they are—because of these qualities he can promote mutual understanding and cooperation.

Slide 27. Symbolism of the Great Ultimate

I am borrowing this symbol to explore the concept of liminality further. It has a number of meanings. One is that the yin and yang qualities are both necessary and complementary aspects of vital energy. You might say that yin is the receptive and birthing quality; yang is the assertive and generating quality. But the original meanings are not quite exactly like that: If you look at a tree on a sunny day, one side is bright and the other is in shade, and as the sun moves through the day the shade and the light are shifting, right? That's the original meaning of yin and yang. They're not static ideas. They're mutually inclusive; they're transformative to each other; they alternate in predominance.

Also this symbol includes the circle around that embraces both. And this is the ultimate non-dual reality. The total meaning of the symbol has two names: one is the great ultimate, the other is the great non-ultimate. Any time we try to name the reality symbolized by the circle --to lock it down to a category or in a box in a concrete idea-- we're missing what it is. That which embraces all beyond boundaries can't be bounded.

Ed Canda's Keynote

I'm not asking you to accept this worldview, that's not my point. But rather, to think in stretching our way of relating to the world in terms of inclusivity, complementarity, beyond boundary-- that could be very helpful. This liminality of consciousness doesn't mean absolutism and it doesn't mean simply relativism. It means transcending either of those rigidities.

Slide 28. Vital Energy

Another meaning associated with this symbol is 'the source of all that is' via the activation of vital energy in the interaction of yin and yang. Vital energy transforms everything. Even if we don't name it anything or if it is not a formal part of our belief system, we all can relate to energy in some way. This is a photograph of Mount Poas volcano in Costa Rica, a strong vivid illustration of life energy.

Slide 29. Death of the Self

Now I would like to move through some more images to illustrate themes pertaining to boundary transcendence.

Another theme that is important is the death of the self as an opening to spiritual rebirth. But this can be easily misunderstood. I had a series of college English classes in which we read great mind-expanding books. I had a wonderful professor who was very challenging. I learned a tremendous amount with her. But this kind of mystical talk freaked her out. She couldn't get what this was about. For a major paper in my class I reviewed the literature of Christian

mysticism, especially on the theme of death of the self. I wrote an elaborate paper on death of the self and spiritual rebirth. After reading the paper, my professor gave me the paper back with a generous grade. But she said to me privately, "You're not thinking of suicide are you?" (Laughter from audience)

Another image that I like is found within a Korean word, haetal, which means enlightenment. This is described to be like when a butterfly emerges. When a butterfly is still in the cocoon, it's confined. When it finally cracks the cocoon and breaks that boundary, then it can fly free. So this transformation appears to be a kind of death, but it's actually a kind of greater life.

Slide 30. The Sweat Lodge

Another important symbolism of connection and harmony that relates to mandalas, medicine wheels, and such, is reflected in the sweat lodge. Black Elk, who was a Lakota medicine person and Catholic Catechist, talked about the meaning of the sweat lodge in the Lakota tradition (Brown, 1971). He said, "The willows, which make the frame of the sweat lodge, are set up in such a way that they mark the four corners of the universe. Thus the whole lodge is the universe in an image, and the two legged, four legged and winged peoples, and all things of the world are contained within it, for all peoples and things too must be purified before they can send a voice to Wakan-Tanka."

I had a really interesting experience relating to this. I've been privileged to be invited to participate in some sweat lodge ceremonies. One time a First Nations friend invited me and my Confucian mentor, who was visiting from Korea. I was

wondering how this Confucian teacher would relate to this. Well he really felt very comfortable and also honored. Afterwards he said, "You know this is original Confucianism before all the fancy philosophy and teaching." That's what he experienced there. Also that lodge was held in connection with a supper to honor the soul of a deceased friend. Food was set out as part of the ceremony and that was also very much like a Korean tradition called chaesa, which involves offering food to memorialize, thank, and appreciate the departed one. Afterwards people share the meal. Please don't misunderstand me; I don't mean that these traditions are all the same. But sometimes when we go deep we can find certain themes and some common connection points across cultures and religions.

Slide 31. Trance/Balance/Ecstasy

Another important symbol and concept around spiritually-sensitive practice is how to be in balance while in this practice and in a liminal mode. This is a photograph of a Korean shaman doing a trance dance on knife blades.

It was funny hearing the reactions from different people who witnessed the ritual. I thought, "Well this is a great opportunity, I'll really be glad to see this."

You might notice that the knife blades she's standing on are on top of a scaffold. You can see the tops of some peoples' heads. They're helping her by balancing the scaffold. For about an hour, the shaman danced on top of the knife blades and turned to the five directions. The five directions in this case mean the four cardinal directions and the centre which is the connecting point.

Well, back to what I was saying about how differences between some of the reactions were funny. My wife, then my fiancé, was with me at that ceremony. She's Korean and was familiar with shamanism from her upbringing. But she hadn't ever been that close to this particular kind of knife treading ceremony. Her reaction was, "whoa, that is intense", so she went off into a corner while I was right up in front. I had also told my traditional Korean percussion master --with whom my wife and I studied, and whose form of music comes out of the grass roots agricultural shamanistic context-- about the ceremony and he joined us. He was watching and I said, "What do you think of this?" And he said, "Oh that's nothing; I've seen that a lot of times before". So even the same event, depending on your vantage point, can produce very different reactions.

In this case, the symbolism of this ceremony was focused on balance, which is a very important part of Korean shamanic ceremonies. Literal balance is also linked to the balance of your self as a person, your relationships, and all that's around. The shaman did have the help of these poles to help her balance, but she was up high. To be able to dance on top of knife blades in bare feet without falling, even with aid of those poles, is no simple task.

There's also a divinatory practice of balancing a large trident on its handle. When the shaman invokes a helping spirit and the connection is clear, then the trident stays balanced with no one touching it, even when there are objects put on top.

Sometimes my students are getting tired and burned out from their long studies and I say, "Well at least in order to graduate we don't make you dance on

knife blades.” (Laughter from audience) But we as social workers have to find how to keep our balance in challenging situations as well.

Slide 32. Cautions about Spiritual Development Stage Theories

I want to make some cautionary observations about Ken Wilber's theory and actually all secular or religious life stage theories (Robbins, Chatterjee, & Canda, 2006). I don't want us to get stuck in standardization of stages, because then we look at people in terms of plans and rigid or cookie cutter expectations. If we do so, then we'll think that everybody has to develop in a certain way to be normal. We don't need that; this is my personal stand.

Also, many stage theories, including spiritually oriented ones such as Wilber's, assume worldview content that should appear at particular stages. I don't see the necessity of being stuck in that either. To me, the qualities and process of development are most important. The more significant qualities to distinguish the spiritual developmental phases are expansiveness of consciousness and compassion; the ability to connect across an increasing range of contexts; and also be to be clear where we are. Those are the qualities that to me are the most crucial.

Slide 33. Key Insights for Boundary Breaking Social Work

So in spiritually sensitive social work, we need a mind that is open to lots and lots of different possibilities; but also we should not be mindless. You know I mean that in two ways: being mindful, being clearly present, but also not being so open minded that our brains fall out. We need to engage in critical thinking

including analyzing evidence based research. I have nothing against evidence based practice, but to me it all depends on what does 'the evidence' mean. I would like to see more evidence based research about how spirituality connects to social work. But we need a very expansive idea about evidence and methods for inquiry. Indeed, all spiritual traditions have established means of engaging in a systematic inquiry into their practices. For example, in the Christian context, the tradition of discernment of spirits could provide helpful implications around mental health issues.

As spiritually sensitive social workers, we need to be very flexible in our behavior, but not just mixed up or lost. That's a danger. Sometimes on this path, when we act as a kind of bridge or a mediator crossing boundaries, we can get really mixed up and lost. Also, we need to be non-judgmental, not imposing in a harsh way, with controlling criticisms. But I don't mean that we should be amoral or unethical. For example, if somebody says, "Ah this spirit being just came and told me to go and shoot the next ten people I see after this session," and you say, "Ah transpersonal experience, how wonderful!" We have to explore a little further and maintain the protection of that person and others. That's an extreme case but it's not an unrealistic case either, unfortunately.

Slide 34.

Slide 35. Implications

Overall, we need to have clear minds in order to help clearly. Our minds should be clear like the beautiful water in the photo at left. We can all relate with the inherent beauty of that.

But looking to the photo on the right, we see an opposite quality: war destruction. These are both actually in the same spot on Lokrum Island in Croatia. I took the photos not long after the war in former Yugoslavia. That clear water is just near by that bomb-blasted building. When I was there, I reflected on the contrast. At any moment I have a choice to move in a direction of clear water or in a direction of destruction. All of us have to watch every moment and decide which way to go. I don't mean to make that sound really heavy. But if you pay attention to your inner mind workings, even on a very small scale, you can notice there will be decision points. If you keep going this way, and this way, and this way, even on little things, you can end up going very far off.

That reminds me of an interesting story that I heard some years ago when I was living in Columbus, Ohio. There was an African American sculptor, named Elijah Pierce, living there who became quite famous as a so called naïve or folk artist. He had no formal art training. He was around 90 years old when I met him and he was a very inspiring person. He told me this story about how he got on his path as an artist and as a Christian minister. He said that when he was a teenage boy, around 12 or so, he and his mother every day at a certain time would take out the Bible and they would read it together. That was a very high priority time of day.

But one day, the Sears catalogue had arrived, and in those days that was a big deal. (Laughter from audience) So the Sears catalogue was over there and the Bible was over here. He was reading the Bible but his mind kept focused on the Sears catalogue. He kept thinking about that catalogue, his mind going over there-- and then suddenly he was stuck dead. He fell over dead. His mother was shocked! "Oh what happened to my child, this is horrible!"

People laid him out and were preparing the funeral. He said it was a couple of days later when he was suddenly up again-- and oh my gosh what happened?! His parents said, "We thought you were dead! We were getting ready to bury you! What happened?" He said, "Well I realized at this moment my mind was going between the Bible and the Sears' catalogue, and then suddenly when I was moving this way God struck me down. And then God said, "You have a choice which way you go." Elijah said, "I am going the Bible way." So God said that he could go back.

In this way, Elijah committed to a life of being a minister. Oh, he had lots of stories like this; pretty amazing. I'm sure glad that he didn't come to a social worker and mental health centre and tell some of these stories at certain points, because he might not have been treated in the best way. (Laughter from audience) But those were really important powerful stories that showed his life journey and transition points and how he came to where he was.

Slide 36. Examples of Using Spiritual Supports in Practice

Very quickly I would like to mention some examples of using inner and outer spiritual supports in social work practice based on the survey of NASW members. They could include holistic bio-psycho-social-spiritual assessment; religious community mutual supports; prayer; meditation; dream reflection; spiritual journaling; subtle energy work; rituals; utilizing spiritually based helpers and healers- including clergy, monks, shamans,- through referral and collaboration; and other complementary and alternative therapies.

It is also important to examine the organizational culture of our human service organizations. Is the organizational culture itself spiritually sensitive? Is it conducive to the spiritual growth and well-being of the workers, of the clients? Is the decision making process spiritually attuned? Is the organization attuned to its impact on the surrounding natural environment? And is it set up to facilitate spiritually sensitive practice?

Other macro related practices include spiritually based peaceful social change movements such as those promoted by Gandhi and King, religiously based non governmental organizations and social services, and transcultural collaborations for planetary well-being. These are especially exciting to me, because they can promote the cross connections starting to happen across many countries on spirituality and social work. They open possibilities for a genuine planetary wide spiritually sensitive social work for planet wide well-being.

Slide 37. Example of Peaceful Change in Social Activism

I'm just going to touch briefly on Gandhian principles for social activism. Gandhi promoted nonviolent but proactive resistance in the pursuit of justice. He referred to his approach as 'satyagraha' which means 'truth force.' He didn't mean by this 'forcing the truth' on others. He didn't promote a vengeful mentality, such as thinking, "Since you are imposing your truth on me, I'm going to hate you and try to destroy you." Rather, satyagraha means trying to engage with everyone's process and pursuit of truth even in the midst of struggling and being attacked. Now that's very difficult. I'm not sure I'm fully up to that, but it's an ideal for me. How can we engage in social justice activism in such a way that we are facilitating everyone's collective movement on a path of truth?

Slide 38.

This is at the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site in Atlanta, Georgia. The sign on nearby Ebenezer Baptist Church is a quote from Rev. Dr. King. It reads, "We will either learn to live together as brothers or perish as fools". Gandhi of course was an important inspiration for King, so there is a statue of Gandhi there.

Slide 39. Kwan Yin, The Bodhisattva of Compassion

I like the symbolism of this sculpture quite a bit. This is one of the ways that the Bodhisattva of Compassion (Gwanseum in Korean; Kwan Yin, in Chinese) in Korea is portrayed. In this version, there are 11 heads and there are

numerous arms. It's the symbolism of compassion. Sometimes this is used to symbolize a Buddhist approach to social work.

The various heads on top each have a different facial expression. Some faces are happy and some are sad. They reflect different kinds of compassionate responses to different circumstances. For example, sometimes a compassionate response is caring anger; not egotistical anger. If a child habitually runs out in front of traffic, there might be a natural loving response of momentary anger in order to prevent harm. But the action part of a loving process. Compassionate anger is not egocentric or harmful. It's not being stuck in the feeling, but it's a compassionate genuine response. In other situations, compassionate response may involve joy or commiseration. These faces depict different kinds of responses suitable to different circumstances.

But also on the forehead there is (A cell phone rings). Oh this must be a message from Kwan Yin (Laughter from audience). Amita Buddha is on the forehead. This is the Buddha of infinite light or of completely clear mind. All of those different expressions of compassion need to come out of that completely clear light or mind.

And then the main face of Kwan Yin is very meditative, presently aware, and clear.

There are also many arms reaching out, and, in many versions, there are eyes in the palms of the hands. That symbolizes being able to perceive in all directions and to reach out to help in all directions. In some versions (including this one), there are different tools in the hands. That symbolizes all the different

Ed Canda's Keynote

skillful means for reaching out and helping. So here's sort of super social worker. (Laughter from audience) This help reaches out not only to human beings but to all beings.

Slide 40.

If you go to the website, you can access many kinds of resources and images on spiritual diversity, health, and social work. In case you can't see that it's www.socwel.ku.edu/canda; then look at the Spiritual Diversity and Social Work Resource Centre there.

Slide 41. Conclusion with Questions and Answers

Well I think I can't top the image of an all-perceiving and all-embracing compassion, so I'm going to stop at that point. Thank you very much. (Applause)
I think we have five minutes for questions or comments. Yes?

Q1 I have a few questions; the first one is, is your syllabus available?

Ed Yes. If you go on my home page (www.socwel.ku.edu/canda) there are a couple of my course syllabi. You can click on the one for the spirituality course and see a recent version.

Q2 Thank you. Could you explain more about what your Confucian teacher meant by his comment on the sweat lodge?

Ed What he meant is that classical Confucianism emphasizes the importance of harmonious relationships among humans and between humans and heaven and earth. The sweat lodge symbolizes this very clearly and that's what he meant. The sweat lodge ritual, like Confucian teaching, connects to the fundamental experience of our root connectedness in harmony as our true nature. He found that very moving. He was also very moved about what was distinctive to the Lakota tradition of the lodge, which was not specifically Confucian. But that's how he was relating philosophically to the experience.

Q2 I don't know much about sweat lodges but I am not sure how much this is like Confucianism, which seems to emphasize individual cultivation rather than connectedness.

Ed Well in my experience, at least with my Confucian teachers, the two are inseparable: a personal cultivation of sincerity and virtue is an expression of our fundamental human nature of benevolence. The Chinese character for benevolence (in, Korean; ren, Chinese) resembles a human figure with two parallel lines next to it. This means that true human personhood is inseparable from benevolent connectedness. The Confucian path involves self-cultivation, which then cycles together with that connectedness. Are there other questions or comments? Yes.

Q3 Back in I think it was '88, you had started us off with the definition of spirituality including connection to the nonhuman world. And then about ten years later you asked us to revisit the person and environment concept, because we were losing sight of the fact that the person can't be separated from the environment. And tonight you talked about the human and nature connection. I find that all very encouraging.

But you said the reason we continue to use this aspect definition of spirituality is because it's the easiest one to operationalize. I just really get frustrated in social work and other activities when, because we need to operationalize for our research, we limit some of these concepts. I don't know how we get to the human nature of peace that you were talking about if we still use that that aspect definition of spirituality to kind of seduce us, because it's the easiest one to operationalize. But it's much more narrow, much more limited than what I think you've been calling us to over all the years to try and understand.

Ed Well, part of this problem has to do with the politics of research and social science with the heavy influence of positivistic worldview. But that's a whole other story. That's why I like the three metaphors of aspect, center, and wholeness together. There are various research approaches we can use to explore all of those including quantitative and qualitative methods, phenomenological research, incorporation of meditative practices, and various transpersonal research methods. We may narrow ourselves because of the political predominance of positivist assumptions and the way those affect funding streams for who will pay for what

kind of research. But one positive thing even in the funding world is that at least in the States there's more and more openness to mixed methods research. So even if the funders are coming from what I think of as a neopositivist frame, they're starting to recognize and even ask for complementary methods: not only quantitative methods in analysis but also qualitative. If you use creativity, you can tap these things.

Even though I said maybe we were pressured towards that narrow definition, much of the difficulty is that we need to get unstuck from that narrow thinking within ourselves. We can find research approaches to explore spirituality in many different ways. But not every kind of research method will work for every kind of research question about spirituality. Some things can't be addressed by reductionist methods. But some things related to spirituality can be addressed through quantitative analysis and physical level measures. For example, in the growing research about meditation, people can triangulate biochemical studies of changes in the body; with phenomenological study of the meditators' reports of subjective experiences; with observation of group dynamics like in group meditation settings; with use of focus group interviews to generate insightful comparisons of experiences; with ethnographic participatory observation of meditation. There are many ways of knowing and there's no reason why we can't connect them. For example, the Dalai Lama has been encouraging much more of these connections of multiple research approaches including ones that would be more consistent with traditional Tibetan Buddhist approaches to inquiry. But he is also supporting conventional Western science. So that's an exciting opportunity.

Ed Canda's Keynote

But I'd have to say that sometimes I'm a little disappointed that there's a tendency towards reductionism in common academic thinking and research on spirituality.

Q3 Sounds like you are describing dancing on beds of many knives.

Ed Yes, maybe so.

Q4 Ed, as always I really enjoyed your talk. You have been a mentor to so many of us. I wonder if you any reflections on future avenues of social work research in spirituality. Certainly it was an implicit message in today's field that it reaches international levels. I was wondering if you had any comments on the possible directions of your future research.

Ed Well I have lots of interests, but one that I personally am most interested in now is international cross cultural collaborative research, where we can bring to bear different cultural and research vantage points around various topics. Part of the challenge is even just building those collaborations now in order to open up the research process down the road.

For example, in December there will be a spirituality and social work symposium in Hong Kong as part of a large international conference on health and mental health in social work. (see www.swh.2006.com) I've been able to invite colleagues from South Korea, Japan, and China to connect around the topic of spirituality and social work. I know scholars in each place, but there has not been the cross connection between them, so I don't know what will come out of that.

Ed Canda's Keynote

This is an exciting opportunity. But international collaborations and networking can be a challenge because most countries in the world at some point have been enemies with one another. And we have to deal with that in order to create these changes and collaborations.

Even researching what works well to facilitate inter-religious collaborations and international research teaming around spirituality would be interesting; a lot of us just sort of 'wing it.' It might be interesting to really try to find examples, but I didn't think of it till just now. Thanks. (Laughter from audience). The US-Canadian collaborations of spirituality and social work that are emerging build on a wonderful connection.

Have we transcended the boundary of nine o'clock (Laughter from audience)?

Q5 There's one more question to go. I was very interested in a previous statement about the need for liminal social workers. Then I was just thinking about what you were talking about a few minutes ago, about the idea of a mixed method type of research on people who are meditating with the adding of some of the qualitative and phenomenological methods. I am wondering about the idea of applying that kind of research with social workers who are meditating in order to study whether meditation facilitates the development of more liminal social worker. What's your thought on that?

Ed Canda's Keynote

Ed Hmm yes, that's a good idea. Well my thought is, it's a good idea. One of my former doctoral students that graduated a year or two ago did a similar study. It was not of social workers meditating, but she went into a nursing home setting to teach a few different simple versions of centering and relaxation practices to residents and then examined how the practices impacted them. She was inspired by a Transcendental Meditation based studies looking at similar things. But we've just barely tapped that sort of research in social work. There have been some people since the '80's advocating about the importance of meditation for the preparation of social workers and social work practice. However, outside of social work, there is more meditation orientated study, such as in transpersonal psychology.

Q5 That's good to hear, that's awesome.

Ed Are we done? (Applause)

Presentation of Gift by Barbara Swartzentruber

John Coates said earlier that those of us on the committee struggled to find out who did what jobs, but I missed the meeting. So I got this job. But that's ok because it's not a struggle to do this. (Audience laughter) So I have the task of thanking Ed. I want to say that I really appreciated your message of interconnectedness and particularly your demonstration of your connectedness in your teaching. On behalf of the committee we'd like to present this locally made glass hummingbird feeder.

Ed Canda's Keynote

Ed Thank you very much (Applause). Oh that's beautiful, wow! Oh beautiful, a humming bird feeder, I love it. Thank you very much, it's wonderful.