

Kate Adams, professor  
University of Winchester, UK

Abstract: *The opaque spaces of children's spiritual encounters*

Children across the world report similar spiritual experiences and 'encounters'. These include, but are not limited to: communications with the divine or other divine beings such as angels either in waking life or in dreams; meetings with deceased loved ones, spirits, ghosts or imaginary friends; and near death experiences.

This paper interrogates data to explore the potential impact of traditions on children's encounters and the resulting spaces which they occupy. It does so by revisiting primary data from several earlier studies with children from different faith and non-faith backgrounds aged 7-12 which explored their spiritual encounters. Ethical permission was received from the required institutions, parents and the children themselves. In addition, the paper draws on secondary data sources from international studies with children.

Findings suggest that in the majority of cases the experiences conform either specifically or more broadly to the cultural worlds of each child. However, alignment with cultural conventions did not necessarily mean that adults deemed the children's experience as credible.

The paper argues that this situation leaves many children's spiritual encounters in an opaque space, suspended between their roots in the history of human experience whilst conversely being denied or dismissed by others living within the same cultural 'boundaries'. The implications of this discrepancy are considered from various interdisciplinary approaches (e.g. psychoanalysis, religion, neuroscience and anthropology). It concludes that in some cases, greater awareness amongst adults is a key to enabling children's spirituality to be edged out of its opaque space into a more lucid space, both across disciplines and society.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

**Willyane de Andrade Alvarenga**, Registered nurse  
Ph.D. from the University of São Paulo - Ribeirão Preto College of Nursing in Brazil  
and the Catholic University of Portugal in Portugal.

**Abstract: *Spirituality of children and adolescents hospitalized with cancer: a qualitative study***

Spirituality is related to the search for meaning in life, helping the children and adolescents with a cancer diagnosis the finding meaning in sickness. However, more studies are needed in order to understand the way in which spirituality is expressed in childhood and adolescence. The present study aimed to identify the meaning attributed to spirituality by Brazilian children and adolescents with cancer.

**Theoretical framework:**

The Relational Consciousness of the spirituality of the child was used as theoretical framework.

**Methodology:**

Qualitative methodology and the data was collected through semi-structured interviews with drawing support and photographs preselected by the researchers to stimulate communication with the participants.

**Findings**

Four categories were constructed and reveal how the spirituality of children and adolescents with cancer is expressed: (i) the connection with family, friends, and nature; (ii) attachment to God, the use of strategies for strengthening the faith and the sense of inner peace; (iii) the change of the self in the trajectory of the disease, from the resignification of the identity, the values and the meaning of life; and (iv) reflection on the mystery of existence. Children and adolescents experienced the search for the meaning and purpose of life with the diagnosis of cancer, which was expressed through a relational conscience with the self, with the significant people and with the sacred, in the search for well-being.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

**Robin Barfield**

Spurgeon's College, London, UK

Abstract: *Original sin, theodicy and the slaughter of the firstborn*

The Reformed Christian tradition has tended to employ the Augustinian concept of original sin and guilt as a key part of a child's spirituality and pedagogical methodology. However recent approaches in the phenomenological tradition have questioned the helpfulness of such a position and emphasised the innocence of the child. This has wider implications on the question of theodicy. The conflict between these two positions can be explored using the slaughter of the firstborn in the Exodus as a case study. This paper argues that a Reformed covenantal approach better explains this particular point in the telling of the Judaeo-Christian story and that the place of original sin and guilt should be reconsidered in the transmission of the wider Christian tradition.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Joyce E. Bellous, retired professor  
University of Calgary, University of Alberta and McMaster University (Canada)

**Abstract: *An Inclusive Spiritual Education***

I defined human spirituality as a sense of felt connection in *Educating Faith* (2006; 2015). A secure sense of felt connection is central to a human capacity to survive and thrive. The capacity and need for felt connection wins support from brain and body sciences, e.g., when mirror neurons were discovered by a group of Italian scientists, quite by accident (1994).

As a consequence, the issue of religion versus spirituality is best posed as a question of religion and spirituality. This assertion isn't made to promote one interest over the other, but to say that the spiritual lies at the foundation of all human experience, i.e., everyone is spiritual, and that typically or often, people use religious language to express spiritual concerns. If religion is suppressed, spirituality may be driven to hide itself.

In this paper, I lay out an inclusive approach to spiritual education that gets beneath religious/spiritual tensions to focus on the human need. In presenting the approach, and perhaps an attitude to the humanity of our learners, the presentation describes four spiritual styles. Each one relies on a specific currency. The four currencies are, namely: word, emotion, symbol or action. I unpack the styles to show how, taken together, they create a holistic and human literacy curriculum that invites children and youth into classroom experience despite religious differences or indifferences they bring with them.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Mrs. Ketki Bhandari  
Monash University, Australia

Abstract: *Exploring teachers' spirituality: A significant influence on children's spirituality*

The relational nature of children's spirituality means that it is shaped and influenced by interactions with people around them. In educational contexts, one of the most significant influences on children's development is their teachers. In the field of children's spirituality, teachers' spirituality and its impact on teaching is a new area for exploration.

The purpose of this research is to understand teachers' perceptions of spirituality and how this affects their teaching. I interviewed five primary school teachers in Melbourne. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, during which the participants referred to a significant artefact that represents their ideas of spirituality. The interview data were analysed using a post-qualitative approach, using Gayatri Spivak's theory of post-colonial marginality and Jiddu Krishnamurti's philosophical teachings about striving for freedom.

This paper will present findings that relate to the formation of teachers' spirituality in light of their cultural and traditional influences, and the impact of this on their teaching. It was found that each participant developed their spirituality in a different way while interacting with the people and influences around them. This research is important because it contributes new knowledge towards understanding one of the influences on children's spirituality, their teachers.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Virginie Boelen, Candidate au doctorat en Éducation  
Université du Québec à Montréal

**Résumé : *Pour une pédagogie du vivre-ensemble sur Terre dans le cadre du développement spirituel de l'enfant au primaire, au Québec***

Depuis les années 2000, l'école québécoise désormais non confessionnelle doit, selon la Loi sur l'instruction publique, « faciliter le cheminement spirituel de l'élève afin de favoriser son épanouissement » (LIP, article 36) au moyen de son équipe-école, dont les enseignants, mais aussi des animateurs dédiés à cela. Une récente enquête exploratoire auprès de ces animateurs travaillant en tandem avec les enseignants, a mis au jour leurs besoins de 1) redéfinir le développement spirituel, adapté à la réalité contemporaine; 2) disposer de stratégies pédagogiques aptes à favoriser le développement spirituel chez les jeunes en contexte séculier.

Une recherche-développement vise à répondre à ce double besoin. Il est d'abord question de revoir le sens du spirituel laïque selon une perspective anthropologique-ontologique de l'« être-au-monde » et de la relation au monde. L'originalité de cette recherche réside dans la construction d'un modèle théorique avec des stratégies pédagogiques pour favoriser cette spiritualité ouverte et créative, en se basant sur le rapport profond de l'être humain avec la nature (Afeissa, 2016 ; Choné, 2016 ; Naess, 2008), tel que suggéré entre autres par les textes du ministère de l'Éducation (MELS, 2005, 2007), et selon une perspective d'autoformation existentielle (Galvani, 2013 ; Pineau, 2006). Cette approche répond à l'enjeu éducationnel majeur du vivre-ensemble sur Terre, où l'idée de communauté de vie s'élargit à l'ensemble du monde vivant et non vivant (Morin, 2014 ; Viveret, 2017 ; Sauvé, 2017). Cette communication exposera les premiers éléments de construction de ce modèle théorique autour du concept d'une spiritualité en lien avec le rapport établi avec la nature.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Isabelle Braibant, aumonier  
Hôpital L'Espérance, Montégée (Belgique)

**Résumé : *À l'horizon de la fin de vie de l'enfant, spiritualité et tradition, entre impasse et passage.***

Relecture de situations d'accompagnements spirituels (religieux) de fin de vie dans le service de pédiatrie du CHC accueillant une patientèle multiculturelle de traditions diverses, anciennes et nouvelles, souvent issues des migrations. En pédiatrie, la relation "enfant, spiritualité et traditions" ne peut se penser sans tenir compte du vécu des parents et elle est marquée par le caractère crucial de la situation. La situation de crise existentielle est révélatrice du caractère éminemment relationnel de la transmission. Elle éprouve la capacité des traditions à soutenir la traversée à vivre par l'enfant et ses proches. "les traditions sont porteuses d'un matériel symbolique transmis par les parents si possible ou par un autre, à l'intérieur d'une relation de confiance pour se construire face aux grandes questions de la vie et de sens que se pose tout être humain." (Struyf, Psychologie et spiritualité) Une première source de questionnements porte sur la manière dont la tradition assume son rôle de "porteur", dans ce contexte crucial au regard du rapport à soi, à autrui, au transcendant, au monde, à l'accueil du réel qu'elle nourrit, soutient ou nie? Par ailleurs, cette logique des spiritualités et traditions vient parfois se heurter, jusqu'à mettre en question la logique des pratiques médicales avec leurs repères éthiques et leurs projets thérapeutiques. Face au risque de l'impasse thérapeutique et relationnelle, il y a un chemin à trouver. L'organisation du travail, la réunion pluridisciplinaire, les relectures collectives de pratiques nous permettent de prendre progressivement notre place d'accompagnateur spirituel et religieux pour chercher ensemble ce chemin qui mène de l'impasse au passage.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Katherine Carpenter, Specialist Behaviour Teacher  
England, UK

Abstract: ***Where do unicorns come from and why does it matter?***

This paper seeks to discuss the monomyth of the unicorn in terms of the role it plays in children's existential questioning. The unicorn is an ubiquitous mythological entity found worldwide. Lavers (2009) argues that 'the unicorn in your head depends on your background'. The Times Educational Supplement (2003) argued that teachers in the United Kingdom ask 'up to two questions every minute, up to 400 in a day, around 70,000 a year, or two to three million in the course of a career'. However, many of these questions exclude existential and spiritual elements, and when raised this type of question is often discouraged, dismissed or relegated to Religious Education lessons. Dabrowski (1970) and Webb (2012) have recognised the importance of allowing children to explore existential questioning, suggesting that in 'gifted children' existential depression could result if this type of questioning is denied. Healthwatch Suffolk (2017) found prevalent rates of stress and self-harm in pupils with many of their 6,800-pupil sample feeling unsupported in their mental health and wellbeing. This paper contends that there is a need amongst educators to pay closer attention to pupils' need for existential questioning particularly with regard to our responses to mental health complications and trauma. Through overcoming the tendency to foreclose existential and spiritual questioning within the classroom, this paper argues that we can develop better schemata for approaching and responding to pupils' wellbeing concerns.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses



Dr. Rupert Collister, SENCO (Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator)

Robin Calla

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto

Abstract: *Teaching and teacher education as 'engaged service': A collaborative conversation*

The role of the teacher is one of service. Teachers serve their students, communities, broader societies, and if they are truly 'engaged', then they serve the Earth itself. In our view such 'engaged service' is inherently 'an applied spiritual practice' whether or not it exists within one of the recognised spiritual traditions.

The two questions at the heart of every curriculum should be 'what kind of teacher do I want to be?' and 'what kind of world do I want my students to live in, and how can I help bring that world into being?' (Harste, 2003 adapted by Crowell, personal communication, 2011). Those who embody 'engaged service' engage in deep reflection on themselves, their own experiences, and their engagement with their immediate and wider contexts. This deep reflection, rather than being a vehicle to withdraw from the world is a way to discover who they really are. This occurs by stripping back the masks and false images that society and dominant worldviews create. It is a way to have an authentic understanding of themselves as a whole person. For, if they cannot experience an authentic understanding of themselves, they cannot experience an authentic understanding of the contexts or structures of which they are part.

The purpose of this workshop is to provide an opportunity for participants to engage in collaborative conversation around these questions and their role in integrating 'engaged service' into teacher education programmes and teaching. The conversation will be interspersed with a range of reflective and embodied activities.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Tony Eaude

Department of Education, University of Oxford, UK

**Abstract: *Constructing identities how cultures and traditions influence young children's beliefs, values and actions***

This interactive workshop will encourage discussion on how pre-adolescent children's identities are constructed and the influence of culture and traditions on their beliefs, values and actions. Key questions will be identified in advance and discussed after a 15 minute introduction. The theoretical framework, drawing on Charles Taylor's and Richard Jenkins' work, is that identity should be seen as a constantly changing narrative, with multiple, often-conflicting identities, combining to form an identity with varying levels of coherence according to context. The distinction between substantive and situational identities and the relationship between beliefs, values and actions will be highlighted briefly. While identity formation is often considered mostly in relation to adolescents, I argue that the foundations of identity are established in younger children, drawing on Berger and Luckmann's concept of primary and secondary socialisation, Micro-cultures such as family, community, place of worship and school and macro-cultures, such as a faith tradition and the overall culture of a society, influence how children's beliefs and values are formed. How young children learn, especially through example, activity, routines, habituation and feedback, the relative influence of these and resulting dilemmas and possible implications for adults will be explored. This is linked to children's spirituality in terms of my work on the search for identity being an integral element of children's spiritual development, Hay with Nye's and others' on the relational aspect of spirituality and Hull's on the spirituality of particular societies, such as the individualistic and materialistic culture in which many children grow up.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Marlene El Khoury, répondante au Service à l'Enfance  
Basilique Notre-Dame de Montréal

Résumé : *Construction du « moi profond » dans la formation à la vie chrétienne.*

Partant de la structure de l'âme reçue des Pères de l'Église et m'inspirant du dialogue qu'ils ont établi avec la culture de leur temps, je souhaite comprendre la construction du 'moi profond' et son influence dans la formation spirituelle des jeunes, en initiation sacramentelle.

À travers l'étude du « Faisons l'homme à notre image et ressemblance » (Gn 1, 26), j'essaierai de trouver le schéma de construction de l'identité chrétienne, individuelle et communautaire. C'est une pédagogie d'initiation où le sujet devient acteur de sa propre formation et co-créateur de son chemin de vie et trouve un sens à son existence, du courage à son espérance et une chance derrière chaque souffrance.

Dans cette structure, le Baptême serait-il le lieu de consolidation de la connaissance et de l'estime de 'soi', dans cette Image enfouie au fond du cœur ? Du Pardon surgira-t-il une volonté de se séparer de ce qui éloigne de ce moi émergent, senti, perçu mais non encore défini ?

La Confirmation déploie ses dons divins à l'âme en continuelle renaissance et lui permettra de devenir, toujours plus elle-même, en même temps qu'elle découvre ce qu'elle devient.

L'Eucharistie permet l'accomplissement, jamais accompli, d'une participation à la vie divine, dans une expérience communautaire et incorporation à un Tiers-pair.

« Image et ressemblance » devient le terreau d'une humanité basée sur l'égalité et la liberté. Unique image ontologiquement immanente et multitude de ressemblances où chaque personne, se trouve dans sa dynamique, unique et libre, engagée dans un meilleur tous pour tous.



International Association  
for Children's Spirituality



UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

**Marie-Claude Faucher**, responsable des communications  
Centre Agapé de Québec.  
Candidate à la maîtrise, Université Laval

Résumé : *Les traditions familiales : lieux de formation*

### **Sujet**

L'élaboration de la culture originale de sa famille. Les traditions sont des organes de transmission de valeurs. Les rituels sont des codes de langage propre à un groupe particulier. Chaque famille a élaboré ses propres traditions et ses rituels originaux.

### **Moyens**

- Rédaction du récit d'un évènement lié à une tradition familiale et qui a été marquant à l'enfance : protagonistes, lieux, moment, etc.
- Identification des effets alors expérimentés, des émotions vécues et des conséquences possibles de cet événement jusqu'à aujourd'hui.
- Mise en commun des éléments des récits.
- Mise en lumière d'éléments communs à chacun des récits.
- Réflexion autour de la question suivante : "quelle appropriation chacun a fait de ces traditions, rendu à l'âge adulte : transmission, transformation, rejet, etc."

### **Conclusion**

La relecture est une activité de premier plan qui contribue à mieux cerner, saisir et s'appropriier les différents impacts et les fruits des expériences vécues. Nous anticipons que les participants à cet atelier pourront mieux prendre la mesure des effets et des influences multiples que les traditions familiales et que les rituels vécus à l'enfance ont sur leur manière de se comprendre aujourd'hui, de s'interpréter et de se projeter dans le quotidien de la vie à l'âge adulte. Plus encore, nous pourrions suggérer l'ouverture suivante : les traditions de famille ne seraient-elles pas aujourd'hui réactualisées, mises au jour et reprises dans de nouveaux contextes à la manière de structures durables et capables d'offrir des microcosmes de sens ?



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Anna Halafoff, Dr.  
Deakin University, Australia

Abstract: *Re-enchanting education: Should schools be sites for nurturing spiritual wellbeing?*

Beginning with contemporary and diverse theories and concepts of spirituality and wellbeing in education, this paper questions whether spiritual wellbeing can or should not be nurtured in both religious and secular school contexts. We present a case study of Australian policy and curriculum on religion and spiritual wellbeing in education, which also draws on findings of an Australian Research Council project on Worldviews of Australia's Millennials (WAM). The WAM project included eleven focus groups and a survey of 1200 young Australians aged 13-18, and was conducted in 2016-2017. We then argue that spiritual wellbeing should not be ignored or divorced from educational practices if educators aim to teach and nurture students in a holistic manner, as global citizens with global responsibilities to live well together in harmony with human and non-human life. Spiritual wellbeing can therefore certainly be part of curricula in some more inclusive faith-based and 'soft-secular' educational settings. However, we also acknowledge that in more exclusive religious and 'hard-secular' contexts, the concept of spiritual wellbeing may be problematic. We therefore recommend that the introduction of spiritual wellbeing programs in education be context specific, and that in some places may not be appropriate or possible at all. Finally, we offer a checklist of questions that we suggest can assist stakeholders when considering how best to address student wellbeing, and spiritual wellbeing in particular, in diverse settings.



International Association  
for Children's Spirituality



UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

**Miftachul Huda**  
**Noraisikin Sabani**  
Universiti Teknologi, Malaysia

**Abstract: *The exposure and implications of Islamic poetry as contributor to children's spirituality: Preliminary study***

The teaching of rhythmic proses or songs is common in children's learning experiences, and aims to inculcate certain teachings and values in them (Borhan, 2004). For the Muslim community specifically, Islamic poetry, which is often delivered in a rhythmic or musical manner, is considered as one manifestation of Islamic art (Saeed, 2011). It has its own distinction (Richard and Oleg, 1987) and is often quite variant from one culture to another (Schmitt, 2012). Such intertwine of values and culture is of importance and cannot be separated (Test, 2006). Therefore, caretakers are seen to have an important role in the children's learning experiences (Suriadi, 2017), which may include the exposure of Islamic poetry as part of their culture.

This preliminary study aims to explore today's caretakers' perspectives of how these rhythmic proses are being taught and exposed to children, as part of their cultural practices. The study also focuses on perceived impacts of such exposure to children's spirituality. The data collection is based on a comparative case study in Malaysia and Indonesia where the samples were selected based on criterion sampling and snowballing. While the interviews will be conducted via virtual means, the data sources' confidentiality is ensured.

The expected findings will focus on caretakers' feedbacks on the anticipated exposure, both in formal and informal spheres, with insights on their observation of how such cultural practices builds on the children's spirituality, especially in an era of technological inclination.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Samira Qayumi  
Zahra Jalaefar  
Iran

**Abstract: *The study of Persian mystical fable's capacity for being rewritten as spiritual literature for children with respect to the theory of relational consciousness***

The concept of spirituality in the Iranian society is usually used interchangeably by being religious and worshipping God. But a short look at different efforts for offering a certain definition for children's spirituality shows that it is no simple task. Among scholars of the field, Rebecca Nye offers a theory named "relational consciousness", which introduces four kinds of relationships as characteristics of children's spirituality: relation with self, others, environment, and the higher being or God. These four relationships have been noted in Persian mystical fables, although not within a certain theoretical framework such as relational consciousness. In the present study, the aim is to review some of these fables to assess their capacity for being rewritten as spiritual literature for children with respect to the theory of relational consciousness. The hypothesis is that fables which pay more attention to the relationship with self and the relationship with the higher being, have less capacity because of their abstract concepts. On the contrary, fables concerning the relationship with the environment and others are more suitable for being rewritten for the child reader, as they are more objective and perceptible. Many fables of this kind have the potential to guide the reader from the relationship with the environment and others to the relationship with self and the higher being. The study also shows that although religious stories are in the center of focus as the source for producing spiritual literature for children, Persian literature has a rich source of mystical fables that could be more effective in nourishing the child's spirituality according to the theory of relational consciousness.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Denis Jeffrey, prof.  
Université Laval, Québec, Canada

## Résumé : *Spiritualités, initiations et adolescences*

C'est un fait que la référence religieuse recule au Québec, plus particulièrement chez les catholiques francophones. Ce phénomène peut notamment s'expliquer par le moralisme du clergé catholique qui ne convient plus à un grand nombre de Québécois qui, toutefois, s'intéressent avec circonspection aux dimensions spirituelles de l'existence. Certaines de ces dimensions accrochent plus particulièrement les adolescents dont les héritages religieux n'ont pas été transmis à la maison. Cela pourrait expliquer, comme le montrent nos recherches (2016), qu'un nombre croissant de jeunes se plaignent de leur vide intérieur, d'une absence de sens à la vie, de la solitude, d'un vécu superficiel, du manque d'ancrage dans une tradition et d'une panne de futur. Les souffrances qu'ils n'arrivent pas à exprimer sont multiples. Certains d'entre se lancent dans les conduites à risque pour donner un sens à leur vie (Le Breton, 2000). D'autres suivent des voies initiatiques qui ne sont pas sans lien avec l'une ou l'autre des dimensions spirituelles de l'existence pour trouver la paix intérieure. En effet, certains s'intéressent à ce qui vient du profond de soi et en même temps les dépasse, à ce qui donne une profondeur à leur vie, à ce qui les connecte avec des forces intérieures, à ce qui ouvre un nouveau regard sur eux et sur le monde, à ce qui procure du sens à leur vie, en fait, à ce qui les attire sur des chemins initiatiques. Dans cette présentation, nous allons discuter de la dimension initiatique dans l'appel spirituel à l'adolescence. Il existe de nombreuses traditions initiatiques pour amener un jeune à assumer ses responsabilités d'adulte. Nous en présenterons quelques-unes. Nos propos, par ailleurs, peuvent largement s'appliquer au thème de la spiritualité et de l'enfance.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses



Fr. Anthoni George, MI

St. Camillus Care Home for PLHIV, Mangalore, India

**Abstract: *Igniting and nurturing the flame of Children's Spirituality: A Pastoral response to the HIV infected children's quest for God and meaning of life.***

This paper illustrates contextually incorporated spiritual perspectives in the multi faith community of children infected with HIV at Snehasadan, Mangalore, India. Deployed members in Snehasadan witness the Merciful Love of Christ who said, "Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." (Mt 19: 14). Snehasada (Home of Love), a residential care and treatment facility for HIV infected envisages that, igniting the flame of our Children's spirituality can support and save our children and their future. Interventions to Spiritual development have been found to improve health outcomes of children and have kept the flame of spirituality lit. In addition, the paper examines how, awakening the spiritual spark that lives inside each child infected with HIV have nurtured children spirituality.

Growing up children exhibit Character, Hope, Enthusiasm in their everyday life. They have discovered their passion and purpose. The paper finally points to all resources, infected children need to grow into happy, healthy, hopeful, faith filled individuals capable of taking their place in the world as well as to lead a meaning full life.

Our challenge is to ignite, and foster the flame of HIV infected children's spirituality and become the keepers of the flame. Nourishing the flame, through our support and guidance, providing opportunities and experiences that let the flame of spirituality grow until it is a glowing light- that can illuminate the world!



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Aostre N. Johnson, professor of Education  
Saint Michael's College, Vermont, USA

Abstract: *What is Spiritual Development? Twelve Perspectives and Educational Possibilities*

What does spiritual development mean? It is challenging for educators to agree, due to varied beliefs about the meaning of "spirituality." I propose twelve underlying perspectives that offer a theoretical foundation for understanding children's spiritual development, and developing curricula and teaching methods for supporting it.

Contemplative capacities include attention and mindful awareness. Mystical capacities suggest belief in an "unseen world" and the ability to live with mystery. Meaning-making/existential capacities fuel a quest for personal meaning and grappling with the significance of living and dying. Faith capacities support hope and courage, even in challenging circumstances. Self-reflective capacities allow for understanding motives, strengths and aspirations. Emotional capacities include empathy, wonder, and emotional regulation. Social capacities encourage relating peacefully with others. Ethical/moral capacities include developing and acting on an internal code based on justice and caring. Aesthetic capacities suggest appreciating beauty in many forms. Creative capacities encompass discovering innovative ways to represent ideas in all disciplines. Ecological capacities include perceiving interconnectedness of natural phenomena and attaining ecological balance. Religious capacities are based on accepting a particular spiritual worldview and engaging in communal practices. In addition, religious traditions include many of the other capacities in their scope with varying emphases, especially as they relate to the spiritual development of children.

In this paper, I will expand on this framework and suggest how it can be adapted by educators with diverse perspectives on spirituality, including those who are rooted in particular religious traditions, those who consider themselves "spiritual but not religious" and those who identify as secular. I believe that this is a significant area of inquiry in an era in which fewer children have access to potentially rich spiritual resources of traditional religions, or are offered a narrow range of beliefs and practices that may limit their spiritual development.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Ronni Lamont, Faith and Nurture Adviser, Diocese of Canterbury (UK)  
Associate Tutor, St Augustine's College of Theology (UK)

Abstract: *Time, space, story, ritual; a year of Godly Play*

This research was designed to complement my work as Faith and Nurture Adviser, a three years project to explore the facilitation of co-working between church, school and home for the benefit of the worshipping child.

Designed to explore the work of two lay ministers within the context of after school clubs, which gave children an opportunity to experience Godly Play, I was looking for indications of flourishing spirituality. One group had a dedicated Godly Play room, the other met in a classroom. The second group stopped using Godly Play half way through the observations, moving to a more traditional form of meeting. Both schools are in the affluent south of Kent (UK) . Permissions were gained from school, children and parents.

I observed ten sessions over two and half school terms, ten sessions each school. Both groups were small but regular- five to ten attendees, aged between five and eleven years.

The group in the dedicated room facilitated the spirituality of the children more comprehensively, and clearly, the children benefited from meeting together in this way. In both groups, the spirituality of the children was evident, but the Godly Play method enabled the children to enter into the stories in a deeper and more inclusive manner.

I recommend that all ministers experience some Godly Play and reflect on how its methodology could impact upon ministry with any age of person.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Raymond Laprée, auteur, professeur retraité

Suzanne Blouin

Université Saint-Paul, Ottawa et en diverses autres universités (UQAM, UQO, UQAC, Sherbrooke)

Résumé : *L'élan vital ré-imaginé par chaque individu pour réussir sa vie*

Dans *La sagesse des 9-12 ans* (Laprée, PUL/Hermann, 2017), nous exposons le processus psychagogique (sous-titre : Accompagner l'autre sur le chemin vers soi) découlant d'une étude empirique (U. Saint-Paul/Sherbrooke), à savoir que les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire sont définitivement installées et pleinement fonctionnelles à la préadolescence (aussi, *L'imaginaire durandien. Enracinements et envols en terre d'Amérique*, Laprée et Bellehumeur [dir.], PUL, 2013). Les données provisoires recueillies lors d'une seconde étude (UQAC, 2018), cette fois auprès d'enfants de 6 à 9 ans, permettent d'anticiper la même conclusion dès la sortie de la petite enfance. Ces constats, en accord avec la théorie de Gilbert Durand sur l'imaginaire, assignent donc un rôle auxiliaire au phénomène de la tradition dans la dynamique interne de l'épanouissement intégral de toute personne, quel qu'en soit l'âge. En effet, le mécanisme principal du flux vital de l'homo sapiens consiste en des « structures anthropologiques » en appétence d'expérimentation de matériaux culturels disponibles dans l'environnement immédiat. L'individu à tout âge reprend donc à son compte l'élan vital auquel il appartient pour l'enculturer dans une « trajectoire spirituelle » individuée, que le test archétypal à 9 éléments (AT.9) d'Yves Durand permet de lire sous forme d'« univers mythiques » personnels. Les traditions se classent ainsi parmi les matériaux dont se nourrit l'imaginaire du chasseur-cueilleur humain. C'est en bref ce que nous inspire une dynamique ouverte à propos « des profondeurs de la vie intérieure » dont fait mention la thématique du congrès, et que nous réinterprétons pour divers milieux d'intervention, notamment en éducation.



International Association  
for Children's Spirituality



UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Simon Lepage-Fournier, candidat au doctorat  
Université Laval, Québec, Canada

Résumé : ***Quelle liberté pour les enfants dans le choix de l'initiation chrétienne?***

Cette présentation exposera la définition phénoménologique et les constituants essentiels du discernement qui mène les parents québécois à poser le choix de l'initiation chrétienne pour leurs enfants. C'est une analyse qualitative de type phénoménologique, menée selon la méthode d'Amadeo Giorgi, fondée sur la philosophie d'Edmund Husserl. Cette recherche a reçu l'approbation du CÉRUL et présentait peu de considérations éthiques. La démarche phénoménologique suppose un petit nombre de participants, la cueillette des données s'est donc faite par le biais d'entrevues de soixante-quinze minutes auprès de trois parents.

Le discernement des parents amenés à opter ou non pour l'initiation chrétienne s'inscrit dans leur historique de vie marqué par des expériences et des croyances, s'actualise dans un réseau de relations dans lequel on choisira ou non de laisser l'enfant participer à ce discernement. Ce discernement prend place dans le contexte québécois, un contexte séculier, pluraliste et parfois hostile au religieux. Ce contexte suscite une conscience accrue du rôle de la transmission qui revient aux parents, une transmission qui représente plusieurs défis pédagogiques en raison de son public. Les demandes d'initiation chrétienne semblent liées aux finalités : la transmission de la foi, l'accès au mariage et s'enracine dans l'expérience d'un élément de salut, qu'elle soit liée à la foi, un sacrement, le soutien communautaire ou une appartenance religieuse. Ce discernement est particulièrement observable à l'approche des sacrements, perçus comme un ensemble à compléter, car ils sont des occasions pour discerner ou questionner son identité ou son appartenance religieuse.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Jennifer Mata-McMahon, Assistant Professor, CEO and Founder  
DePaul University, Mata Consulting, LLC, USA

Abstract: ***Spirituality and Play: Making Connections for Early Childhood Education.***

Expanding the view of young children's development to include the spiritual, in order to honor the whole child by providing holistic education and care, this paper looks at the found benefits of play for all areas of development, sharing surveyed early childhood educators' perceptions on nurturing spirituality through open-ended and free play. It is posed that developmentally appropriate approaches (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009) to early childhood education would be enhanced by including spirituality in their understanding of the child, as well as intentionally nurturing spirituality in educational settings, by providing play environments and opportunities for children to experience spiritual moments, defined as feeling wonder, awe, joy, and inner-peace (Schein, 2014).



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Valerie Michaelson, Dr.  
Queen's University, Kingston, Canada

**Abstract: *Patterns of religious participation and the importance of spirituality in children who have lived in Canada for less than 5 years***

In this poster, I present qualitative and quantitative data to describe the religious and spiritual experiences of children who are new immigrants to Canada. Data sources were: 1) the 2014 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children survey, a large, national population health survey (n=24,307) and 2) a national qualitative study (n=60) conducted with young people across Canada. Ethics approval for both was attained through Queen's University.

Quantitatively, we found that involvement in a religious group, the importance of meditation/prayer and the importance of a connection to a higher spiritual power were all higher in children who had been in Canada 5 years or less compared with children who were born in Canada. A relationship between religious/spiritual practice and positive health outcomes (mental health and participation in a variety of risk behaviours) was also observed. Analysis also suggests that the protective effect of prayer or meditation is slightly stronger for children who have lived in Canada  $\leq 5$  years, even after being controlled for age, sex and SES. I complement these findings with qualitative data in which newcomers to Canada share their experiences of spirituality and religion.

Both strands of data suggest that traditional religious involvement is far more important to children who have lived in Canada for 1 to 5 years than to those who have been in Canada for longer than 5 years, with the least importance and involvement found in children who were born in Canada.

Implications for religious rights are discussed.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Valerie Michaelson, Dr.  
Queen's University, Kingston, Canada

Abstract: ***Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: perspectives of children from Northern Canada***

Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) is a direct translation of: “that which Inuit have always known to be true.” At its core, it is a holistic concept that encompasses all aspects of life, including spiritual well-being. Though much traditional knowledge has been lost due to relocation, displacement and the Indian Residential School system (TRC, 2015), many Inuit Elders in Northern Canada have intentionally documented Inuit traditional knowledge, based on the principles of IQ, so that its wisdom will be available to sustain future generations.

While this work by the Elders is fundamental in transmitting this traditional knowledge, the child’s active voice, too, as an interpreter of his or her own world makes an important contribution to understanding the multifaceted relationships between young people and Indigenous spirituality. In this study, I had the opportunity to interview seven Inuit children from Northern Canada (ages 11-18) about their understanding of Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit, and their experiences of connections related to the four domains of spirituality (Fisher; Hay & Nye): connections to self, to others, to nature and to the transcendent. A phenomenological approach guided data collection. Study design and related ethics were developed in partnership with Inuit community leaders, and ethics clearance was attained through Queen’s University. By intentionally listening to the voices of these children, we gain insight into some of the unique ways that they are embracing traditional knowledge, and at the same time adapting to changing realities in the world around them. Findings are discussed in the context of contemporary literature on IQ.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses



Valerie Michaelson, Dr.  
Queen's University, Kingston, Canada

**Abstract: *"Like Spokes on a Wheel": Exploring lived experiences of the spirituality of Canadian adolescents***

21st century children are redefining traditional religious landscapes, and many are finding ways of meaning-making through experiences of spirituality that are not rooted in traditional religious structures. Within this context, the purpose of this study is to provide insights into the question "Where is spirituality today?" I present data from a 2016/17 national, qualitative study of Canadian adolescents, in which children were asked to share their experiences of connections in four domains (to self, to others, to nature and to the transcendent) (Fisher; Hay & Nye). Participants (n=60) were ages 11-15 years from across Canada (from both coasts, central Canada and the Arctic), and self-identified with a variety of cultural and religious identities, including atheist, Christian, Indigenous, Muslim and "unsure".

A phenomenological approach guided data collection, which included both individual interviews and focus groups. Ethics approval was attained from Queen's University. Key findings suggest that both traditional religious experiences and non-religious experiences can lead to powerful experiences of spirituality, which were strongly associated with a sense of balance, and seen as positive in people's lives. However, discomfort or confusion around the word spirituality was often expressed. One barrier to nurturing spirituality in young people may be the lack of both a clear definition, and accessible language that can be used to talk about it with children is needed. These findings offer an intriguing glimpse into the spiritual landscapes of Canadian children, and draw attention to barriers and possibilities for nurturing spirituality in their lives.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Yoko Okumoto, doctoral student  
Osaka Prefecture University (Japan)

**Abstract: *The role of “speech formation” in Steiner’s Waldorf education: The relationship between language and intuitive thinking in developing spiritual identity***

The aim of this theoretical paper is to explore “speech formation” developed by Rudolf Steiner in relation to his understanding of intuitive thinking in human development, and to clarify its significance in building children’s spiritual identities across religious traditions.

The paper first examines Steiner’s “intuitives Denken” or “intuitive thinking”, and the notion of living ideas in the world of ideas. Steiner designed intuitive thinking as his original way of thinking which can have meaning for everyone, regardless of their religious preference. He believed that through the training and deepening of intuitive thinking, one can go beyond personal desires, impulses and sense of values to find one’s own deeper individual “idea” or identity.

Then the paper explores the meaning and characteristics of speech formation in Steiner’s understanding of human development. Speech formation is the art of speaking which gives great importance to the internal and bodily relationship between human beings and language. One of its aim is to make it possible to bring into existence the power of words, the spirit of language beyond our merely subjective thinking and feeling.

Lastly, the paper relates the role of speech formation to the development of intuitive thinking, and examines how it can serve to build an identity as a spiritual being not only in Waldorf education, but in other approaches to spiritual education.

During the presentation of this paper, some participatory exercises of speech formation will be provided to deepen understanding of the theory.



**International Association  
for Children’s Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Anita Pettersen, Independent Researcher  
BECCEd from Capilano University, North Vancouver, Canada

Abstract: *Pedagogical Relationship: Indigenous Connections to Land, Spirit and the Quantum*

This presentation connects to the core of the conference problematic of looking at how spirituality is transmitted to self, to children, to parents, to teachers, and to all. It is in living an examined life when one notes the influences from our environment and from within ourselves -- where valuable treasure-troves of information are revealed. This step into exploring self and environment led to the creation of a published article that situates myself, the presenter, as a Eurocentric colonial settler trying to connect with the Indigenous unceded territory we inhabit on the Westcoast of Canada. It has been a searching for personal identity in-relation-to my history, my experiences, my resulting perspectives and my environment. Then the work moves into pedagogical relationship between people and place/Land and how this becomes a form of spiritual transference. Indigenous knowledges enter through an embodied pedagogy of Land and the wisdoms within it, as discussed by Styres, Haig-Brown and Blimkie (2013), and by Simpson (2014). Land in a quantum pedagogy of Land includes all of our environment -- water, earth, air and spirit - and brings a focus of Land as first teacher, and how this speaks to pedagogical relationship as a spiritual experience. A fluid spiritual pedagogy of Land is part of the ancient wisdom of listening and responding to Land from the heart, and may be enacted through setting foot on the Land, as well as engaging in a multitude of artistic experiences, ceremonies and rituals that activate spiritual life forces. The transmission of spirituality happens in fertile moments of gathering, like sharing in conference, through self-examination, through sharing knowledge with elders and other wisdom carriers.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

William Pickett, Dr.  
Valerie Michaelson, Dr.  
Queen's University, Kingston, Canada

**Abstract: *Child spirituality and mental health: translating findings from a national, mixed methods study to applied practice***

Spirituality has been proposed as a potential health asset that fosters the search for connectedness, meaning and purpose in life. A focus on spiritual health during the adolescent years in turn opens up new opportunities not only for traditional religious practitioners, but for health promotion and clinical intervention, especially in the field of mental health. Funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (Operating Grant MOP 341188), our research group has studied the spiritual health experiences of young people in Canada via a mixed methods paradigm. In addition to epidemiological study of the self-reported experiences of almost 30,000 Canadians aged 11-15 years, we have qualitatively gathered information on the lived experiences of young people from across the country (n=60). Our hopes for this workshop are to: (1) briefly share our national quantitative and qualitative findings, then, engage participants in exercises that will, (2) integrate and synthesize applied findings related to the role of a healthy spirituality as a protective mental health asset, then (3) identify opportunities to apply these findings (subject to rigorous evaluation) to clinical and health promotion initiatives in populations of young people and to traditional religious practice. Workshop findings will lead to the identification of priorities for professional practice and evaluation, and (practically) inform the content of one chapter of a book on the spiritual health of Canadian children being written by co-author Michaelson in association with Queen's-McGill Press.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

William Pickett, Dr.  
Valerie Michaelson, Dr.  
Queen's University, Kingston, Canada

Abstract: *Spirituality as a protective health asset in adolescent populations in Canada, England and Scotland*

This paper is an exploration into the Challenges and prospects of spiritual formation of children and youth in the multi religious context of India taking inspiration from the Salesian youth spirituality and Indian tradition with particular reference to the interventions on behalf of the young at risk in the province of Bangalore, India.

The paper begins with an exposition of the goal and dimensions of the Indian Salesian youth ministry. The great tradition of Salesian youth spirituality finds its expression in its ministry of catechesis, education, group experience and vocational orientation. In India which is the birthplace of four major religions and a land of rich religious tradition, spirituality plays a major role in helping children actively negotiate their own spiritual lives in their overlapping spaces between children's and adults worlds, spaces of play, school and friendships. Their perspectives on religion influence their social practices, and their social practices influence their perspectives on religion.

The second part of the paper presents the scenario of Indian Salesian youth ministry with particular reference to the interventions for the young at risk. The Province of Bangalore is part of the Salesians of Don Bosco, a worldwide religious congregation with a history of about 150 years of effective youth ministry especially on behalf of the poor and abandoned. Its pioneering ministry for the young at risk has been a success story in the holistic formation of children discovering their potentialities and nurturing them. The young at risk is another term used for street and working children. The province of Bangalore has 10 centres working for the rescue and rehabilitation of street children in the major cities in the states of Kerala and Karnataka.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Jessica Pratezina, Child and Youth Care Worker  
New Westminster, Canada

**Abstract: *Alternative culture kids: spiritual and cultural identity among children and youth involved with new religious movements***

The term “new religious movement” (NRM) has come to replace the more provocative term “cult” in the academic literature. However, this shift of scholarly language has not resulted in a softening of public perception towards those in religious groups perceived as weird, even threatening. This public perception leaves a distinct mark on the identities of children raised in these communities. This paper will argue that Euro-Western children raised in alternative and controversial religions comprise a unique subculture outside the mainstream experience. Explored through an interview with Ruth Wariner, whose New York Times bestselling memoir *The Sound of Gravel* tells the story of her childhood in a Fundamentalist Mormon community, it is argued that the experience of growing up in a NRM has an important impact on a young person’s sense of cultural and spiritual belonging. Drawing on and expanding Useem and Downie’s model of “Third Culture Kids”, the model of “Alternative Culture Kids” is developed. It is proposed that Alternative Culture Kids are a subculture in their own right and share a sense of belonging and identity based on their experience of being religious “others” within mainstream culture. By identifying this underserved population, new research opportunities are highlighted. The study of NRMs has long been the domain of sociologists. Yet Alternative Culture Kids have unique spiritual, mental-health and socio-economic needs that make them deserving of scholarly attention from those across the helping-professions. This means taking seriously the stories of young people both currently involved with and disaffiliating from NRMs rather than relying on popular perception.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Rabbi Sandy Sasso, Spiritual leader  
Rabbi Michael Shire, PhD.  
Butler University, USA

Abstract: ***Master Narrative in Tradition and Spiritual Meaning in Jewish Teaching and Learning***

The Biblical account of the Exodus from Egypt is a master story of the Jewish People. The narrative has been concretized in ritual and liturgy, reinterpreted and elaborated on through rabbinic stories (midrashim). This master narrative and its accompanying religious artefacts has mediated the spiritual meanings of the human quest for liberty, redemption, responsibility and national consciousness. We will examine some of these rituals (the Passover Seder), liturgies (the midrash of the four children, symbols (the Passover Matzah) to demonstrate the power of meaning that derives from the master story and the space for dialogical interpretation through the pedagogies undertaken in Jewish educational settings. We will consider how new rituals have expanded the story to include fresh voices (Miriam's cup) and opened an important theological conversation about human effort and supernatural intervention. These pedagogies will include ancient rituals of the Passover rite, artistic creativity to interpret the story as well as personal spiritual development as inspired by Torah Godly Play. This workshop will introduce and model some of these pedagogies for the participants.

As a compelling enduring story, the Exodus has become a universal message of hope for freedom and responsibility. It has been shared across religious traditions and cultural communities and is a key feature of children's understanding of redemption. As such it is relevant to interdisciplinary education and the construction of meaning making and human values. We will examine the assumptions made in teaching about this Master story and the ways in which transmission takes place to influence worldviews and virtue ethics.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Binu Scaria SDB, Youth Animator  
Salesians of Don Bosco, Philippines

Abstract: ***Spiritual Formation of Children and Youth in the Indian Salesian Context : Challenges and Prospects***

This paper is an exploration into the Challenges and prospects of spiritual formation of children and youth in the multi religious context of India taking inspiration from the Salesian youth spirituality and Indian tradition with particular reference to the interventions on behalf of the young at risk in the province of Bangalore, India.

The paper begins with an exposition of the goal and dimensions of the Indian Salesian youth ministry. The great tradition of Salesian youth spirituality finds its expression in its ministry of catechesis, education, group experience and vocational orientation. In India which is the birthplace of four major religions and a land of rich religious tradition, spirituality plays a major role in helping children actively negotiate their own spiritual lives in their overlapping spaces between children's and adults worlds, spaces of play, school and friendships. Their perspectives on religion influence their social practices, and their social practices influence their perspectives on religion.

The second part of the paper presents the scenario of Indian Salesian youth ministry with particular reference to the interventions for the young at risk. The Province of Bangalore is part of the Salesians of Don Bosco, a worldwide religious congregation with a history of about 150 years of effective youth ministry especially on behalf of the poor and abandoned. Its pioneering ministry for the young at risk has been a success story in the holistic formation of children discovering their potentialities and nurturing them. The young at risk is another term used for street and working children. The province of Bangalore has 10 centres working for the rescue and rehabilitation of street children in the major cities in the states of Kerala and Karnataka.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses



Deborah Schein, PhD  
Champlain College, Minneapolis, United States

Abstract: *Finding a Definition of Spiritual for all Children*

This workshop will share a research study on spiritual development where data was collected during interviews with early childhood educators to determine a definition and a framework for nurturing children's spiritual development. The research was based on several assumptions, one being that all humans are born with a spiritual embryo, a metaphor used by Montessori to describe the internal driving force that propels each child toward growth and development. Data analysis resulted in a preliminary definition of spiritual development as a system of children's deep connections leading first to self-awareness, and later to the nurturing of basic and complex dispositions ignited by moments of wonderment, awe, joy, mindfulness, and inner peace that develop into the prosocial personality traits of caring, kindness, empathy, and reverence. This system requires love and attachment, spiritual modeling, and time spent by children within spiritual moments, which include great doses of nature. Participants described specific attributes for spiritual moments in time, space, nature, within relationships, and with big question capable of taking children beyond themselves. It may be possible that nurturing a child's spiritual development can provide a foundation for all other developmental domains and while simultaneously providing an avenue for a more peaceful world.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Neha Sharma, director  
Warwick Research Services, UK

Résumé : ***The impact of Arshavidya on psychological health of students:  
A cohort study***

Prevalence of academic stress and adolescent distress is a significant problem in India among students preparing competitive entrance exams. This study aimed to investigate psychological health of students preparing for competitive entrance exams before and during Arshavidya study. Arsha Vidya means knowledge of the Ancients Sages which coming down from generation to generation through the lineage of teacher and student (Guru-sishya-parampara).

A one-year prospective study was done on students joined the arshavidya study group learning Indian philosophy, Hindu and traditional spiritual beliefs, regular practice of advaita vedanta. The stress, anxiety and depression were measured by the DASS-21 at five intervals; during interview (Time 0), three months (Time 1), six months (Time 2), nine months (Time 3) and final entrance examination (Time 4) The prevalence of unfavourable stress, anxiety and depression before the onset of entrance exams preparation was 76.7%. At time 0, Mean scores of depression, anxiety and stress were 21.01, 16.27, 27.72 respectively. Continuing studies for entrance exams and regular participation in Arshavidya (Time 1-4) Showed significant decrease in levels of depression (17.1; 13.6; 9.3; 9.6 respectively), anxiety ( 9.2; 8.1; 8.0; 8.8 respectively ) and stress (17.3; 15.2; 14.6; 14.9) The prevalence and level of unfavourable depression, anxiety and stress during studies were significantly lower than before the onset preparation ( $p < 0.0001$ ).

This study supports views that regular spiritual involvement is optimal environment to psychological health of students preparing for competitive entrance exams.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Mr. Sarwar Smael

Hirsh A.Hameed

Cihan University of Erbil and Barz Basic Educational Complex

**Abstract: *Impact of religiosity, war and ideology on PTSD and psychiatric disorders in children from Mosul suburb/north Iraq***

This work examined the extent to which differences in the types of war trauma, religiosity and ideology accounted for variation in PTSD and psychiatric disorders among children from Mosul suburb. Participants were 400 children aged 6 to 12 years. They were selected from the refugee camp and primary public school in the areas exposed directly to war. Questionnaires were managed in an interview format with children. Results indicated that the various types of trauma had differential effects on the psychological status of children. War was more predictive of PTSD and psychological distress in children. Differences in religiosity and ideology did not account for similar variation in stress response among children. While higher levels of religiosity evidenced the greatest levels of depression and anxiety in children. Ideology was negatively associated with depression and anxiety. The clinical and research implications of these conclusions are discussed.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Helena Stockinger, professor

Department of Religious Education and Didactics of Religious Education at the Catholic Faculty of the Ludwig Maximilians-University Munich (Germany)

Assistant-professor, Department Catechetics, Religious Education and Education at the Catholic Private University Linz (Austria)

**Abstract: *Developing spirituality in kindergarten - an equal right of every child?***

Children's spiritual development is influenced by those with whom they interact and by the world around them. As the environment is highly pluralistic, kindergartens can be important institutions to the development of children's identity by confronting them with different religious traditions, worldviews and different forms of spirituality. Focussing on one kindergarten in Catholic and one kindergarten in Islamic tradition in Vienna, Austria, (Stockinger 2017) the research questions are: How is religious education provided in these kindergartens? How do children talk about their religious traditions in these kindergartens? The research project has an ethnographic and a multi-method approach and it focuses on the children, aged four and five years, the organisation kindergarten, the teachers and the heads of the kindergartens. The results show that there are many different contents of religious tradition in the kindergartens such as prayers, stories, music, and rituals, but mainly of the one dominant religion. The religious traditions of the children of the non-dominant religion are hardly considered. This seems to influence the children's feeling of being welcome and ultimately accepted in the kindergarten and affects their talking about diversity and their own religious traditions. Considering this, kindergartens should develop structures that do not discriminate against children with other religious traditions and should find ways of recognizing all the children. Kindergartens should strive for equal rights of the children to develop their own spirituality. "Safe spaces", where diversity is acknowledged and interaction about diversity is allowed, might be a way to foster the individual's development.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Augustine Thomas, S.J.  
The Philippines

Abstract: ***Imparting Spirituality to the Non-Christian Students in Nepal - An Analytical Narrative***

According to the census of 2011, Christians were just 1.41% whereas Hinduism (81%) and Buddhism (9%) led as the major chunk of the total population of Nepal. Preaching gospel and religious conversion is against the constitution of the country. Nevertheless, Jesuits education is a well sought-after education, catering approximately to 8000 students across the country in different schools. Jesuit schools did not teach bible in the school but focused on spirituality rather than religion. From my nine years of experience in education sector and interacting, teaching and guiding the students from all corners of Nepal, belonging to various religions and castes and after living in Nepal for the last 25 years, I see that students here perceive spirituality as well knitted with the cultural, traditional and religious practice where they grew up. Keeping this context as the background, my paper focuses on exploring the following points.

- 1) To analyze my experience of guiding students who belonged to different religions, castes and socio-economic background and how they related to God and how the God experience helped them to discover their own personal spirituality.
- 2) My experience guiding the none-Christian students in spirituality, through a none-cultic journey into one's 'inner self' and radiating one's 'inner self' through good deeds?
- 3) The role of *karma* in spirituality and how do Hindu and Buddhist students express their spirituality through *karma*?

What is the role of spirituality for a transformative education in the context of Nepal, considering the cultures and traditions of Nepal?



International Association  
for Children's Spirituality



UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Chris Walton, retired  
Derbyshire, UK

Abstract: *Epiphanies of connectedness or wrapped up Gently, glowing, swaying, bubbling rustling*

This paper is a demonstration of the use of diacritical hermeneutics which 'explores the possibilities of inter-communion between distinct but not incomparable selves' (Keanney, p.18)<sup>2</sup>. This was the methodology used for interpreting children's responses after experiencing Magic Spots, (now often called sit spots).

The paper's introduction is a description of the context and the facilitation of magic spots at a residential outdoor education centre in Suffolk England over a period of 10 or more years.

My contention is that so often we think we can see through the eyes of the child, as if some how we can interpret their in experience of spirituality only when we can it express in our own adult terms. Our relationship with children need be no different to our relationship with anyone else. We are all different, that is, we are 'distinct though not incomparable'. In relationship with *any* 'other', we are always dealing with difference. Thus, if we are wanting to understand/experience the spirituality of children, the same care, empathy, hospitality, respect and credibility which we, hopefully, offer to those we are sometimes wont to call 'those of difference', needs to be offered to the children we 'use' to write about children's spirituality.

The paper will be presented with the projection of a series of animated hermeneutic spirals together with a commentary demonstrating the complexity of discovering and articulating spirituality and meaning.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Jean-Daniel Williams, chaplain  
McGill University, Canada

Abstract: *The Wesleyan Quadrilateral in Children's Ministry: How Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience work together to form young disciples*

In Christian practice, many churches struggle to formulate the goal of their children's ministry and lack tools to assess how well they are doing it. To take Jesus's call to welcome children seriously we need to have a framework for knowing what we are inviting them into and how to measure if we are doing it well. The Wesleyan Quadrilateral is a principle that we use the interplay of Scripture, Tradition, Reason, and Experience to determine true doctrine and practice. I propose this is an excellent model for building and analysing children's ministry, beyond "Wesleyan" denominations, as it takes seriously the Bible, theology, the best practices of pedagogy and developmental psychology, and is open to local adaption and ongoing revision.

I propose a workshop in which we discuss this framework in light of children's ministry, and then analyse concepts by all four rubrics and come up with a sample activity that we could do with children to teach or explore a religious idea.

I would be willing to present this as a paper (it is fundamentally my dissertation-in-progress), but as a practical theologian and children's minister, I would rather do a participatory workshop.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses

Karen-Marie Yust, professor  
Union Presbyterian Seminary, Richmond, USA

Abstract: *A Developmental Look at Traditioning*

When contemporary religious practitioners seek to pass on faith, they typically draw from social science fields such as education and psychology to help them develop effective strategies for spiritual nurture. Yet systems of faith education can be slow to adjust to new research findings, diminishing their ability to cultivate children's spiritual identity and support spiritual development. This paper explores emerging theories in developmental psychology related to children's socialization and critical understanding and suggests ways in which this research might reshape practices of childhood religious formation. New discoveries related to selective social learning (Poulin-Dubois 2016; Mills 2013; Over and Carpenter 2013; Harris and Lane 2013), parent-child reminiscing (Salmon and Reese 2016, 2015; Fivush 2011), guided play (Skolnick, Hirsh-Pasek, Golinkoff, Kittredge and Clahr 2016), and nascent ideas about false-beliefs (Scott 2016; Scott, Richman and Baillargeon 2015; Baillargeon, Sloane, He and Setoh 2015) are presented and analyzed for religious education implications. The author offers constructive suggestions for redesigning formal (institutional) and informal (familial) faith formation systems to better share religious beliefs, values, customs, and practices with contemporary children. The paper also makes an implicit case for religious traditions to intentionally seek out trends in social science research as essential information for developing robust methods of traditioning.



**International Association  
for Children's Spirituality**



**UNIVERSITÉ  
LAVAL**

Faculté de théologie  
et de sciences religieuses