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**Spirituality in Social Work Education and Practice
in Aotearoa New Zealand**

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requirements for the degree of

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Abstract

There is growing interest worldwide in the place of spirituality in social work practice, but as yet very little research in Aotearoa New Zealand. This study examines how non-Māori former students of the social work programme at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa experienced spirituality during the programme and how it is applied in their social work practice. As a non-Māori researcher who has engaged with spirituality in a Māori environment, the researcher places herself in relation to Te Tiriti o Waitangi, bicultural practice and critical theory. Participants discuss the importance of spirituality in their own lives, their experiences at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa, and the relevance of spirituality to social work practice. The bicultural nature of the social work programme as expressed through ngā take pū, the underpinning bicultural principles, is also examined.

The study found that engaging with the social work teaching programme at Te Wānanga o Aotearoa was a spiritual experience which enhanced and deepened participants' sense of their own spirituality and flowed through into their practice. They describe their spiritual practice with reference to client needs and social work models, including blocks and ethical dilemmas. The study identifies some elements of the Wānanga programme which were associated with spiritual development and learning and suggests that these may be helpful for other social work education programmes. It also suggests that social work practitioners can use existing models to incorporate spirituality into their practice.

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