Spirituality in the Context of the Aotearoa New Zealand Primary School Classroom

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Abstract

Contemporary spirituality is understood to be a basic quality of all people, more culturally plural than simple religious affiliation. Accordingly, spiritual wellbeing is seen to be a fundamental dimension of people’s overall health and wellbeing. Western-based research into contemporary childhood spirituality is a relatively new area of inquiry, and this is certainly the case within Aotearoa New Zealand. While official curriculum documents variously, and often vaguely, reference the spiritual dimension, very little research focused on the primary school years has been undertaken. The inclusion of Mason Durie’s (1994) whare tapawhā model in the New Zealand Curriculum for Health and Physical Education (Ministry of Education, 1999) to illustrate the importance of all aspects of life being in balance adds a uniquely Aotearoa context. There is a need to explore the relationship between spiritual wellbeing and other aspects of children’s overall wellbeing.

Seeking to address this gap in the literature, this study examines what some Year 6 children in Aotearoa New Zealand, and their teachers, understand by spirituality. In the process the focus is on two issues: first, the relationship between primary students’ spiritual wellbeing and other markers of childhood development (namely social development, emotional development and educational attainment), and second, the applicability of John Fisher’s (1998) construct of spiritual wellbeing as an effective way of articulating children’s spirituality within the context of Aotearoa New Zealand primary schools.

The study utilised a mixed methods approach. For the quantitative phase of the study, empirical data were collected with regard to 32 Year 6 children, from three urban, state primary schools. Qualitative semi-structured small-group interviews were then completed with 20 of these children and, in the case of two of the schools, with the seven class teachers of these children.
A significant correlation was found between the spiritual wellbeing scores and children’s social competence, emotional quotient and mathematical attainment, but not with either measure of reading attainment, suggesting that primary school aged children’s spirituality may somehow be linked to other markers of childhood development. Analysis of the interview data identified spirituality themes common in contemporary childhood spirituality literature and, additionally, noted frequent expressions of spirituality with reference to children’s close connectedness to animals and pets.

Introducing Fisher’s (1998) model of spiritual wellbeing as a pragmatic and relatable construct, the study validates the use of this model within the Aotearoa New Zealand context, highlighting ways in which the use of this construct and language could sit alongside Durie’s (1994) whare tapawhā model of well-being to provide a way forward, blending contemporary Western and Māori understandings. The discussion addresses a professional concern that spiritual wellbeing remains largely unconsidered in most classrooms, and that teachers may not currently have the knowledge, confidence or support to openly acknowledge and nurture spirituality within the school setting. The study concludes that the use of Fisher’s model of spiritual wellbeing could allow childhood spirituality to be understood, openly discussed and explicitly nurtured in the modern, secular context.
Acknowledgements

I am very grateful to all of the people who have supported me throughout my journey to complete this thesis. I have never seen myself as a short-distance sprinter. Having successfully trained for and completed a number of marathon distance events, I know from personal experience that my style and preference is rather more for the slower paced, long-distance event.

However, on reflection now, I would have to say that the race to complete my doctoral journey has been rather more of an extreme, ultra-marathon by comparison, albeit with an 11-month sprint finish. In particular, I will remain eternally grateful to my wife, Karen, for her unwavering encouragement along the way. Through significant earthquakes, career moves, household shifts and even a change of islands, it has been Karen who has been constantly there to support and encourage me through times when I wondered if I would ever reach the finish line before the race officials had packed away the road cones, closed the course and gone home.

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Chapter One

Introduction

“...The life committed to nothing larger than itself is a meager life indeed. Human beings require a context of meaning and hope” (Seligman, 1990, p.284).

1.1 Introducing the Context for the Study

Without doubt, a healthy spirituality is an essential part of one’s overall wellbeing (de Souza, 2009, 2014; Durie, 1998; Hyde, 2008; Robbins, Powers, & Burgess, 1991; Seligman, 2011). I believe that addressing spirituality, and spiritual wellbeing, in the context of the primary school classroom is an important and essential way forward if, as teachers and as schools, we are to fully prepare children for a life of wellness and wholeness (de Souza, 2009). Spirituality can be understood in many ways (Eaude, 2003), and so it is noted here that arriving at a clear, concise and fixed definition of spirituality is both unlikely and unhelpful. The literature review which follows will explore contemporary understandings in detail. However, for the purposes of the current study, my own conceptualisation of spirituality, drawing together and referencing key themes, is provided at the outset:

To be human is to be spiritual; spirituality is innately human (Groome, 1998) irrespective of whether or not, for any individual, spirituality might be experienced and expressed through the traditions and beliefs of one’s family, cultural and/or religious context (Kennedy & Duncan, 2006). Spirituality is seen as a life-long journey for the individual, as one’s search for meaning and purpose in life. It encompasses the Māori concept of kotahitanga, that in coming to know oneself, one is able to connect with others, to all living things, to nature and the universe, and to transcend the “here and now” (Durie, 1998). The spiritual journey inextricably focuses on an innate quest for the deepest levels of personal integrity and self-awareness, connectedness with all, and with
Other. Therefore, taha wairua (spiritual wellbeing) relates to the quality of the relationships established within each of these areas (Fisher, 1998), helping to develop resilience to face the challenges of daily life (Bone, 2007), but also allowing for expressions of wonder and awe, generosity towards all other, optimism, hope and wisdom, and the realising of one’s potential for lasting fulfilment (Seligman, 2003, 2011).

1.1.1 The changing face of life for children today.

Youth and mental-health workers, reflecting on the many pressures and demands for children today, increasingly focus on the role that spirituality could play in building happiness, satisfaction in life and resilience in children (de Souza, 2009). In these rapidly changing times, parents, teachers and schools are faced with the task of preparing children for a successful, fulfilling and meaningful life (Park & Peterson, 2008; Seligman, 2011) in a world ahead which is largely unknown, and difficult to imagine. More than ever before, our society today would seem to fast-track its youngsters through to adolescence. The combination of mass media working to prematurely empower children, and the steady diet of video images and gaming, and social media platforms for example, see young children regularly exposed to teenage and young adult issues at a much earlier age. On-line games, situated in fantasy, often involve the creation of avatars, or virtual characters with aspects of the self that the player wishes to utilise in the virtual world of the game. The literature is beginning to investigate this relatively new phenomenon, as adolescent children spend significant amounts of their time connecting with others across the world through social networking and gaming communities (Hodge, 2010; Morehead, 2010). The concern, as expressed by Yust, Hyde, and Ota (2010) being that “the promise of friends and conversation – the sense of connectedness with others – has the appearance of authenticity, but in reality, it may be a façade to mask the deep sense of loneliness experienced when one is sitting alone at the computer screen” (p.293).
Carr-Gregg (2001) has noted that children today are “fast-tracked out of latency”, that period of pre-adolescence when

they gathered a lot of strength - they did well in sports, art or drama, investigated the world, became confident learners, and confident socially. In essence, they marshalled their psychological forces in order to be able to go into puberty. (p.1)

While physiological changes to the body may now be occurring at an earlier age, psychological and emotional development lags behind this headlong rush into adolescence. Although peer pressure has always been a significant issue, with less parental involvement evident many children today are influenced to a far greater extent by their peers, particularly in this digitally connected world. Children today are exhibiting higher levels of anxiety, depression and youth suicide (Gluckman, 2017; Ministry of Health, 2016; Palmer, 2007; Robbins & Francis, 2009). Reviewing the phenomena of pessimism, sadness and passivity in the United States, Seligman (2003) comments that “depression has become the common cold of mental illness and it takes its first victims in junior high school – if not before” (p. 37). Within the New Zealand context, the Prime Minister’s Chief Science Advisor has released a discussion paper on youth suicide, describing the figures as a suicide crisis and commenting that far from being simply a mental health issue, the focus on prevention must start very early in life, “promoting resilience to the inevitable exposure to emotional stresses and building self-control skills in early childhood and primary school years, by using approaches that we already know about” (Gluckman, 2017, p. 1). This country’s youth suicide rates are the highest in the OECD (Stubbing & Gibson, 2019). While New Zealand is often regarded as a relatively benign country within which to raise children, it has been reported that child poverty as assessed by income-based measures has increased markedly recently, from 12% in 1988 to 35% by 2014 (Perry, 2014).
Children today are growing up in more secular community groupings and are more disconnected from the influence of the communities in which they live (Gluckman, 2017). Personal rights seem to come before responsibility for others. “Our society grants power to the self that selves have never had before: to change the self and even change the way the self thinks. For this is the age of personal control” (Seligman, 1990, p. 282). In previous decades individuals were less preoccupied with how they felt, and more concerned than today with a sense of belonging and a sense of duty to something else beyond themselves. Modern parental concerns over safety deny children many opportunities to learn about others, comparing the “free-range” after school neighbourhood experiences of the previous generation with the compulsion that today’s parents feel to personally deliver their children to and from school, and to schedule further private lessons into the late afternoon, and through school vacation periods.

It might be argued that the basic role of a parent does not change significantly from one generation to the next. On the one hand, the task of any parent is to nurture a very dependent baby through the early childhood years and into adolescence, as they become increasingly independent, to the point at which they are able to function successfully as a fully independent adult. This surely is the basic expectation that any society over the various millennia has had of the adults charged with parenting. However, much has changed for parents in Western society in these early years of the 21st Century. Today’s generation of parents, “Generation X” parents, not only bring their very different particular life experiences, themselves born in the 1970s and 1980s, growing up in the “me generation” of the 1980’s, but also, as discussed above, face a vastly different array of issues than those that even their own “Baby Boomer” parents were required to grapple with. As pointed out in a government document,

There is now a diverse range of family types in New Zealand, the traditional nuclear family of wife, husband and child(ren) being the most common. Although increasing diversity of family types is a trend in many post-
industrialised societies, New Zealand has the distinction of having one of the highest proportions of sole-parent families. (Statistics New Zealand, 2007, p.6)

Another factor impacting on parenting today is the tendency for families, particularly in developed countries, to be smaller. National surveys, such as the following, suggest that 15-20% of children today are part of an only child family, and very few children have more than one other sibling. As documented in a government statistical report, “New Zealand women give birth to 1.95 children on average. This is less than half the high of 4.3 births per woman recorded in 1961. This reduction in births per woman is reflected in a shift towards smaller families and households” (Statistics New Zealand, 2006, p. 2). While on the one hand, these might suggest that children benefit from a greater share of parental time and affection, on the other a smaller family with fewer siblings results in far fewer situations where siblings learn to share, to negotiate or to compromise. As argued by Seligman (1990),

The extra attention that results when parents are centered on just one or two children, although gratifying to the kids in the short run (it actually ups their mean IQ about half a point), in the long run gives them the illusion that their pleasures and pains are rather more momentous than they are. (p. 285).

Furthermore, as Grose (2006) notes, smaller family size can lead to “parental concentration”, where “concern is centred on fewer children, which can cause anxiety for carers, educators and children themselves” (p. 3). This phenomenon is exacerbated by the fact that many more children today are living in the family home well past their teenage years. Additionally, there has been a growth in new family types such as same-sex couple families, step-families, blended families and families separated by space. Increasingly, through separation or divorce, members of a family with dependent children do not always live under the same roof. Families may have a complex set of living arrangements where children share time between two parents, often with siblings from step- and blended families (Statistics New Zealand, 2012).
Today’s parents want to be friends with their child in a way that their own parents were not. This has been described as the “Chummy Mummy Syndrome” (see, for example, Goleman, 2006). Essentially, many Generation X parents exhibit an almost compulsive desire to be-friend their offspring. This then inhibits the parent’s ability (let alone their desire) to set limits and often results in an inability to use moral language. Rather than imparting important family values, today’s parents are much more likely than their forebears to attempt to reason and negotiate with their children and often capitulate to remain on friendly terms, leading observers to ask the question, “Who is in charge here”? (Grose, 2006, p. 4). Other potentially unhelpful parenting styles all too common currently are becoming well known in education circles. For example, “helicopter parenting” (Grose, 2006, p. 4), where parents constantly hover to swoop in and pluck out their child at the first sign of disaster looming and “curling parents” (Grose, 2006, p. 6) who skate dutifully ahead of their child to neatly sweep any perceived obstacles aside. Unfortunately for the unwary, parenting in these ways mistakenly protects children from the quite normal range of childhood opportunities to build resilience, to learn intra-personal and inter-personal skills. As Goleman (2006) describes this potential pitfall,

> If we fail to learn in childhood how to handle the full catastrophe of a rich life, we grow up emotionally ill prepared … given how the brain masters social resilience, children need to rehearse for the ups and downs of social life, not experience a steady monotone of delight. (p. 183)

### 1.1.2 Implications for parents and teachers.

What, then, are the implications for parents and for schools? How best to prepare today’s children for their future in this ever-changing world? In his 2007 publication, Howard Gardner described five kinds of minds which he believed were the key to preparing students for the future. Alongside three minds related to intellect, he described two relating to character: the respectful and ethical minds. Much of our traditional schooling, based upon earlier conceptions of academic intelligence,
focused on steady development of literacy and numeracy skills, and on the acquisition of knowledge. However, given the globalisation of our world and the many changes to societies, communities and families we must ask ourselves if we are really doing our best to prepare children for the unknown future ahead. We know, too, that there is more to this challenge than bolstering self-esteem, simply “emphasising how a child feels, at the expense of what the child does” (Seligman, Reivich, Jaycox, & Gillham, 1995, p. 27). Modern day parenting styles, and smaller family structures, may be overprotecting our children. Australian psychologist Michael Carr-Gregg (2001), in reviewing preventative factors most likely to lead to successful adolescence, lists the need for “charismatic adults, connectedness to schools and family, belief in moral order, opportunities and rewards for involvement and religiosity” (p. 178). Similarly, positive psychology steers us toward the five elements of well being (Seligman, 2011, 2018), being positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment. In combination each of these elements functions to build the resilience needed to lead fulfilling, meaningful and flourishing lives.

Few would argue against a holistic view of education. Almost all would agree, in setting out the big picture goals for a school, that it is vitally important to go beyond traditional definitions of academic intelligence to include development of the child’s emotional, psychological, creative, physical, social and even spiritual talents and potentials. Schools have moved a long way from traditional views of intelligence, which saw reliance on a “sacred number called the intelligence quotient or IQ” (Johnson, 2006, p. 41), recognising that a purely psychometric definition of intelligence is not particularly useful. During the 1990s, Howard Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligence began to inform a much wider notion of intelligence, and schools and teachers are now well versed in the eight different types of intelligence described by Gardner (1999), which has been instrumental in leading the move towards thinking about intelligence in this much wider sense. Schools also now focus on metacognition, or awareness of the process of learning, as another critical
ingredient to successful learning. Knowing how to learn, and knowing which strategies work best, are valuable skills that differentiate expert learners from novice learners. And so, the learning journey for pupils today is regularly further influenced by, for example, Bloom’s revised taxonomy for learning, teaching and assessing (Anderson, 2014), De Bono’s Six Thinking Hats (1973), and by Costa’s Habits of Mind (1981).

Another critical intellectual dimension was described by Goleman (1995), who suggested that it is emotional intelligence much more than the traditional IQ that determines success in the real world. Emotional intelligence has been defined to include abilities such as “self-control, zeal and persistence, and the ability to motivate oneself” (p. xii). Goleman’s seminal work has shown that these crucial life skills can be taught to children and, furthermore, that success in mastering emotions gives one a better chance to use whatever intellectual potential and whatever set of intellectual strengths one begins life with. Using new evidence coming from advances in neuroscience, Goleman’s focus has developed into the area of social intelligence (Goleman, 2006). He has been able to expand our understanding of emotional intelligence “beyond a one-person psychology – those capabilities an individual has within – to a two-person psychology: what transpires as we connect” (2006, p.5). Goleman challenges the earlier conceptions which saw “social intelligence as the application of general intelligence to social situations – a largely cognitive aptitude” (2006, p. 332). He promoted a view which sees social intelligence as far more than the ability to influence and control others to one which encompasses “synchrony and attunement, social intuition and empathetic concern, and arguably, the impulse for compassion” (2006, p. 333).

In response, the place of values education, within New Zealand’s National Curriculum, has been much debated over the later part of the 20th Century. While the 1977 Johnson Report highlighted the importance of this learning dimension in a section entitled “Moral, Spiritual and Values Education”, their recommendations
“regarding moral, values and spiritual education became bogged down in controversy and were not adopted” (Paul Keown, Parker, & Tiakiwai, 2005, p. 70). More recently, both the Curriculum Review (Ministry of Education, 1987), and the Curriculum Stocktake Report (Ministry of Education, 2002) strongly emphasised the importance of values and attitudes and the need for their integration within the curriculum. Following an extended period of extensive consultation, the Ministry of Education launched the new National Curriculum statement (Ministry of Education, 2007) which included a clear statement on values education in New Zealand state schools. Noting that the statement is neither exhaustive nor exclusive, and specifying that individual schools must reflect the needs of their community, the secular values listed are “excellence, innovation, inquiry, and curiosity, diversity, equity, community and participation ecological sustainability, integrity, and respect for self, others, and for human rights” (p. 10).

Throughout all of this period, many schools, both state and independent have developed extensive values-based, moral and character education programmes within their own communities, with a number of schools basing their philosophy on one of a number of initiatives, most commonly The Living Values Project, The Corner Stone Values Project, Philosophy for Children, The Virtues Project, The Character Education Project or The Churches Education Commission Programme (for a detailed review of practice, see Keown, Parker, & Tiakiwai, 2005). More recently, schools have been exploring and adopting aspects of positive psychology (Park & Peterson, 2008), focussing on personal development constructs and programmes designed to directly address aspects such as “happiness” and “mindfulness” (Mazza-Davies, 2015; Rossiter, 2014). This reflects a world-wide interest in developing holistic wellbeing in youth (de Souza, 2009). While this attention is consistent with the idea that wellbeing/hauora is about all aspects of life being in balance (Ministry of Education, 1999), it does avoid transparent and explicit attention to the role that spirituality might play in human wellbeing and personal wellness (Adams, Hyde, & Woolley, 2008; Robbins, Powers, & Burgess, 1991).
A focus on values education and personal development, within the context of Aotearoa New Zealand’s largely secular schooling environment, might be regarded as the most expedient and acceptable approach. Reviewing the history of New Zealand’s secular approach, Openshaw, Lee and Lee (1993) noted that this has been a guiding feature for state schooling since the government of the day mandated that primary schooling be secular in nature as far back as 1877. However, the question ought to be asked, “Is this enough?” For, notwithstanding the various references to spiritual development and spiritual wellbeing within official curriculum documents, in my experience spirituality is not commonly addressed in transparent and explicit ways within the Aotearoa New Zealand primary school classroom. Interestingly, many parents seek schools with not only strong, family-based values that they perceive to be missing, but those with a moral and spiritual (if not religious) dimension. This has been evidenced in the gradual roll growth in special character state-integrated and independent (often religious affiliated) schools (Education in New Zealand, 2018; School Rolls, 2018), as parents seek schools promoting something more than a purely secular value-based educational environment. This trend can be seen to parallel some of the major changes in our society. Nevertheless, the place within the curriculum of a non-religious approach toward spiritual development has not featured in educational discourse within New Zealand. While evidence of deliberate approaches to address both emotional and social intelligence can now be found in most schools across the country, the suggestion that there is also untapped, innate spiritual potential to be nurtured and developed warrants attention.

1.2 Justification for the Study

At a time when there is so much change and uncertainty, 21st Century parents’ aspirations for their children centre increasingly on higher-order goals, looking beyond individual success and independence to a desire for their children to be able to live happy, fulfilled and meaningful lives. Children of the new millennium are
growing up in a very different world to that of their parents. Arguably, never before have the inter-generational changes in society been so remarkably different than those experienced by today’s parents and the children they are charged with rearing in such changed times. And so, also, is it the case for today’s teachers.

From my professional perspective, I believe that there is a need for a clearer understanding of a universal, non-religious based spirituality, and a more purposeful approach towards the sustained nurturing of children’s spiritual wellbeing in the Aotearoa New Zealand primary school classroom. Through a career as a primary school principal, leading a range of schools across state and independent sectors, and in both secular and church-based contexts, I have been drawn to consider what I see as some fundamental issues which appear to render this problematic. While on the one hand, we wish our children to be well educated in the traditional sense, we also wish them to be optimistic and hopeful, empathetic and generous, and to be happy and fulfilled. As educators at the dawn of this new millennium, might we also usefully consider the spiritual development of our children more openly? As the first step in this process, I see the need for a wider discussion around, and ultimately acceptance of, the legitimate place of spiritual nurturing within the secular education system that is the reality for most of this country’s children. Irrespective of whether or not children are part of a family or school community with religious beliefs, I see the need for the spiritual development of children to be considered outside of (or in addition to) traditional religious beliefs, which may often restrict and narrow the point of view. Sheri Klein (2000) raised a legitimate question with ongoing relevance. She questioned whether or not the total curriculum experienced by students in America had the space to support the education of the whole child and the “development of mind and body that go hand in hand with the awakening of the soul and the education of the heart”? (Gandhi, cited by Klein, 2000, p. 6). I think that this question is equally relevant in the context of the Aotearoa New Zealand primary school classroom.
From an academic perspective, there is a continuing need for a broad understanding of the term spirituality, and the impact of spiritual wellbeing on a child’s overall development. A variety of conceptions and definitions have been used in the literature, which might be expected in such a relatively new field of enquiry. However, while there is an emerging consensus describing spirituality, it appears at times as though the various writers talk past each other (Ratcliff & Nye, 2006). There is a need for the New Zealand primary school context to be explored, beyond the pre-school years and, particularly given the largely secular nature of this country’s compulsory schooling sector1, beyond church-affiliated schools. To date, the Aotearoa New Zealand primary school child’s voice has rarely been heard. With this in mind, the current study has taken a deliberate focus by engaging with, albeit a small sample, of Year 6 children. This is a new area of study, as this age level has not previously been the focus of research within Aotearoa New Zealand. As the final year grouping in New Zealand’s contributing primary schools2, this age level was selected for study as the eldest pupils (typically aged 10 to 11 years) in most large primary schools, prior to their transition on into intermediate and high schools. While also limited in sample size, there have been some small-scale investigations within New Zealand at both intermediate and high school levels (see Chapter Two).

My research also has the potential to add further knowledge to this relatively new field of enquiry, by considering Aotearoa New Zealand’s unique bi-cultural

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1 Most schools in New Zealand are owned and funded by the state (state schools). They teach the national curriculum and are secular (non-religious). State integrated schools are schools with a special character. They are funded by the government and teach the national curriculum. They have their own sets of aims and objectives to reflect their own particular values, and are set within a specific philosophy or religion. Independent (Private) schools receive some government funding but are mostly funded through charging parents school fees. They develop their own learning programmes and do not have to follow the national curriculum. For further detail, refer to “Education in New Zealand”, https://www.education.govt.nz/ministry-of-education/our-role-and-our-people/education-in-nz [retrieved October 27, 2018]

2 State primary schools in New Zealand are categorised as ‘Contributing Primary’ (Years 1-6), ‘Full Primary’ (Years 1-8) or ‘Intermediate School’ (Years 7 & 8). For further detail, refer to “School Structures and Types”, https://www.education.govt.nz/school/running-a-school/school-structures-and-governance/ [retrieved October 27, 2018]
educational landscape. This is another new area of study considered in this thesis. As discussed further in the literature review, Bone (2014) believes that the indigenous Māori as *tangata whenua* (people of the land) have acted as *kaitiaki* or spiritual guardians of indigenous spirituality, and that this has led to the inclusion of Māori models of health and wellbeing in national health and educational statements (see also Egan, 2009). An example of this is the inclusion of Durie’s (1998) *whare tapawhā* model of wellbeing or *hauora* in the New Zealand Curriculum for Health and Physical Education (Ministry of Education, 1999). This model illustrates the importance of all aspects of life being in balance. It is with this model of *hauora* in mind that quantitative measures have been included in this study, to tentatively investigate the empirical relationship between spiritual wellbeing and social, cognitive and emotional wellbeing through correlational analysis.

Finally, given the concerns discussed above from my professional perspective and experience, this study also draws on Fisher’s (1998) model of spiritual wellbeing. As discussed by Francis, Penny, and Baker (2012), Fisher’s conception of spiritual wellbeing resonates well with wider discussions of the educational implications of spirituality in the United Kingdom and in the United States. As a new area of study being addressed in this thesis, a key focus is to investigate whether Fisher’s model might resonate within the Aotearoa New Zealand primary school context and, potentially, provide a useful framework against which to group, understand and interpret expressions of childhood spirituality.

### 1.3 Research Questions

The purpose of this study, then, is to examine what some Year 6 children in Aotearoa New Zealand, and their teachers, understand by spirituality. In the process this study focusses on two issues: first, the relationship between primary students’ spiritual wellbeing and other markers of childhood development (namely social development, emotional development and educational attainment), and second, the
applicability of Fisher’s model of spiritual wellbeing as a way of better articulating children’s spirituality within the context of Aotearoa New Zealand’s largely secular and increasingly multi-cultural primary schools.

The specific research questions for the study are:

**Question 1**: What do New Zealand Year 6 primary school children, and their teachers, understand by the term spirituality?

**Question 2**: Does a measure of the spiritual wellbeing of primary school students relate to children’s school, gender, ethnicity and regularity of family religious affiliation?

**Question 3**: Does a measure of the spiritual wellbeing of primary school students correlate with children’s social and emotional development, and educational attainment?

**Question 4**: To what extent can Fisher’s (1998) model of spiritual wellbeing be adopted to facilitate an understanding of spirituality for both teachers and children in Aotearoa New Zealand primary school classrooms?

1.4 Thesis Structure

The final section of this introductory chapter provides an overview of the structure of this thesis. Firstly, the introduction has given the reader an overview of the context for the study. The research questions have been presented, followed by the justification for the study.

*Chapter Two* reviews the literature pertaining to contemporary understandings of spirituality, before focussing more specifically on childhood spirituality. In the next
section, spirituality is considered through the alternate lens of an intelligence, before links with health and wellbeing are explored. The chapter concludes with a presentation of spirituality within the Aotearoa New Zealand context.

*Chapter Three* provides an overview of the methodological assumptions underpinning the study, and a rationale for the use of a mixed-methods, multiple-case study design. The research design is outlined, and data collection methods are described in detail. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the methods of analysis used and ethical issues taken into consideration.

In *Chapter Four*, the findings of the study are presented, in reverse order to data collection. The rich, qualitative interview narrative is explored in relation to the research questions, followed by the quantitative findings which relate particularly to Research Questions Two and Three.

*Chapter Five* discusses the findings of the study, and how they inform an understanding of childhood spirituality. The relevance and use of Fisher’s (1998) model of spiritual wellbeing to address taha wairua/spiritual wellbeing specifically within the context of the primary school in Aotearoa New Zealand is explored.

The conclusion of this thesis is presented as *Chapter Six*. The unique contribution of this study is discussed, along with consideration of the limitations and suggestions for further research in the field. The chapter concludes with closing reflections.
Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This review of literature firstly provides an overview of contemporary understandings of the complex construct that is spirituality, within a Western context. Noting that spirituality may mean different things to different people (Eaude, 2003), the focus has come to provide consensus views on descriptions of spirituality, as a universally accepted definition has been elusive (Hyde, 2008). Moving on next to review significant international research projects as they relate specifically to childhood spirituality, the common themes found in the literature are examined from the time of Coles’s (1990) seminal work, *The Spiritual Life of Children* which paved the way for subsequent research to look for the spiritual within the natural responses of children to their everyday experiences.

The review then considers spirituality from the alternate, but overlapping constructs of, firstly, spiritual intelligence and, secondly, of spiritual wellbeing. Drawing on research from a range of disciplines, spirituality as an intelligence and spiritual wellbeing are each considered as alternate lenses through which to view and understand important aspects of spirituality.

In the final sections of this review, attention turns to the context of Aotearoa New Zealand, and examines the impact that the indigenous Māori worldview has had within this context, alongside the guidance given by official curriculum statements within New Zealand’s largely secular schooling environment. This section concludes with an overview of significant contributions to the field of childhood spirituality from researchers working within Aotearoa New Zealand.
Using both the Academic Search Complete and EBSCOhost academic journal search databases, from 1998 to the present, key contributors to these related fields of enquiry were identified, initially by utilising the descriptors spiritual, spirituality, spiritual intelligence and spiritual wellbeing. A wide range of peer-reviewed articles and published books on the general themes under review were sourced. In particular, the *International Journal of Children’s Spirituality* was found to be most useful because its specific focus on children’s spirituality draws contributions from across a range of research disciplines. However, to extend the review, and to provide necessary background context (particularly with regard to descriptions of spirituality, criteria for intelligence and links with research disciplines beyond education), the work of authors cited from within the initial set of identified articles were sourced. In this way the review extended to include an earlier time frame and some particularly relevant cross-disciplinary edited books. Relevant postgraduate theses were reviewed, along with related works recommended by the primary supervisor.

### 2.2 What is Spirituality?

The growing body of research on Western spirituality offers a range of definitions of the concept of spirituality. While it is generally acknowledged that spirituality is difficult to define (Berryman, 2001; OFSTED, 1994) there are, however, some key recurring themes in the literature upon which many agree. It is also noted that arriving at a clear, concise and fixed definition of spirituality is both unlikely and unhelpful. There is an inherent danger here, in that a fixed definition may well limit the wider understanding of spirituality, as spirituality may mean different things to different people (Eaude, 2003). The same issue can be seen in attempts to define, or describe, spiritual development. For example, Love and Talbot (1999) describe spiritual development in terms of the following five propositions (each with an accompanying fuller description), noting that these are not stages listed in any particular order, but rather interrelated processes that can be observed concurrently:
1. Spiritual development involves an internal process of seeking personal authenticity, genuineness, and wholeness as an aspect of identity development
2. Spiritual development involves the process of continually transcending one’s current locus of centricity
3. Spiritual development involves developing a greater connectedness to self and others through relationships and union with community
4. Spiritual development involves deriving meaning, purpose, and direction in one’s life
5. Spiritual development involves an increasing openness to exploring a relationship with an intangible and pervasive power or essence that exists beyond human existence and rational human knowings.

(pp. 364-367)

With these thoughts in mind, the current review contends that much of the literature has focussed on giving descriptions of spirituality (Hyde, 2008), rather than looking for a universally accepted definition.

2.2.1 Spirituality is not religion.

Most commentators note that spirituality is more fundamental for the individual than religion (Elton-Chalcraft, 2002; Fisher, 1998; Hay & Nye, 1998, 2006; Hyde, 2004, 2008). It is generally agreed that “the spiritual applies to everyone in a way that the religious does not: an atheist may not be religious but he or she is spiritual” (Watson, 2000, p. 40). According to Fisher (1998), spirituality is part of a person’s being and, therefore, prior to and different from religiosity. On the other hand, as Roger (1996) points out, while spirituality is not synonymous with religion, it is not opposed to it (see also Bosacki, 2001; Champagne, 2001). This is not to say that spirituality often is not religious, rather that it does not have to be (Erricker, 2001). Spirituality is something more culturally plural than simple religious affiliation (Berryman, 2001).
Traditionally within Western culture, spirituality has been closely linked with Christian religious practice. As Tacey (2000) puts it, traditionally Christianity has argued that it is impossible for spiritual values or feelings to be separated from the context of formal Christian beliefs. However, over recent decades a much broader conception of spirituality has been widely accepted, acknowledging that spirituality can exist outside of religious traditions. For example, as Best (2014) notes, given that many more people today live in multi-faith societies where, in fact, “the majority of the population are probably de facto agnostic and many are atheists, the attraction of a spirituality untethered from any specific religion is great” (p. 12). From the perspective discussed by Kennedy and Duncan (2006), the shifting of the boundaries of spirituality, particularly in the Western world, has allowed it to be recognised outside of a religious framework and

by people who do not wish to be part of a religious structure or institution but are interested in seeking answers to some of the big questions in life such as: people’s relationships, identity, meaning in life and what, for them, is of ultimate value in their lives. (p. 892)

Woodhead (1993, as cited by Egan, 2000), has identified this post-Christian conception of spirituality as developing most sharply from the 1960s onwards. However, other writers have noted that spirituality is seen to be both much larger and to pre-date any form of organised religion belief systems. For example, O’Murchu (1997) argues that while formal religions can be traced back at least 4,500 years, the spiritual history of humans is at least 70,000 years old.

2.2.2 Spirituality is human.

Further to the understanding that human spirituality pre-dates religious history, are descriptions of spirituality which place it as a fundamental condition to being human (Chater, 2001; d’Aquili & Newberg, 1998; Gromme, 1998; Hyde, 2004; Watson, 2000). For example, Gromme (1998) believes that “spirituality is ontological – it belongs to every humankind’s being. It is more accurate to call ourselves spiritual beings who
have human life than human beings who have a spiritual life” (p.332). Spirituality concerns basic questions which are universal to all cultures, such as to do with the origin, end and purpose of human life (Champagne, 2001; Egan, 2009; Hay & Nye, 1998; Roger, 1996). This is not to say, of course, that every human being necessarily would agree to describe themselves as a spiritual being.

Hardy (1965, cited by Hay & Nye, 1998) argues that spirituality is “biologically natural to the species Homo Sapiens” (p. 22). He proposes that spirituality has evolved through natural selection because of its survival value to the individual. Following this notion, neurophysiologists have begun to look for an anatomically identifiable part of the brain that might be associated with spirituality. For example, d’Aquili and Newberg (1998) have proposed that the human brain has a number of neural operators which are responsible for higher cortical functions. By mapping the changes in brain activity as subjects enter a meditative state, d’Aquili and Newberg (1998) have shown that specific areas of the brain account for “causal sequencing of elements of reality abstracted from sense perceptions” (p. 190). Similarly, Ramachandran (1998, as cited by Fontana, 2003) has also shown that magnetic stimulation of areas within the temporal lobes appears to evoke mystical-type experiences in normal subjects, leading him and others (for example, Zohar & Marshall, 2000) to label this area of the brain as the “God Spot”. The suggestion, then, is that the essential elements of spirituality are “hard-wired” into the human brain. Newberg, d’Aquili, and Rause (2001) argue that other related areas of the brain interact, and that each is required to explain the variety of human spiritual experience. They argue that, even though the human brain has evolved over millions of years in response to basic survival needs, the potential for spiritual experience has always existed. And, as Hyde (2008) summarises this, “as evolution proceeded, the potential for the spiritual and its usefulness in addressing issues of meaning and value was realised and favoured by the process of natural selection” (p. 38). This particular aspect of spirituality is also discussed below, being one of a number of arguments supporting the idea proposed by some (Adams, Hyde & Woolley, 2008;
Emmons, 2000a; Hyde, 2004; Johnson, 2006; Luckcock, 2008; Vaughan, 2002; Wolman, 2001; Zohar, 2005; Zohar & Marshall, 2000) that spirituality may be viewed as a form of intelligence.

### 2.2.3 Spirituality is relational and unifying.

Spirituality deals with connections and relations to ourselves, the world around us, and the sense of being connected to something greater (Fisher, 1998; Hay & Nye, 1998; Watson, 2000; Bosacki, 2001). Zohar and Marshall (2000) point to the holistic nature of spirituality, as “a dynamic wholeness of self in which the self is at one with itself and with the whole of creation” (p. 124). Spirituality can mobilise our inner resources to strive for a more unified and better harmonised existence (Champagne, 2001). Spirituality is to do with sharing with others, with using the gifts one has to serve others, and it acknowledges the importance of commitment in all relationships (Randerson, 2008). In this regard, Western spirituality has been seen as the striving for unity and wholeness. It is an acknowledgement of human desire to be connected with something that is larger and richer, and that is beyond one’s present, limited situation. As pointed out by Hyde (2008),

Such a holistic concept of the spiritual representing a dynamic wholeness - of self at one with Self and the whole of creation – suggests connectedness and relationality not only with Self but also with Other in creation – the universe – and possibly the Transcendent. (p. 30)

In a similar way, Elton-Chalcraft (2002) described four dimensions of spirituality as the inner, the social and moral, the environmental, and the transcendental, while for

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3 Within the spirituality literature, ‘Self’ with a capital letter is used to refer to one’s true nature which, at the deepest levels, can be seen to be one with the Divine (for example, God in the Christian tradition, Brahman in Hindu, or the state of ‘anatta’ in Buddhism, meaning no-self). Whereas ‘self’ with a lower case letter signifies the individual’s socially constructed self, or ego, out of which a person commonly acts. And ‘Other’ in both the human and nonhuman is that with whom Self seeks to become unified (Hyde, 2008).
Hay and Nye (2006) this aspect of spirituality involves a deep awareness of the whole, of one’s relationship with Self and everything that is Other than Self.

Researching from a health education perspective, Fisher (1998) developed his extended model of spiritual wellbeing, again reflecting the unity and wholeness, and inter-connectedness, that is fundamental to a healthy spirituality. His model, discussed in more detail below and used within the research phase of this study, describes spirituality across four domains of the personal, communal, environmental and the transcendent.

2.2.4 Spirituality is a quality of consciousness.
Most contemporary definitions of spirituality include reference to consciousness (Champagne, 2001). The term consciousness is used to refer to the capacity to reflect, to stand back from an experience, and the capacity for abstract thought (Schneiders, 1986; Mott-Thornton, 1996). As Randerson (2008) puts this aspect, “spirituality is being able to dream dreams beyond the conventions of ordinary life, and make them happen” (p. 10). For Austin (2000), who describes waking consciousness, or losing the sense of superficial self as one moves toward complete unity with Other, this new sense of consciousness emerges as self-centred subjectivities dissolve and the world is revealed with unburdened clarity, allowing one to glimpse the reality of things “as they ‘really’ are” (p. 228). Similarly, Wuthnow (1998) suggests that spirituality can be defined as a state of being related to a divine, supernatural or transcendent order of reality or, alternatively, as “a sense or awareness of a suprareality that goes beyond life as ordinarily experienced” (p. 307). This heightened sense of consciousness noted in the literature is not restricted to descriptions of adult spirituality. For example, Hay and Nye (2006) describe three interrelated themes or essential categories of spiritual sensitivity and awareness: awareness-sensing, mystery-sensing and value-sensing. These experiential categories point to the spirituality inherent in the lives of the many children who have been part of their research. Additionally, Hay and Nye (2006) report a common thread of
childhood spirituality as relational consciousness, reflecting both the heightened sense of consciousness or perceptiveness that she observed in children, along with the ways in which the children related to other things, people, themselves, and to God. Also exploring childhood spirituality, de Souza (2009) describes spirituality as a journey where, at the deepest levels of connectedness, mind and matter become one and the same. As discussed more fully in a following section, it is widely acknowledged that even from a very early age, children can have profound spiritual experiences.

2.2.5 Criticisms of contemporary spirituality descriptions.
There appears to be some consensus around the key, recurring themes in the ways in which Western spirituality is described and understood by many today. The above review has focused on the most widely described aspects, namely that spirituality is an essential human trait, irrespective of the fact that, for some, it may be expressed through religious beliefs and traditions. Furthermore, that spirituality is relational, unifying, and aspirational, and that it has the capacity to encompass a quality of consciousness that takes one beyond self and life as usually experienced.

However, there are, naturally, alternate points of view to this consensus understanding. This is hardly surprising particularly since, as Eaude (2003) has reminded us, spirituality can mean different things to different people. In the post-secular environment of many countries, increasing numbers of people are describing themselves as spiritual rather than religious “because of a reluctance to commit, or submit, to authorities, including traditional religions” (Watson, de Souza, & Trousdale, 2014, p. 297).

New Age beliefs about the nature of spirituality have been criticised because of their individualistic nature (Hodder, 2009). Kohn (2006, as cited by Hodder, 2009) has

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4 New Age is a term associated with a wide range of holistic spiritual beliefs and practices that developed in the Western world during the 1970s. There is a strong emphasis on the spiritual
argued that since these beliefs are unique to the individual, then they cannot hope to lead to any widespread improvement in society in the way that a traditional religious-based spiritual movement might aspire. Contrary to this, of course, is the popular view that much of the global conflict that we experience today can be attributed to religion and religious beliefs. Nevertheless, some scholars are of the view that contemporary spirituality is “subject to the trends evident in consumer society, so that spirituality itself seems up for sale” (Hodder, 2009, p. 205).

Spirituality, unconnected from a religious base, may lose its meaning. For example, spirituality “may lack a definite shape and structure and may be unconnected to any wider tradition of belief, practice and value, thereby making it difficult to specify criteria for spiritual development in relation to them” (McLaughlin, 2013, p. 192, cited by Best, 2014). From this perspective it is argued that separated from a religious meaning, advocates are forced to assign meaning. Furthermore, in doing so, “the more the meanings which are assigned to the term, the more human experience it seems to touch (if not include), and the less precise its meaning actually becomes” (Best, 2014, p. 13). Unhelpfully, Western attempts to define spirituality are largely derived from Christian thinking, and did not typically explore Eastern understandings and teachings (Watson et al., 2014). In both Buddhism and Hinduism, for example, Eastern philosophy has understood that the focus for one’s spiritual journey is being able to expand awareness so as to be able to move beyond the superficial self, or ego, in order to realise the true Self (Hyde, 2008). For Hindus, ‘self’ in lower case letters, refers to the conditioned and socially constructed self, resulting from learned experiences. “It is this ‘self’ that a person mistakenly takes to be who he or she really is” (p. 39). Whereas, when ‘Self’ is used with a capital letter, authority of the Self, and the importance of acknowledging and honouring one’s intuition (Hodder, 2009). Occasionally, it includes belief in semi-divine non-human entities which can be reached through channeling. Also seen in the rise of publications to do with ‘mind, body and spirit’, and with holistic healing and alternative medicine, many regard New Age beliefs with suspicion, the growth being seen as a consequence of people in today’s secularised societies searching for meaning in life (Adams, et al., 2008).
it is one’s true nature which is referred to, and identified with the Absolute. For the Buddhist, “self ceases to exist as a separate entity. Self blends into Other, and mind and matter become one and the same” (p. 39). It is this state that is regarded as one’s true nature, and that as a person becomes aware of it they can also understand the true nature of everything else (Hart, 2003; Hay & Nye, 2006).

And so the question naturally arises, is spirituality actually needed as a concept? One argument here is that unlike other areas of development (such as cognitive, physical, emotional and social), which are at least in principle possible to measure, the lack of a clear consensus definition of spirituality makes it difficult to ‘operationalise’ and, therefore, difficult to measure (Best, 2014). This would seem to be a relatively weak argument, given that there are many concepts which, as humans, we experience that are not easily quantifiable (consider hope, for example). In any event, this would not provide a justification for failing to acknowledge the concept, or for not providing opportunities in schools for them to be experienced. Others argue against the need for spirituality at a conceptual level, believing that it is more correctly and accurately defined according to emotional development or to a philosophical stance (Marples, 2006). Marples argues that the idea of spirituality as a search for meaning is problematic, and that much that is ascribed to the spiritual can be understood in terms of the emotional or the aesthetic, or alternatively as predispositions, character traits or virtues. Similar questions are asked by Eaude (2009), as he debated whether children’s spirituality had anything to offer over concepts such as happiness, emotional wellbeing and mental health. Eaude concluded “that an explicit focus on children’s emotional well-being, happiness and mental health may be counterproductive, and that these are best seen as by-products of other activities, rather than as ends in themselves, to avoid a tendency towards introspection” (p. 195). Usefully, Eaude (2009) contends, spirituality has an alternative emphasis on searching for meaning and connectedness with less of a focus on oneself (see also Seligman, 2011). To the extent that spirituality can help children meet and make sense of challenges, it can lead to an overall state of
wellbeing or, “of flourishing, rather than the immediate gratification associated with what is external and transient. Spiritual well-being does not just involve feeling good, being happy, or having fun” (Eaude, 2009, p. 195).

While spirituality itself evades precise definition, its centrality to our shared humanity along with its relational and unifying aspects will combine to keep it within our attention as we continue the search for meaning and purpose in our lives. Surely just because we cannot see it, or define it precisely, does not mean spirituality should be ignored and, as Moberg (2002) notes, the “fickleness of academics inability to provide precise definitions has never prevented people from practising it” (p. 49). Perhaps, as Hay and Nye (2006) have observed, spirituality faces its toughest test of plausibility in our nervousness and lack of faith in the trustworthiness of the heightened states of awareness that our spiritual beings are capable of sensing.

2.3 Childhood Spirituality

Over recent decades a focused interest has emerged on the spiritual development of children and young people. This growing research interest parallels new interest in children and religion more generally, in the scholarship of both contemporary and historical childhoods (Browning & Bunge, 2009; Hemming, 2005; Morrison & Martin, 2017; Strhan, Parker & Ridgely, 2017). Comprehensive reviews of earlier literature have been completed by Ratcliff (2007), for example, in his paper titled The Spirit of Children Past: A Century of Children’s Spirituality Research, which shows that the study of children and religion has a long history. Whereas earlier interest in childhood spirituality dating back at least to the nineteenth century was closely linked with religion and with religious language (for example, Bushnell, 1861; Lewis, 1896), contemporary research with children in Western countries has sought to explore spirituality as it is understood and discussed in the preceding section. This research interest has also been driven by educational reform across the Western world, and in response to concerns about the spiritual wellbeing of young people, and how best to
build resilience in youth (Hyde, 2008). Internationally, children’s spirituality has
developed in recent times as an important area of enquiry particularly within
medical, psychological and religious disciplines, although often it has been focused
upon adolescents. This has been balanced, somewhat, since Coles’s (1990) seminal
work, The Spiritual Life of Children, with the founding of The International Journal of
Children’s Spirituality in 1996 and through the subsequent hosting of international
conferences with specific focus on children’s spirituality. The literature reviewed in
the next section provides an overview of the regularly cited, major international
contributions to understandings specifically of childhood spirituality in Western
contexts, consistent with the general descriptions of spirituality presented above, and
relevant to the current study.

An important marker in contemporary research into childhood spirituality was
provided by Coles (1990) in The Spiritual Life of Children. After many years of clinical
work with children, investigating aspects of their daily lives in countries around the
world, Coles realised that he had been overlooking expressions of spiritual
awareness. His subsequent research with over 500 children, from the United States,
Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Central and South America and Asia involved
children from a wide range of traditional religious backgrounds, as well as children
from secular settings with no exposure to religious traditions. Through many
individual and group interviews, Coles (1990) found that, regardless of background,
children expressed spiritual understanding and found answers to their questions as
they searched for meaning in their lives. In fact, Coles (1990) concluded that children
were able to use their spiritual knowing to comfort themselves and to make meaning
in their lives, often more capably than the adults who were interviewing them.
Coles’s work has been criticised due to the anecdotal nature of his reporting of
results, and for his use of questions that were biased toward his assumption that
children’s spiritual lives are connected to influences from home, school and religious
teaching (Sauln, 2013). However, in his view the work with children’s spirituality
was primarily a phenomenological and existential exploration to provide a
foundation for more specific research in the future (Coles, 1990). Coles’s research confirmed his previous experience that “children try to understand not only what is happening to them, but why; and in doing that, they call upon the religious life they have experienced, the spiritual values that they have received, as well as other sources of potential explanation” (p. 100). He noted that, for many children, an interest in God, the supernatural, the sacred or the ultimate meaning of life was not necessarily related to religious practices to which they had been exposed. Some children asked questions not in keeping with the tenets of their religion, while others who had parents described as atheists or agnostics still were very interested in God and the sacred. Coles (1990) came to the view that spiritual awareness is a universal human predisposition. This ground-breaking research paved the way for more recent studies that have moved the focus away from looking for expressions of religious language to a focus more on children’s spiritual perceptions and spiritual awareness within everyday activities.

Important examples of the resulting shift toward looking for the spiritual within the natural responses of children to their everyday experiences are found in the way that subsequent researchers approached their respective work. McCreery (1996) described her research as conversations with four- and five-year-old children in Britain, around typical home, school and television events within the children’s experience. In her research, McCreery (1996) was at pains to allow children to use their own words, and looked for the words and phrases that were used to express spiritual awareness. She found that even these very young children had begun to make sense of their experiences, and that they were asking questions of meaning about things that they did not understand. McCreery (1996) concluded that adults working with young children should encourage these questions, acknowledging them as they explored the questions and issues with children as they arose. In a similar way, using unstructured interviews with young children in America, Erricker and Erricker (1996) allowed children to speak to them in natural and unstructured ways. From their extensive research they have also stressed the importance of
listening for and listening to expressions of children’s developing spirituality. They alert those working with young children to their belief that the thinking of children in relation to these early expressions and ideas must be taken seriously.

Another major contribution during this period was the research conducted by Hay and Nye (1998), with 38 British children between the ages of six and eleven, 28 of whom had no religious affiliation. In individual interviews conducted by Rebecca Nye for this research, pictures were presented to each child with the researcher then wondering out loud about the image to evoke the child’s ideas. The research was based on a relational consciousness model of children’s spirituality, defined as children’s conscious awareness of their interdependence with other beings, including God, animals and humans. The term “relational” is used to describe the context of spirituality, in that it involves relating to people, things, self or divinity. The term “consciousness” emphasises the heightened sense of awareness, perception and reflection (Ratcliff, 2007). Describing spiritual awareness in three categories – awareness sensing (connection to the here-and-now, tuning, flow, focusing), mystery sensing (capacity for awe and wonder, imagination) and value sensing (delight and despair, ultimate goodness, meaning) – Hay and Nye (1998) analysed the children’s responses accordingly. From this, they were able to suggest that each child had a personal spirituality signature, and that this personal signature was linked with the child’s personality and temperament. Hay and Nye (1998) also noted that the children’s dialogue fell into one of two categories, either using explicitly religious ideas and language or using non-religious language that implicitly conveyed that the child was engaged in something more than the mundane. Although the study had been designed to avoid religious language, the researchers were surprised to find how often children with no religious exposure nevertheless used religious language and ideas in their conversations. This they attributed to the children’s lack of other language with which to describe what they were experiencing, summarising the children’s spiritual awareness on a continuum:
At one end are those who perceive spiritual matters in terms of questions or principles. Then there are those who go on to make unconscious associations with traditional spiritual language of religion in their attempt to articulate these questions and find meaningful ways of answering them. Finally at the other end of the continuum are those who have experienced their spirituality directly and personally in the form of religious insights. (Hay & Nye, 1998, pp. 106-107)

Hay and Nye (1998) concluded that while children often resort to use of religious language, their spiritual expression does not necessarily include it, and that adults need to be aware that spirituality may rather be expressed through children’s play, imagination, creativity and dreams. These forms of expression may be quite different from the ways in which adults express spirituality. Nevertheless, although children often may not use either traditional religious or metaphysical terminology, they are still able to express sensitive and profound reflections concerning matters of ultimate concern and meaning. These observations, coupled with the fact that, for young children, matters of a spiritual nature are typically treated by them as far more ordinary than by adults, mean that children’s expressions of spirituality are often missed by the adults in their lives. Hay and Nye (1998) believe that to notice a child’s spirituality as an adult, one must be aware of each child’s personal style, referred to in the study as the ‘signature phenomenon’. This links with the Errickers’ (1996) findings discussed above, and their similar emphasis on the need to listen carefully to children.

Listening carefully to children’s expressions of spirituality in their conversations was also important for Champagne (2001), working with young children in Canada. Taking this a step further, however, Champagne argued that it is also possible to listen for the spiritual awareness underlying children’s daily lives. Reinforcing the thoughts of other researchers, Champagne (2001) grouped her findings into the three themes she encountered when listening to and listening for children’s expressions of spirituality: spirituality as human experience, spirituality as a quest for unification
and integrity, and spirituality as a quality of consciousness. Consistent with the findings of Hay and Nye (1998), Champagne (2001) has highlighted the feeling that young children can and do display such capabilities even before they have developed the formal language to express them. While she was observing daily activities and interactions, many children’s experiences transcended the human and suggested something beyond. The children displayed a natural openness and eagerness to discover and engage, which were markers of the richer and more complex reality to which they were relating. The children’s sense of connection to others and to their world spoke also to the quality of their consciousness. A fundamental question that Champagne believed needed to be addressed was whether adults are willing to see young children as being capable of making sense of their lives, in ways that adults have not directly taught them.

Picking up on this theme, and also particularly relevant to the current study, is an American research project conducted by Hart (2003). Hart added written accounts from adults recalling childhood experiences to in-depth interviews with children. Hart’s research has added further to the understanding that children do in fact have rich and formative spiritual lives prior to the development of formal reasoning. His research identified five spiritual capacities: wisdom, wonder/awe, the relationship between one’s Self and the Other, seeing the invisible and wondering in relation to the ultimate questions of life. Hart has argued that, while children may not possess the adult logic and language, they do show a capacity for considering questions of meaning and value at deep levels. He believes that even quite young children do have a capacity for deep empathy and compassion for other human beings and for aspects of their relationship with the world around them. Hart’s research also highlights another aspect of childhood spirituality, as can be seen from the title of his book The Secret Spiritual World of Children (2003). Hart (2009) has led the discussion around the ‘invisibility’ of children’s spiritual life, describing their spiritual world as a secret one: rich and varied, but largely hidden from the adult world. This aspect of children’s spirituality has been noted by others. For example, as Adams (2009) has
stated “given that serious discussion of spiritual experiences is not common in daily discourse, children often feel a fear of ridicule or dismissal and for that reason often retreat into silence” (p. 814).

Another often cited work, based this time in Aotearoa New Zealand, is the research completed with early childhood centres by Jane Bone (2007). Bone’s concept of an ‘everyday spirituality’ resonates with the studies discussed above, also being based on an inclusive and relational view of childhood spirituality. For Bone (2007), spirituality can be described in the way that it

connects people to each other, to all living things, to nature and to the universe. Spirituality is a way of appreciating the wonder and mystery of everyday life; it alerts me to the possibility for love, happiness, goodness, peace and compassion in the world. (p. 9)

This description clearly grounds spirituality in the everyday experiences of daily life, acknowledging that an important aspect of spirituality is its outward expression as a way of life. Using a qualitative case study approach, in a Montessori casa, a private preschool and a Steiner kindergarten, Bone (2009) identified the three themes of spiritual withness, spiritual in-betweeneness and spiritual elsewhere. These are described as three relational and transformative spaces, which overlap and are open ended. The first space is that of spiritual withness which is described as a form of intersubjectivity, “the giving and receiving of attention between Self/Other” (p. 878). This space frames spirituality as a sense of connection, and is a shared space. Secondly, spiritual in-betweenness refers to a place of ambiguity which is always changing as the children and adults act and react with the environment and with each other, supported by daily rituals and rites. Bone noted that rituals are a way of bringing people together, as “they involve all the senses, the emotions and the spirit” (p. 882). This spirituality in-between might also be a moment of personal epiphany, a spiritual moment or pause in the day, when one notes something “as if for the first time” (p. 882), or with heightened clarity. Thirdly, the spiritual elsewhere, is the
space of dreams and imagination. Sometimes this imaginative world of play can be obvious to the adults, while at other times it can be “a place of escape, of day dreaming; it is a private world” (p. 885). This space recognises that children often show a deep connection to special possessions, to living things and to each other in play that goes beyond surface understandings of the connection.

This overview of the development of contemporary understandings of childhood spirituality can be seen to mirror the way in which human spirituality in general is viewed and understood. A change in language is required to match this much wider way of looking at spirituality, as the religious language which may have been relied upon earlier is no longer sufficient to express the full meaning of spirituality as it is understood today (Kennedy & Duncan, 2009). While different authors, writing from various perspectives such as philosophy, psychology and social sciences for example, express their understanding in differing ways, there is an underlying consensus evident that childhood spirituality includes a sense of connectedness, relation and meaning (Willis, 2017).

To date, the spiritual voice of primary school aged children in Aotearoa New Zealand has not been heard in the literature, with the exception of Laurie Mazza-Davies’ (2015) doctoral thesis: Mindfulness in the Classroom. Mazza-Davies interviewed 16 primary-aged children while researching, primarily, teachers’ perceptions of wellbeing. And, as she notes, “while this research did not focus on children’s spirituality per se, it has explored teachers’ perceptions of well-Being in relation to mindfulness-based practices, and as discussed earlier, well-Being as defined by the participants, can encompass a spiritual element” (2015, p. 184).

This current study seeks to elicit spiritual data directly from the children themselves, and to look for possible connections between spiritual wellbeing and markers of social, emotional and educational development at the Year 6 level of schooling.
2.4 Spirituality as an Intelligence

The previous sections have examined what is commonly understood today by the notion of spirituality. The idea that spirituality could, in fact, be considered as an intelligence has been postulated by an increasing number of writers in psychological, neuroscience, religious, spiritual, health, leadership, and education fields (Adams, Hyde & Woolley, 2008; Emmons, 2000a, 2000b; Hyde, 2004; Johnson, 2006; Luckcock, 2008; Piechowski, 2003, 2006; Sternberg, 2003; Sternberg & Ruzgis, 1994; Vaughan, 2002; Wolman, 2001; Zohar, 2005; Zohar & Marshall, 2000). Gardner (1993) initially considered spirituality as a separate intelligence but decided that it did not meet his definition. As discussed in more detail below, Gardner (1993) cited the lack of convincing evidence about brain structures and processes as his chief hesitation with regard to declaring a ninth intelligence. However, a spiritual intelligence model may have the potential to usefully integrate research findings in the differing disciplines (Emmons, 2000; Piechowski, 2003). From Zohar and Marshall’s (2000) perspective, it is argued that spiritual intelligence exists as a third domain of intelligence which is seen to complement and integrate the more traditional academic intelligence (IQ) and emotional intelligence (EQ).

2.4.1 What is Spiritual Intelligence understood to be?

Emmons (2000) identified five core components of spiritual intelligence, common across the vast majority of cultures. For Emmons, spiritually intelligent people are characterised by:

1. the capacity to transcend the physical and material.
2. the ability to experience heightened states of consciousness.
3. the ability to sanctify everyday experience.
4. the ability to utilize spiritual resources to solve problems.
5. the capacity to be virtuous.

(Emmons, 2000, p. 10)
These key features can be seen to reflect the areas of commonality in the definitions of spirituality discussed in earlier sections. Further work defining spiritual intelligence by other writers (Adams, Hyde & Woolley, 2008; Emmons, 2000b; Hyde, 2004; Piechowski, 2003, 2006; Wolman, 2001; Zohar, 2005; Zohar and Marshall, 2000) while each having their own particular emphases, lends general support to a number of Emmons’s (2000) proposed components.

It is the first two components of Emmons’s (2000) definition of spiritual intelligence which attend to the ability and capacity for transcendence and mysticism. For Emmons, transcendence is seen as a fundamental human capacity to see synchrony to life (see also Vaughan, 2002), to develop a bond with humanity which does not end with death, and mysticism as engaging in heightened forms of consciousness with the awareness of an ultimate reality taking the form of a sense of oneness or unity (see also Johnson, 2006). Wolman (2001) argues that spiritual intelligence reflects our human ability to ask ultimate questions about the meaning of life and, in so doing, to experience the seamless connections between each person and the world. People high in spiritual intelligence are especially skilled at entering these special forms of consciousness (Emmons, 2000; Wolman, 2001). Johnson (2006) describes spiritual intelligence as enabling “the most complete range of states of consciousness” (p. 45). For Vaughan (2002), spiritual intelligence implies a capacity for deep understanding of existential questions and the ability to access multiple levels of consciousness.

Emmons’s (2000) third component, the ability to sanctify or see everyday activities as a special calling, is seen as an expertise which humans can bring to bear on problem-solving and planning for action. When everyday activities, such as work being seen as a calling (Howard & Howard, 1996; Zohar, 2005), or parenting being seen as a sacred responsibility (Gromme, 1998; Hay & Nye, 2006; Seligman, 1995), are viewed deeper than in purely secular ways, there are important outcomes. Emmons’s (2000) research indicates that when humans orientate their lives around ultimate concerns,
an increased sense of meaningfulness, fulfilment and personality unification is experienced (Piechowski, 2003, 2006).

The ability to identify problems, identify and weigh alternative courses of action, and implement a plan of action is generally agreed as an indicator of intelligence (as described below). Emmons (2000) identifies the ability to bring spiritual resources to bear upon life’s issues as his fourth component of spiritual intelligence. Vaughan (2002) has observed that spiritual intelligence can “open the heart, illuminate the mind, and inspire the soul” (p. 19), and can be seen to assist people to distinguish reality from illusion. Zohar and Marshall (2000) have argued that the 30–40% of Western populations who report undergoing spiritual experiences, with the associated feelings of great euphoria and wellbeing, also experience “deep insight which brings new perspective to life” (p. 99). It is this new insight and perspective which enables a spiritually intelligent person to determine new insights and develop alternate, creative solutions to life’s problems of meaning and of value.

Finally, spiritually intelligent people are able to consistently practise virtuous behaviour, for example “to show forgiveness, to express gratitude, to exhibit humility, to be compassionate, and to display sacrificial love” (Emmons, 2000, p. 12), or “loving kindness, honesty, tolerance, open-mindedness and inner peace” (Vaughan, 2002, p. 23). Virtues such as these are seen in practically all cultures and major religions, from the earliest of times to the modern world (Adams et al., 2008; Hyde, 2004; Marshall, 2000; Zohar and Marshall, 2000). These inner qualities are seen by Emmons (2000) as sources of inner strength enabling people to function effectively in intra- and inter-personal domains. Acting from principles and values are the basis of what Zohar (2005) and Luckcock (2008) describe as the vision- and value-led aspects of spiritually intelligent leadership. Vaughan (2002) adds that spiritual intelligence enables one to recognise the value of virtuous qualities within self and within others. From her many years of working with thousands of children, Painton (2009) has defined spiritual intelligence according to the inner world of the
child. “Spiritual intelligence is boys’ and girls’ capacity to be awake and aware of a deeper dimension of themselves that leads to wisdom and intuition, compassion, and other-worldly experiences” (p. 368).

2.4.2 Is the notion of Spiritual Intelligence defendable?
As might reasonably be anticipated, when any new theory is advanced, knowledgeable commentators in the field can be seen to add further support, put up arguments to refute the proposal, or to conclude that while the developing theory might be plausible it is not yet proven beyond reasonable doubt. While the preceding section has reviewed the concept of spiritual intelligence as a set of related abilities and competencies, we need also to consider if it can be seen to pass accepted standards to be regarded as a separate intelligence.

2.4.2.1 What constitutes an intelligence?
There is a wide range of views as to what constitutes an intelligence. Simply, there is no one, agreed basic definition (Sternberg, 2003). However, one area in which there is some agreement is that many theories of intelligence highlight the centrality of problem-solving ability. Sternberg (2003) believes that intelligent behaviour can be judged by the extent to which it functions to assist in generalised adaption to the environment, while for Chiu, Hong, and Dweck (1994) it is “the level of skills and knowledge currently available for problem-solving” (p. 106). Walters and Gardner (1986) similarly see intelligence as a set of abilities that enables an individual to solve problems. Zohar and Marshall (2000) have noted that it pertains to the ability to address and solve problems involving logic, emotion, meaning and value. Emmons (2000) focuses on adaptive problem-solving behaviour, defining it with respect to the attainment of practical goals. To effectively negotiate life, one needs to be able to intelligently identify worthy goals, and locate and then pursue pathways towards those goals.
A further generally accepted hallmark of intelligence is the capacity to carry out abstract reasoning (Sternberg, 2003). This type of intelligent thinking involves the ability to carry out a variety of mental transformations, summarised by Mayer (2000) as identifying similarities and differences, making generalisations, mentally rotating figures, all according to specifiable rules.

While by no means unique, Gardner’s (1993) theory of multiple intelligences has been influential in challenging traditional views of intelligence. Rather than viewing the intelligence of multi-dimensional humans in a one-dimensional way, Gardner’s theory identified eight different types of intelligence, each describing a set of abilities useful for solving problems and fashioning products within particular communities. While each intelligence exists as a potential inherent in each individual, each varies genetically in terms of individual competencies and potential for development. Gardner (1993) proposed criteria which he believed were important for distinguishing an independent intelligence, which required combined evidence from neurological, developmental, evolutionary and psychological sources:

1. An identifiable core operation or set of operations
2. An evolutionary history and evolutionary plausibility
3. A characteristic pattern of development
4. Potential isolation by brain damage
5. The existence of persons distinguished by the exceptional presence or absence of the ability
6. Susceptibility to encoding in a symbol system
7. Support from experimental psychological investigations
8. Support from psychometric findings.

(Gardner, 1993, pp. 62-68)

Using the above overview as a basis then, in the following section some key arguments that spiritual intelligence might or might not be properly regarded as a ninth, independent intelligence will be evaluated.
2.4.2.2 Adaptive problem-solving.

Hyde (2004) notes that it was James (1902, as cited by Hyde, 2004) who first noted that personal religion (known today as spirituality) may be used by an individual as a means to find solutions to problems of meaning and value in life. For James, spiritual experiences often give great insight into deep truths enabling the individual to confront and find new solutions to the difficulties and problems of life. Emmons (2000) also argues that the fact that spirituality can underlie a range of problem-solving skills that are relevant to everyday life supports its elevation to an intelligence. Since the spiritually intelligent person has added a bank of spiritual information to his or her general knowledge base, it is argued that adaptive problem-solving behavior is enhanced. As noted above, Zohar and Marshall (2000) argue that spiritual insights positively assist people to determine solutions not only to significant problems of life, but also to difficulties of meaning and value.

This problem-solving aspect of spirituality, as a key element of intelligence, is used as an argument supporting the conception of spirituality as an intelligence. This is one aspect of a spiritual intelligence that Gardner (2000) has been, in response to Emmons (2000), prepared to consider. For Gardner many questions remain unanswered here, and he calls for more supporting psychological evidence.

2.4.2.3 Abstract reasoning.

Mayer (2000) contends that spiritual intelligence is more correctly conceived as spiritual consciousness; a heightened state of consciousness rather than a higher order intelligence. Mayer (2000) is critical of Emmons’s (2000) reliance on the use of Gardner’s (1993) intelligence criteria, in so far as only two of the eight criteria (core mental operations and symbol system requirements) can be seen to overlap in any way with the overriding importance, to Mayer, of the abstract reasoning test for an intelligence.
For Mayer (2000), both the transcendence and mystical components of spiritual intelligence are more accurately described by what psychologists refer to as ‘structuring’ or ‘developing consciousness’, as opposed to being a sign of abstract reasoning. Mayer concedes that the third and fourth components of Emmons’s (2000) model, namely sanctification and coping may indicate elements of abstract reasoning. For example, an individual who has high spiritual intelligence might perceive more abstract relationships to things sacred than one who is lower in such intelligence. However, Mayer (2000) cautions that such abstract connections might not be unique to the spiritual. “If the reasoning in spiritual stories is the same as that employed in literary scholarship or the arts, then all that might be present would be verbal intelligence” (p. 53).

2.4.2.4 Virtuous traits.

Emmons (2000) initially listed the capacity to be virtuous as an important fifth component of spiritual intelligence. Others have vigorously argued against this aspect (Fontana, 2003; Hyde, 2004; Mayer, 2000). Chiu, Hong, and Dweck (1994) caution that, for all practical purposes, intelligence and personality features become inextricably intertwined. For Mayer (2000) the concern is to avoid blurring important distinctions between intellectual and non-intellectual qualities.

There is widespread acceptance of the universality of many virtues across cultures, and most would agree that virtuous traits such as humility, forgiveness, love and honesty, to name but a few, are essential human characteristics. Mayer (2000) takes issue with the inclusion of such qualities in a definition of intelligence since there are large noncognitive parts to them, citing examples where virtues can be exercised indiscriminately, inappropriately or for a less than virtuous motive. He also cautions against labelling someone as spiritually intelligent on the basis of consistently displaying virtuous behaviour when they may have inherited, for example, an easy going temperament which enables forgiveness to come easily. Similarly, he argues, should we ascribe low spiritual intelligence to someone who finds it difficult to
forgive when that person may be biologically predisposed as unhappy and angry, or may be a person who has experienced an abusive upbringing?

Gardner (2000) also takes issue with Emmons (2000) on these points. Additionally, Gardner points to a blurring of distinction between abilities that all people have to some degree and which others possess in a more pronounced way, with other capabilities that are rather more accurately seen as simply admirable virtues. For Gardner (2000), issues of spirituality with regard to “desired values or behaviours are best deemed external to the intellectual sphere” (p. 3). Furthermore, Gardner argues that spiritual intelligence as proposed presents the difficulty of distinguishing between those who use this supposed high intelligence in a destructive, psychopathic manner as opposed to creative, humanitarian or otherwise positive manner (see also Berryman, 2001).

However, the positive psychology movement of the last two decades, in promoting optimal development for all humans, has clearly identified character strengths as the foundation of lifelong healthy development (Park & Peterson, 2008). “The VIA (Values in Action) project supports the premise of positive psychology that attention to good character – what a person does well – sheds light on what makes life worth living” (p. 91). Based on broad categories of virtues that consistently emerge across cultures and time, Park and Peterson (2008) list 24 character strengths under the virtue headings of wisdom and knowledge, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence. Within the VIA project, spirituality is listed as one of the 24 character strengths and defined as “having coherent beliefs about the higher purpose and meaning of life” (p. 87). Many of the other character strengths in the VIA classification of strengths can be seen to relate directly to the conception of spirituality as I have defined it within this thesis (refer pp. 1/2).
2.4.2.5 *Neurobiological evidence and evolutionary history.*

Neurobiological studies that have pointed to the identification of specific parts of the brain that might be involved in spiritual experiences (d’Aquili & Newberg, 1998; Emmons, 2000; Hyde, 2004; Zohar & Marshall, 2000) are also used to defend spirituality as an intelligence. Particular areas of the frontal lobes have been identified. Heightened temporal activity can have strong emotional effects, and Zohar and Marshall (2000) have noted that even very short experiences can result in strong and lasting, life-transforming influences. Lending further support, Newberg, d’Aquili and Rause (2001) have identified four association areas of the brain which, together, produce the mind’s spiritual potential. Hyde (2004) concludes that the potential to perceive spiritual experiences, to sanctify everyday experiences and to store visions has an evolutionary history. Newberg, d’Aquili and Rause (2001) suggest that the potential always existed, the brain’s higher functions developed from simpler processes which were originally orientated to more basic survival ends. As evolution proceeded, the usefulness of spiritual potential was favoured by natural selection.

However, Fontana (2003) remains sceptical, maintaining that this research has not as yet demonstrated any direct link between areas of the brain and spiritual intelligence. There remains no empirical evidence that higher-order thinking assumed by the concept of spiritual intelligence activates specific areas of the brain. He argues that any evolutionary advantage of spiritual intelligence is far from established, particularly since it is known that the frontal lobes evolved at a very late stage in human development. For Fontana (2003), Zohar and Marshall’s (2000) description of the God Spot is more correctly connected with the quality of the human life, and the generation of altruism, than with physical survival. While altruism may lead to a readiness to sacrifice one’s life to aid in survival of the community, it does not increase the likelihood that the altruistic individual’s genes will be passed on (Dawkins, 1979, cited by Fontana, 2003). Ironically, following the
theory of natural selection, it is more likely to be the genes of the less virtuous who has ‘run for cover’ which will be passed to the next generation.

Having repeatedly defended his contention that spirituality is not an intelligence (Gardner, 1993, 1995, 1996; Walters & Gardner, 1986), but rather an amalgam of inter- and intra-personal intelligence with a value-added component, Gardner (2000) has more recently considered an existential intelligence. While the idea of existential intelligence, he believes, qualifies well against his eight criteria (outlined above), it is the idea that one part of the brain may have evolved to perform operations on elements that transcend normal sensory perception that has most attracted his attention (Gardner, 2000). Nevertheless, Gardner cites the lack of convincing evidence about brain structures and processes as his chief hesitation with regard to declaring a ninth intelligence.

The ground-breaking research of Piechowski (2003, 2006) into the spiritual giftedness that he has studied in children adds further weight to the concept of a spiritual intelligence. For Piechowski, “from the idea of emotional intelligence it is only a short step to consider spiritual intelligence since a spiritual connectedness is vital to many people” (2006, p. 5). Commenting on the complementary research, coming from many alternate fields and perspectives on spirituality, Piechowski endorses spiritual intelligence as indeed an intelligence in its own right. Amongst his arguments, for example, he has stated that both emotional and spiritual intelligence have their own demonstrated neurological basis and that “there is sufficient evidence to admit spiritual giftedness as distinct from emotional giftedness” (2003, p. 407). Additionally for Piechowski, it is the well-established notion of relational consciousness and its “sense of an overall connectedness” (2003, p. 413) which identify both emotional and spiritual intelligence independently of each other.
2.4.3 Summary.

Emmons (2000) stated that his identification of the core components was a starting point in the necessary debate to establish whether or not aspects of spirituality might be correctly postulated as spiritual intelligence. This review has demonstrated that while many other authors, from a range of disciplines, lend support for Emmons’s assertions, equally other commentators raise considered arguments against the notion of spiritual intelligence. It may also be seen that there is considerable overlapping in the various arguments put for and against. The least disputed area of support can be seen to be with regard to adaptive problem-solving.

In his paper “Spiritual Intelligence or Spiritual Consciousness”, Mayer (2000) directly challenges whether or not a definition of spirituality as an intelligence passes the abstract reasoning criteria of intelligence. He does, however, concede that the two components of sanctification and coping come closest to meeting this threshold, that there does appear to be a clustering of inter-related abilities and that there is development with age. Fontana (2003), while remaining sceptical about the current body of knowledge on brain function, notes that humans do appear to have an innate propensity for spirituality which adds meaning and value to their lives, while strengthening, informing and guiding actions.

Having opposed the notion of spiritual intelligence, Gardner (2000) has also made some concessions to his standpoint. He, too, accepts that there appears to be a clustering of various facets of spirituality which is characteristic of an intelligence. And, should further supportive empirical research be forthcoming, Gardner accepts that the sacredness, problem-solving and unifying potentials of spirituality could meet his intelligence criteria. However, Gardner continues to wrestle with whether or not to declare a ninth existential intelligence, again largely on the lack of evidence from neuroscience. Emmons (2000b) has concluded that while virtuous behaviours promote intelligent living, they are not part of a ‘mental abilities’ conception of intelligence. He has, therefore, reduced his spiritual intelligence components to the
first four, agreeing that this strengthens the argument for spiritual intelligence as a set of abilities rather than as preferred courses of behaviour.

Is spiritual intelligence simply a relabeling of spirituality or is it, indeed, an independent intelligence? It would appear that this question remains to be answered definitively. The cluster of skills and abilities associated with spirituality do contribute to everyday problem-solving and, as more research evidence comes available, they may be proven to meet each of Gardner’s intelligence criteria. As Mayer (2000) concluded, deciphering the reasoning and rules of spirituality would add further weight. However, given the complex and personal nature of spirituality itself, and the fact that contemporary literature tends to describe rather than precisely define spirituality, this seems to be an unlikely outcome. More recently, Zohar (2010) has summarised current thinking, stating that the foundation of spiritual intelligence is based on a synthesis of findings from related fields of scientific research, including cognitive psychology, psychoanalysis, transpersonal psychology, and neuroscience. Zohar sees spiritual intelligence as the intelligence by which one builds spiritual capital, defined as “the wealth, the power, and the influence that we gain by acting from a deep sense of meaning, our deepest values, and a sense of higher purpose, and all of these are best described through a life of devoted service” (2010, p. 2). This approach to the definition and acceptance of spiritual intelligence as a construct is consistent with other contemporary research in the field (Baharuddin & Ismail, 2015; Kadkhoda & Jahani, 2012; Kilcup, 2015; Sharma, 2017; Sisk, 2016). For example, Sisk (2016) utilised integrated learnings from psychology, science, ancient wisdom, traditions of eastern mysticism and the wisdom of indigenous people, while Baharuddin and Ismail (2015) include teaching from the Islamic perspective. In each case, however, spiritual intelligence is seen as the ability for humans to utilise abilities such as intuition, meditation and visualisation to access their inner knowledge.
For the purposes of this current study, the concept of spiritual intelligence provides an alternative lens with which to view spirituality. The concept of spirituality as an intelligence might also provide alternate, acceptable language for use within secular educational discourse (Kannan, 2010). As schools and teachers strive to provide an holistic educational experience to address mind, body and soul, spiritual intelligence might indeed be the unifying element which enables the evolution of human potential (Piechowski, 2006; Zohar & Marshall, 2000).

2.5 Spirituality, Health and Wellbeing

There has been much interest in the Western world, in recent decades, in exploring and understanding the links between contemporary descriptions of spirituality and its links with health, wellbeing and holistic education in general. This can be seen, for example, in the publishing of edited books, such as International Handbook of Education for Spirituality, Care and Wellbeing (2009), Global Perspectives on Spirituality and Education (2014) and Spirituality across Disciplines: Research and Practice (2016). It can be seen in the August 2009 special issue of the International Journal of Children’s Spirituality which focused specifically on Spirituality and Wellbeing. The breadth of interest in the education and wellbeing of children can be seen in the complementary contributions from authors across the disciplines such as psychology, sociology, theology, education, health, occupational therapy and counselling, with the consensus being that “no one profession is allowed custody of the human spirit” (O’Higgins-Norman, 2009, p. 937). As de Souza et al. (2009) note in the general introduction of the International Handbook of Education for Spirituality, Care and Wellbeing, the central theme linking each of the contributions is the understanding that education is inseparable from human fulfilment.

2.5.1 Linking spirituality, health and wellbeing.

This is, of course, no new idea. Spirituality and health, as essential elements of overall wellbeing, have been linked for centuries. Even in Greek times, for example,
Educators postulated that, to be truly healthy, the individual required a strong spiritual base (Brown, 1978). The ancient Greeks understood wellbeing to be characterised by harmony between all parts of the human person. Therefore, Greek education focused heavily on training the entire person, which included education of the mind, body and imagination. The emphasis was on the development “of the whole human being into a complete and perfect and accomplished (teleost) man” (Downey, 1957, p. 340). Renowned educators through this time, such as Plato and Socrates, were guided by the ideal of wisdom, rather than the goal of education being solely to pass on the practical skills and knowledge needed by the next generation. Individual development and self-realisation were promoted (Marrou, 1956). Throughout ancient Greece, more formal education comprised of “gymnastics for the body and music, or spiritual culture, for the soul” (Marrou, 1956, p. 70). The human spirit was thus nurtured by focusing on educating the individual mind, body and imagination of each student.

According to Hawks (2004), health is much more than physical fitness and the absence of disease. It includes the mental and emotional aspects of knowing and feeling, the social dimension arising from interaction with others, the vocational domain, and the very essence of being, the spiritual dimension. Other writers have noted that it is the spiritual dimension which seems to have the greatest impact on personal health. The 8th International Conference on Children’s Spirituality, held in Australia in 2008, was themed “The role of spirituality in education and health: finding meaning and connectedness to promote wellbeing”. This conference drew some 70 papers, and 130 delegates, from both health and education professionals across the world. Their common purpose for participating in this conference, was to discuss recent research findings that explored the role of spirituality in education and health (de Souza, 2009). In his 2009 doctoral thesis Spirituality in New Zealand Hospice Care, Egan noted that “there has been a significant growth in review articles in spirituality and health since 1997” (p. 38) and, while not claiming complete coverage, he had identified 62 published peer reviewed articles in this field to
support his view. Boynton (2011) also discusses this link, citing research and literature within helping disciplines that demonstrates that “spirituality is significant for children and it appears to be a component of health and well-being” (p. 110). Summarising literature in this area, she believes that spirituality is part of overall health, that it contributes to coping and resiliency, and that spirituality has “an integrative function in our emotions, values, and beliefs that allows us to experience ultimate reality” (p. 111).

Similarly, the unifying concept of wellbeing has been the focus of much research, as an individual and social value as well as a basic psychological human need. While, as for “spirituality” as a concept, there is considerable diversity as to what is understood by “wellbeing” even within educational discourse (O’Higgins-Norman, 2009), schooling is generally directed toward the wellbeing of the whole person. The holistic education philosophy is based on the understanding that “education is inseparable from human fulfilment” (p. 937). Education is seen as an integrated process in which all aspects of the person are developed and promoted. Wellbeing as such is seen as an indicator of quality of life, with a vitally important role to play for overall human health and development. This line of research is also central to modern positive psychology aiming to build a good quality of life (Seligman, 1995, 1998, 2011). The fields of psychology and spirituality can be seen to have had, traditionally, a polarised research relationship (Parks, 2005). However, positive psychology seeks to bridge much of the divide offering “a more complete and balanced scientific understanding of the human experience – the peaks, the valleys, and everything in between” (Seligman, Steen, Park, & Peterson, 2005, p. 410). Parks (2005) sees the link here as the desire positive psychology has shown to “cross the bridge to spirituality” (p. 313), in recognition that this dimension allows young people to find meaning and achieve resilience in their lives. Wellbeing in the field of positive psychology refers to what people think about their lives, how they feel, and to the “cognitive and affective conclusions that they reach when they evaluate their experiences” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 9). The PERMA construct of
wellbeing developed by Seligman in his more recent work (2011), reflects his belief that “the topic of positive psychology is well-being, that the gold standard for measuring well-being is flourishing, and that the goal of positive psychology is to increase flourishing” (p. 13). While his earlier work focussed on authentic happiness, wellbeing is now seen to include the elements of positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning and accomplishment, encapsulated in the mnemonic PERMA. The links here with aspects of spirituality are particularly evident in the element of meaning (defined by Seligman as “belonging to and serving something that you believe is bigger than the self” (2011, p. 17), and in the element of positive relationships with other people. However, as elaborated below, each of the five elements have much relevance with both Fisher’s (1998) four-domain model of spiritual health and wellbeing and with Durie’s (1998) whare tapawhā model of wellbeing.

Other authors link wellbeing to spiritual intelligence, noting that when children have their spiritual intelligence nurtured their potential for healing and happiness is realised (Erricker, 2009; Painton, 2009). While noting that talk about happiness in education has often been regarded as ‘soft’, Erricker (2009) argues that happiness in schools should be linked to spirituality, health and wellbeing. Adams et al. (2008) also believe that young children use their spiritual intelligence to address issues of meaning and value in their own lives, as well as to enhance their sense of resilience and wellbeing. Indeed, Hyde (2009) has stated:

If a key purpose of education is to promote holistic learning, in which both the cognitive and non- cognitive dimensions of learning are addressed, then attention needs to be given to all of the various areas in which learning occurs, including the cognitive, social, emotional and spiritual dimensions. Indeed, attention to each of these promotes and enhances the wellbeing of the whole child. (p. 867-868)
Increasingly, different regions and cultures are re-examining the basis for the education of their children, in response to what is seen as an over-emphasis on the cognitive aspects of education over the affective domains. As stated by Watson, de Souza and Trousdale (2014), following the 9th International Conference for Children’s Spirituality, with its focus on spirituality and education:

It became clear that, for some, identifying and nurturing spirituality was seen as a significant way forward to meet the challenges and issues that were evident amongst the young people in their respective countries. It is equally apparent that, in a global world which followed a colonized world, the education systems in many countries have been founded on a Western education system where competition, compartmentalization and an unprecedented emphasis on the acquisition of knowledge and skills, and on performativity in literacy, numeracy, science and technology, have gained precedence over other aspects of a holistic education. This has also included an overemphasis on valuing certain character and personality traits over others, so that many children and young people across the world feel less valued and struggle to cope in the high-pressure performance culture in which they find themselves, both academically and socially. (2014, pp. xi-xii)

It is, then, an holistic approach to education of the whole child which brings together the separate strands of spirituality, health and wellbeing. While each has its own research background, it is in focusing on the overall wellbeing of the child as the central goal of education that professionals from such a wide range of caring disciplines find common ground. Acknowledgement of spirituality in education can be a way to nurture children into wholeness and wellness (de Souza, 2016).

2.5.2 Spiritual wellbeing.

The combination of the two multi-faceted concepts of spirituality and wellbeing, into the term “spiritual wellbeing”, was first described as “the affirmation of life in a relationship with God, self, community and environment that nurtures and
celebrates wholeness” (NICA, 1975, as cited by Fisher, 2009, p. 273). Similarly, for Ellison (1983), spiritual wellbeing “arises from an underlying state of spiritual health and is an expression of it, much like the color of one’s complexion and pulse rate are expressions of good health” (p. 332). It was from this basis that Fisher (1998) developed his four-domain model of spiritual health and wellbeing, by interviewing nearly 100 educators in a wide range of state, Catholic, independent and other Christian Australian schools.

Fisher describes spiritual health, illustrated through his model, as:

a, if not the, fundamental dimension of people’s overall health and well-being, permeating and integrating all the other dimensions of health (i.e., physical, mental, emotional, social and vocational). Spiritual health is a dynamic state of being, shown by the extent to which people live in harmony with relationships in the following domains of spiritual well-being:

*Personal* domain – wherein one intra-relates with oneself with regards to meaning, purpose and values in life. Self-awareness is the driving force or transcendent aspect of the human spirit in its search for identity and self-worth.

*Communal* domain – as shown in the quality and depth of interpersonal relationships, between self and others, relating to morality, culture, and religion. These are expressed in love, forgiveness, trust, hope and faith in humanity.

*Environmental* domain – beyond care and nurture for the physical and biological, to a sense of awe and wonder; for some, the notion of unity with the environment.

*Transcendental* domain – relationship of self with some-thing or some-One beyond the human level (i.e., ultimate concern, cosmic force, transcendent
reality or God). This involves faith towards, adoration and worship of, the source of Mystery of the universe. (Fisher, 1998, p. 191)

Fisher (2009) has since refined his model to illustrate further the dynamic interrelationships within and between each domain.

![Figure 2.1. Fisher’s (1998) four-domain model of Spiritual Wellbeing (Fisher, 2009, Fig. 4.1, p. 75).](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERSONAL</th>
<th>COMMUNAL</th>
<th>ENVIRONMENTAL</th>
<th>TRANSCENDENTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>meaning, purpose and values.</td>
<td>morality, culture and religion.</td>
<td>care, nurture and stewardship.</td>
<td>transcendent Other, cosmic force, ultimate concern, God</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-awareness</td>
<td>in-depth interpersonal relations</td>
<td>connectedness with Nature</td>
<td>faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>joy, peace, patience, identity, self-worth.</td>
<td>love, forgiveness, justice, hope and faith, trust.</td>
<td>awe and wonder peak experiences</td>
<td>adoration, worship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within each of his four domains, the knowledge aspect (in bold type) provides the cognitive framework which helps to interpret the inspirational aspect (in italics) which is the essence or motivational element of each domain. In striving for harmony, between the ‘head’ and the ‘heart’, the third aspect of each domain comes into play as expressions of wellbeing. In this model spiritual wellbeing is enhanced as the individual develops positive relationships in each domain, and can be built up as levels of spiritual wellbeing are increased by progressively embracing the next domain. The figure shows this synergistic relationship, described by Fisher as progressive synergism, between the four domains of spiritual wellbeing. He also notes that the quality of relationships in each domain will vary over time, and with personal circumstances coming into play, along with the impact of personal worldview and beliefs. The development of personal relationships related to meaning, purpose and values for life is also enhanced by the development of communal relationships of morality, culture and religion.
Fisher identifies cultural differences around the world with respect to his environmental domain. For many, unity with the environment builds on the relationships developed within the preceding two domains. Specifically noting the Australian Aboriginal and New Zealand Māori as notable exceptions within Western countries, Fisher contends that “Westerners are more likely to have some awareness of environmental concerns rather than the deep connection or sense of wonder and oneness that is evidenced in some non-Western cultures” (2009, p. 76).

With regard to the fourth, transcendental domain, Fisher sees the quality of relationship one might have with a Transcendent Other as further enhancing relationships in all the other three domains. This idea is supported by the belief that as a person develops a spiritual dimension beyond themselves and their physical world, they become more truly like themselves (or Self) (Macquarrie, cited in Best, 2014). Fisher has added the ‘rationalist’ descriptor (in domains one to three) to identify people who identify as atheist or as agnostic, illustrating that while they are willing to embrace the knowledge aspects of spiritual wellbeing (namely, meaning, purpose and values, morality and culture, care, nurture and stewardship), they would not necessarily embrace the inspirational aspects.

2.6 The Aotearoa New Zealand Context

The New Zealand context is unique in so far as the indigenous Māori culture can be seen to have influenced social, educational and political dimensions of the country (de Souza, 2016). For example, the use of the name Aotearoa, or ‘the land of the long white cloud’, reflects the integral connection with, and close observation of, the land, that Māori have. This is also evident in that many other indigenous place names are used (Bone, 2014). Widely cited local researchers in the field of childhood spirituality, Deborah Fraser (2004) and Jane Bone (2009), have both described the way in which spirituality has been part of the New Zealand curriculum for many
years. Fraser (2014) notes that while there is a growing awareness of indigenous values and practices around the world, within the Aotearoa New Zealand state school curriculum the wellbeing of all students has been seen to include a fostering of spirituality, and successive governments have included Māori models of health and wellbeing, and specific references to spirituality, into official statements in acknowledgement of the indigenous voice (Egan, 2009). Fraser (2014) discusses that while the impact of colonisation had detrimental effects, Māori have in many respects maintained strong spiritual beliefs which permeate their daily lives.

Māori also identified, then and now, with their local mountain and river as part of their tribal family whakapapa or genealogy. Their spiritual beliefs made it clear that they were inextricably linked to the land. ... Māori are still referred to as tangata whenua, which literally means people of the land, and this spiritual connection is considered part and parcel of their identity. (p. 104)

Since spirituality is understood to be a basic quality of all humans, spiritual wellbeing can be seen to be a fundamental dimension of people’s overall health and wellbeing. This is doubly important in the bi-cultural context of Aotearoa New Zealand, as highlighted by Fraser (2014) in her discussion of *The Spiritual in State Education in Aotearoa New Zealand*. Spirituality is integral to *te ao Māori* (the Māori world) and is also recognised as one of the paths to learning (Pere, 1991). In addition, for Māori, the spiritual dimension of human existence includes values and ethical decision making, along with the expectation that one’s spirituality is used in the service of others (Bevan-Brown, 1996).

Spirituality also includes the idea of oneness, or unity, expressed by Māori as *kotahitanga*, and defined essentially as in knowing one’s self, one is able to know others. Bevan-Brown also discusses the ‘intertwinedness’ of these concepts, and the Māori belief that spirituality is inextricably bound with God-given gifts, or special personal abilities. Spirituality is still, today, an integral and important part of Māori life (Durie, 1998).
For Māori children then, and also for the growing numbers of ethnicities represented within the increasingly multi-cultural contexts of primary schools, the ‘spiritual’ may well be a much more natural and integral part of the shared beliefs and conversations within the communities with which their respective families identify (Bone, 2007; Egan, 2000; Kennedy & Duncan; 2016). As de Souza (2016) for example, has noted, studies of Eastern and indigenous perspectives show spirituality to be much more of an ‘every day affair’ within these contexts.

2.6.1 Spirituality in the curriculum.

In Aotearoa New Zealand models for wellbeing, and holistic development and learning within education, include the spiritual dimension. Bone (2016) attributes this to her belief “that in New Zealand spirituality has been kept alive by Māori as tangata whenua (people of the land) who act as kaitiaki or spiritual guardians of indigenous spirituality and the spirituality of others (p. 887). As a result, “successive governments have been ethically impelled to consider Māori models of health and wellbeing” (Egan, 2009, p. 21). What is less clear is the extent to which these models only pertain to the world-view of the Māori, or extend to include the spirituality of other ethnicities and religions (Kannan, 2010).

Early childhood learning and care within Aotearoa New Zealand is not administered by the Ministry of Education in the same way as for schools. Rather, the Ministry of Education’s role is one of oversight and support, empowering early learning services to help young children become “competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society” (Te Whāriki: Early Childhood Curriculum, 1996). Within the early childhood sector, the world-renowned bicultural curriculum document, Te Whāriki, (Ministry of Education, 1996), was constructed around the notion of the partnership and biculturalism, primarily traced back to the Treaty of Waitangi/ Te Tiriti o Waitangi, signed in 1840 by Māori and the Crown. Te Whāriki itself is regarded in spiritual terms, “as it is increasingly
regarded in New Zealand as a *taonga*, a treasured artifact. It is a unique document in that it attempts to reconcile different worldviews”. (Bone, 2014, p. 119)

Bone (2007) has noted that *Te Whāriki* uses the metaphor of a woven mat (*whāriki*) to illustrate the integrated nature of the curriculum principles of *whakamana*/empowerment; *kotahitanga*/holistic development; *whanau tangata*/family and community; and *nga hononga*/relationships. These principles mesh with the strands of *mana atua*/wellbeing; *mana whenua*/belonging; *mana tangata*/contribution; *mana reo*/communication; and *mana aoturoa*/exploration. The research underpinning the curriculum document used the following working definition of spirituality:

> [It] connects people to each other, to all living things, to nature and the universe. Spirituality is a way of appreciating the wonder and mystery of everyday life. It alerts me to the possibility for love, happiness, goodness, peace and compassion in the world. (Bone, 2007, p. 9)

This definition clearly identifies spirituality within the official curriculum document, as being about a strong sense of Bone’s (2007) ‘everyday spirituality’, permeating daily lives and pointing to the sense of connectedness of society, culture and nature in a way that integrates mind, body and soul.

Within the compulsory schooling years (pupils aged from 6-16), the educational landscape in Aotearoa New Zealand is dominated by government controlled state schools, with the numbers of children being educated in non-government, independent schools being just under 5% of the total school-aged population of the for the years of compulsory schooling (*School Rolls*, 2018, October 27). Since the 1877 Education Act mandated the separation of church and state, state schools within New Zealand have been required to provide free, compulsory and secular education. Within this state system, allowance is made for state-integrated schools, of which there are some 330 of a total of 2530 schools across the country (*Education in New Zealand*, 2018, October 27). While these state-integrated schools are able to maintain
their ‘special character’ (most often from a religious tradition), most state schools are secular by nature.

As early as 1937, references to spirituality, which have much in common with the contemporary descriptions discussed above, are evident within state school curriculum statements. The 1937 syllabus stated:

There still survives in the schools a great deal of the old-fashioned formalisation that regarded education more as a mechanical process than as a means of securing for every child the fullest possible spiritual, mental and physical development. It is hoped that the present Syllabus will give encouragement to those teachers – and fortunately there are many of them – who regard the child not as inanimate clay in the hands of the potter, or as an empty vessel sent to them for filling, but as soul, a personality, capable of being developed and trained for the wider service of humanity. (Department of Education, 1937, p. 65)

More recently, references to spirituality were also made in the earlier art education statement (Department of Education, 1989), and two very broad statements can be found in the current arts curriculum, which states that the arts “enrich our emotional and spiritual lives” (Ministry of Education, 2000, p. 9), and that “visual arts link social, cultural, and spiritual action and belief” (p. 70). Similarly broad references to spirituality are to be found within the Social Sciences statement in the New Zealand Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education, 1993). For example, “they will examine the ways in which people from different cultures, times and places make decisions, and meet their physical, social, emotional and spiritual needs” (p. 14). However, it is within the Health and Physical Education curriculum statement (Ministry of Education, 1999) that a more explicit definition of spirituality is to be found.
2.6.2 Taha wairua/spiritual wellbeing.

The inclusion of Mason Durie’s (1998) whare tapawhā model of wellbeing or hauora in the New Zealand Curriculum for Health and Physical Education (Ministry of Education, 1999), illustrates the importance of all aspects of life being in balance. Hauora includes a spiritual dimension in this model (Fraser & Grootenboer, 2004). The model pictures the whole whare (house) as more than the sum of its parts, representing the four walls as taha whanau/social wellbeing; taha hinengaro/mental and emotional wellbeing; taha tinana/physical wellbeing; and taha wairua/spiritual wellbeing. The model adds a uniquely Aotearoa New Zealand context to an holistic approach to education. It reminds us that education of the whole child must attend to the development of each aspect of mind, body and soul, demonstrating, pictorially, that in strengthening each wall, the whare becomes inherently stronger; that in strengthening each aspect of a child’s development, the overall hauora of the child becomes more robust and resilient. Taha wairua/spiritual wellbeing is defined in the statement as,

the values and beliefs that determine the way that people live, the search for meaning and purpose in life, and personal identity and self-awareness. (For some individuals and communities, spiritual wellbeing is linked to a particular religion; for others, it is not.). (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 31)
Given the largely secular nature of schools within Aotearoa New Zealand, the inclusion of this statement is significant. The inclusion of reference to religious affiliation for some in the final statement, in response to feedback about a lack of acknowledgement of religious affiliation in the original drafts is noteworthy. However, this direct reference to a contemporary spirituality allows teachers and schools licence to explicitly address the spiritual dimension within the classroom; “the spiritual wellbeing of students is required to be addressed in state schools” (Egan, 2000, p. 18).

Despite this explicit reference, many note concern, as highlighted by Egan (2000) and Fraser (2014) for example, that these various and often rather vague and undefined claims of spirituality do not appear to have been taken up within the secular environment. Taha wairua, and the spiritual dimension generally, is an important area of development for all children that is largely ignored, or avoided, at both school and classroom levels. Furthermore, given the Aotearoa New Zealand bicultural context, indigenous understandings of the importance and centrality of spiritual wellbeing may not be filtering through to daily classroom experiences and interactions between teachers and their pupils, let alone reinforcing the value of spiritual awareness for all. Fraser’s concerns are highlighted further, when she notes that the most recent 2007 curriculum statement “makes the briefest allusion yet to spirituality. It is couched in Māori (as taha wairua), with no English translation, and only in relation to health and wellbeing” (Fraser, 2014, p. 107). The implication here is that spirituality within the curriculum is largely superfluous, with Fraser wondering about the implications for teachers and students should references to spirituality in future become totally non-existent in official curriculum statements.

2.6.3 Childhood spirituality research.
From an academic perspective, this current study adds to the literature on childhood spirituality in Aotearoa New Zealand and, specifically, within the primary school context which has not often been the focus of others. While not claiming to be an
exclusive list, the following notable researchers within Aotearoa New Zealand have contributed to the above literature review.

Primarily focused on the early childhood sector, internationally respected, and often cited by others, Bone (2007) completed her doctoral thesis investigating the spiritual experience of young children in three New Zealand settings. By studying children in a Montessori casa, a private pre-school and a Steiner kindergarten, Bone (2007) identified the three key themes of spiritual withness, spiritual in-betweenness and spiritual else-where. She proposed these relational spaces as a way of reconceptualising holistic approaches to pedagogy and wellbeing in early childhood educational contexts, based around her concept of an ‘everyday spirituality’. Over the intervening years, Bone has been a regular contributor to the *International Journal of Children’s Spirituality*. Her ongoing research has seen her continuing to focus on the early childhood sector, sometimes in association with others. For example, she has explored spirituality and links with the holistic curriculum (2007), trauma, loss and healing (2008a), children’s play (2010), and child protection (2015). In 2009 Bone contributed a chapter in the edited *Handbook of Education for spirituality, care and wellbeing* while, in 2016, she contributed a chapter on spirituality and environmental issues in the edited handbook *Spirituality across Disciplines: Research and Practice*.

Another New Zealand based researcher, Deborah Fraser, working from the University of Waikato, has investigated the links between secular schools, spirituality as described in the various curriculum documents, and the interplay with the traditional values of indigenous Māori, by interviewing Māori teachers in 2004. Also in 2004, in association with Grootenboer, Fraser interviewed nine teachers in two secular primary schools, shedding light on teachers’ perceptions of spirituality and the integral role that their own views on the topic brought to bear. Fraser and Grootenboer (2004) concluded that when teachers were able to recognise and value spirituality “as part of the dimension of all classrooms, children’s deepest concerns and interests are more likely to be nurtured” (p. 319). Further published work by
Fraser informing this literature review includes her 2007 paper examining several teachers’ personal and professional narratives, and her chapter titled “Taha Wairua: The Spiritual in State Education in Aotearoa New Zealand” within the 2014 *Global Perspectives on Spirituality and Education* Handbook.

Kennedy and Duncan (2006) undertook a small-scale study of 10 teachers in Catholic Schools in New Zealand. Consistent with Fraser and Grootenboer’s findings, Kennedy and Duncan noted the influence of teachers’ own spirituality on how they responded to children’s spiritual expressions. They also discussed the impact of the teachers’ prior religious upbringing, which gave them a language with which to discuss the ways that spirituality can be understood and expressed. The potential issue of adults having the personal language and understanding of spirituality with which to support children is a theme discussed within the discussion chapter of this current study.

Egan (2000) conducted a small scale spiritual wellbeing unit of study with a group of secondary students, and made some recommendations about how to address spirituality in state schools. His extensive review of New Zealand’s national curriculum documents, and of the research affirming spirituality as an essential dimension of wellbeing, informed the current literature review. Also referenced, is the 2010 doctoral thesis of Kannan, who investigated the spiritual intelligence and imagination of Year 7 to Year 13 students in a Catholic integrated school and in a state intermediate school.

2.7 Conclusion

This literature review has explored the rationale for the role that spirituality plays, both in education and in health, to support and nurture children to find meaning and connectedness, and to promote overall wellbeing. It is a holistic approach to education of the whole child, which links the otherwise separate strands of
spirituality, health and wellbeing within an educational setting. Authentic acknowledgement of spirituality in education is seen as a way to nurture children into wholeness and wellness (de Souza, 2016). And, since spiritual wellbeing can be seen as the expression of one’s underlying state of spiritual health (Ellison, 1983), measures of spiritual wellbeing may shed light on the path of one’s developing spirituality. The secular schooling environment in Aotearoa New Zealand has a responsibility to take the indigenous Māori values into consideration (Fraser, 2004), providing for the nurturing of each of the spiritual, intellectual, physical and social dimensions of childhood development of all children, within the increasingly diverse and rich mix of ethnicities to be found in most primary schools.

The Aotearoa New Zealand primary school child’s spiritual voice has rarely been heard in the literature, and the spiritual wellbeing of this age-group has not been documented. Furthermore, the connections between spiritual wellbeing and indicators of social, emotional and academic wellbeing have not been explored in scholarship. This thesis, therefore, makes a tentative but new contribution to the literature in three important ways. Sampling a small group of children from three schools, the study sets out to document understandings of spirituality at the Year 6 level of schooling in the unique bi-cultural context of Aotearoa New Zealand. Secondly, by the use of Fisher’s (2004) Feeling Good Living Life measure, the study documents aspects of the participants’ spiritual wellbeing and, thirdly, the study provides an initial testing of connections between spiritual wellbeing and indicators of social, emotional and academic development.

From a professional point of view, there does not appear to be any widespread, purposeful or sustained approach to spiritual development within this country’s primary school classrooms. With much pressure on the crowded school curriculum, is there a case to be made for spiritual wellbeing to be given equal weight and attention alongside the more widely acknowledged and accepted academic goals of the school?
Therefore, it is these questions, and the gaps in the scholarship that they represent, that inform the focus of this thesis, the shape of this research and the findings as discussed in the following chapters.
Chapter Three
Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The literature review has highlighted the fact that research into contemporary childhood spirituality is a relatively new area of inquiry. This is certainly the case within Aotearoa New Zealand, and while official curriculum documents variously, and often vaguely, reference the spiritual dimension, very little research focused on the primary school years has been undertaken. The purpose of this study is to examine what some children in Aotearoa New Zealand, and their teachers, understand by spirituality. In the process this study focuses on two issues: first, the relationship between primary students’ spiritual wellbeing and other markers of childhood development (namely social development, emotional development and educational attainment), and second, the applicability of Fisher’s model of spiritual wellbeing as a way of better articulating children’s spirituality within the context of Aotearoa New Zealand primary schools.

The specific research questions for the study are:

**Question 1**: What do New Zealand Year 6 primary school children, and their teachers, understand by the term spirituality?

**Question 2**: Does a measure of the spiritual wellbeing of primary school students relate to children’s school, gender, ethnicity and regularity of family religious affiliation?

**Question 3**: Does a measure of the spiritual wellbeing of primary school students correlate with children’s social and emotional development, and educational attainment?

**Question 4**: To what extent can Fisher’s (1998) model of spiritual wellbeing be adopted to facilitate an understanding of spirituality for both teachers and children in Aotearoa New Zealand primary school classrooms?
This chapter provides an overview of the methodological assumptions underpinning the study, and a rationale for the use of a mixed-methods, multiple-case study design. In the data collection section the schools, children and teachers studied and the methods of selection for each are outlined. This is followed by a discussion of the data collection instruments used for both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study. The procedures adopted to conduct the empirical measures and the interviews are then described. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the methods of analysis used and ethical issues taken into consideration.

3.2 Methodological Overview

Each researcher brings to the task their own world view, influencing each decision-making step in the research process (Crotty, 1998). The researcher’s own ideas of social reality (ontological assumptions), and how this comes to be known and shared (epistemological assumptions), has a significant bearing upon the theoretical perspective adopted. This, in turn, underpins both the research methodology and selection of data collection tools ultimately used to address the research question (Cohen & Manion, 2000). This research is based on the pragmatic philosophical paradigm, rejecting the extremes of either an objectivist or subjectivist position, rather holding that there is “no epistemological separation between the realm of theory and the realm of practice” (Biesta & Burbules, 2003, p. 86). The pragmatic approach to research is driven by the philosophical ideas associated with pragmatism, originally a philosophic movement out of America, which was developed and driven by the ideas of William James, John Dewey and, in particular, those of C. S. Peirce (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). A pragmatist philosophy rejects the historically mutually exclusive dualisms, mentioned briefly above, and accepts both realist and constructivist perspectives on epistemology (Greene, 2003, 2008). From this perspective, it is argued that the relationship between theory and practice is horizontal, rather than vertical, with scientific enquiry following the same
pattern as common sense inquiry (Biesta & Burbules, 2003). The notion that scientific research had a special method to uncover the realities of this world that is, any different to the way in which humans gain knowledge while solving problems in the course of everyday life, is rejected (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

A key postulate of the quantitative approach is that the researcher can stand apart from the study, achieving a truly objective stance. Qualitative research has the potential to take this issue into account to a greater degree (Yardley, 2000). Qualitative research offers opportunities to focus on words as opposed to numbers, and on discovery versus proof. It is research which is from a ‘perspectival observer’ (where the integrity of those studied is maintained) rather than a ‘objective observer’ basis. Bodgan and Biklen (1992) argue that, rather than having a focus on outcomes and products, researchers with a qualitative perspective concern themselves with process, considering questions about how particular situations come to be, about the history of what they observe. While these key features illustrate the differences in research approach, they can also be seen as strong arguments in support of combining methods from both paradigms (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994).

Pragmatism is based on the belief that research outcomes can be enhanced when stories emerge from both quantitative and qualitative paradigms, as this may yield stories that converge, or uncover discrepancies that invoke fresh perspectives and new, more illuminating explanations (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989). Pragmatism is seen as the natural philosophical partner for research utilising a mixed-methods methodology (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). As Tashakkori and Creswell (2007a) argue, the bottom line is that research approaches should be mixed in ways that offer the best opportunities for answering important research questions. This is particularly relevant within the context of this study, as with complex constructs such as spiritual wellbeing, quantitative scoring can only ever been seen as an indicative measure (Nichols, 2014), with the potential to greatly enrich understanding when the participants’ personal interview reflections are also taken
into account. As Biesta and Burbules (2003) point out, research in the field of education seeks to inform actions and activities, rather than simply define how the world is out there. Educators “want knowledge that can inform their actions and activities” (p. 1). By considering the qualitative responses from children, in conjunction with the insights gained from their teachers’ responses, further light may be shed upon otherwise puzzling quantitative scores, which can then in turn more accurately inform the teacher’s response for a particular child causing concern.

3.3 Research Design

This study uses a mixed methods research approach to address the research questions.

3.3.1 Mixed methods and multiple case study.

Mixed methods designs are those which incorporate both quantitative and qualitative features in the research design (Lopez-Fernandez & Molina-Azorin, 2011; Mertens, 2010; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). A mixed-methods approach closely parallels what naturally occurs in everyday human problem solving in a way that neither qualitative nor quantitative methods alone can do. This multi-faceted approach might be seen as a particularly relevant way to lead to broader and more credible understandings of particularly complex areas of study like the human experience, than can be achieved by using either a qualitative or quantitative approach in isolation. As defined by Saldana (2011),

mixed methods research uses a strategic and purposeful combination of both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis for its studies. It is assumed that the epistemological (i.e. ways of knowing) and methodological advantages of each paradigm can work in concert to corroborate or more robustly support the findings, or to reveal complementary or even contradictory outcomes. (p. 10)
While both quantitative and qualitative research traditions have their respective proponents, strengths and weaknesses, Tashakkori and Teddlie (2010) consider that mixed methods as a research approach has matured to the point that it can be seen in its own right as a valid “third methodological movement”. This is in contrast now to earlier views, which often described mixed methods as merely the selection of “at least one quantitative method (designed to collect numbers) and one qualitative method (designed to collect words)” (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989, p. 256).

It is not unusual for researchers to combine methods and/or methodologies to get the best answers to their research questions. While others have argued from a philosophical point of view against combining research methods from the different paradigms (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), Patton (1990) believes that the overriding concern must be to gather the most relevant information relating to the research question possible. Once specific questions have been formulated, a researcher should consider the most diverse array of methodological tools available to answer those questions. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003, 2010), agreeing with Howe (1988), believe that this is consistent with pragmatism’s rejection of having to select one approach over the other and is, rather, a hallmark of the mixed-methods researcher’s approach toward conducting research selecting from a continua of options. Additionally, the results of the qualitative and quantitative strands of the study can be woven into coherent conclusions or inferences that are more comprehensive and meaningful than those of the qualitative or quantitative strands alone (Tashakkori & Creswell, 2007b).

Mixed-methods design allows the researcher to use the findings of one method to complement the findings of another method (Creswell, 2009, p. 14). As cautioned later in this chapter when describing the spiritual wellbeing instrument selected for this study, and as similarly noted by Nichols (2014), given that quantitative research into participants understandings of spirituality can be subject to superficiality, “quantitative investigation is considered an incomplete method in isolation” (p. 105).
According to Leech and Onwuegbuzie’s (2009) three-dimensional typology of mixed methods research designs, this study is a partially mixed sequential equal status multiple-case study design, giving equal importance to the quantitative and qualitative parts of the study, and the implementation was sequential. Thus this mixed methods study used a “QUAN→QUAL” design (Morse, 1991). While the quantitative phase collected data from each of the original 32 participants, the selection process for the qualitative phase was implemented using a sequential design, as the quantitative first phase informed the second qualitative phase, providing a purposeful sample for some of the interview participants, and when interpreting the responses.

In addition, the study is considered as a multiple-case study following Yin’s (1993, 2003) case study approach, as it involves the choice of three schools (each one representing a single-case study). Also referred to as collective case study, several individual cases are selected to enable the research focus to be understood in a broader context (Mertens, 2010). By selecting three schools from which to sample children and their teachers, this research is able to consider the potential impact of differing school cultures and differing adult understandings with regard to spiritual development that might impact on their respective pupils.

3.3.2 Data collection.

3.3.2.1 The schools.

This study included three urban primary schools of comparable total roll size. In selecting the three schools, using a purposive sampling approach, the aim was to obtain a range of school type and ethnic make-up, specifically:

1. a school with a high proportion of New Zealand European children
2. a school with a high proportion of Māori children, and
3. an independent church school
Following approval from the Otago University Human Ethics Committee (Reference Number 10/115), the researcher contacted principals personally known, from a total of eight schools which met the above school and pupil profiles, by way of an initial exploratory email, to gauge their potential willingness to participate in the proposed research. Given that the topic explicitly included the notion of ‘spirituality’ and, therefore, the personal nature of the proposed enquiry, along with schools feeling ‘over-researched’ and generally time-poor, it proved difficult to gain initial enthusiasm to engage. After follow-up telephone contacts, six principals agreed to consider a formal invitation to participate (see Appendix A). It was not possible to obtain access to an independent church school, and the focus therefore shifted to finding three state schools in which to undertake the investigation.

From this, initially five schools agreed to participate. Based on the relative numbers of Year 6 children and associated class teachers in each of the schools, full sets of introductory letters (Appendices B, E and H), information sheets (Appendices C, F and I) and consent forms (Appendices D, G and J) were mailed to each of the five schools. In one case, the principal withdrew consent to participate following further consultation with the school board of trustees. In another case, while the school agreed to distribute the letters and forms, and in time the parents of five children consented to participation, staff at the school misplaced the completed consent forms and subsequently decided to withdraw from the study.

The study sample, therefore, ultimately comprised three urban schools, two from the South Island and one from the North Island. The identity of each school has been protected by the use of pseudonyms.
Table 3. 1. Participation Rates by School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Total Year 6 pupil roll</th>
<th>Pupil consent forms received</th>
<th>Pupil consent rate (percentage)</th>
<th>Class teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brook School</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>39.6%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willow School</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15.3%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fern School</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>totals</strong></td>
<td><strong>137</strong></td>
<td><strong>32</strong></td>
<td><strong>23.4%</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3.2.2 The children and teachers

**Stage One – Quantitative Data Collection**

All of the 32 children who consented to the study were included in the empirical and demographic data collection of stage one. The self-report instruments were completed directly by each child (Feeling Good, Living Life questionnaire and BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory), at a time convenient to the respective class teachers. Each of the eight class teachers completed the School Social Behavior Scales on behalf of their pupils, and submitted the current standardised test scores, obtained from the PROBE reading comprehension assessments, the STAR Reading Test and the Progressive Achievement Test for Mathematics.

**Stage Two – Qualitative Data Collection**

The key research tool employed in Stage Two was semi-structured group interviews, conducted with groups of children, and separately with their teachers, to gain in-depth information with regard to understandings of spirituality. Previous research to shed light upon key aspects of children’s spirituality (for example Coles, 1990; Hay and Nye, 1998; Hyde, 2005) has utilised qualitative interviewing methods to engage with children.

The participants were selected using a non-probability sampling strategy that generated a convenience sample, which is an example of a purposive sample (Kemper, Stringfield, & Teddlie, 2003). It involved participants "that are both easily
accessible and willing to participate in a study” (Collins, Onwuegbuzie, & Jiao, 2007, p. 272). It can be described as a convenience sample because of the professional contact and, therefore, ease, and convenience, of access that the researcher had with the schools selected for involvement (Plowright, 2013).

While quantitative research tends to focus on factors studied in large numbers of people, a strength of the qualitative approach is its typical focus on the particular situation and experiences of a small number of individuals participating in the study. Traditionally, much research has been based around large sample sizes, selected at random from the population. For the quantitative researcher, the carefully selected sample offers the potential for results of the research to be generalised, given that the random selection of subjects assures that the sample accurately represents the population from which it is selected (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Maykut and Morehouse, 1994; Patton, 1990). Qualitative research based on purposeful sampling, allows ‘information-rich cases’ to be studied in detail (Patton, 1990, p. 169). The sampling rationale here is to identify a small number of examples which will yield the researcher with a great amount of detailed information about the central issue. Patton identifies some 15 separate purposive sampling strategies, all of which have this aim of increased understanding rather than generalisability (see also Liamputtong and Ezzy, 2005). For example, extreme cases may be selected to understand some unusual phenomenon, or ‘maximum variation’ sampling might be employed to represent the greatest range of differences in the phenomenon.

Therefore sample size for a qualitative research project can be difficult to predict. The most often cited test relates to sampling to the point of ‘redundancy’ (Lincoln and Guba, 1985), that is, the point at which no new information is forthcoming. Taking a slightly different perspective, Liamputtong and Ezzy (2005) believe that the sample is large enough when the data collected is rich enough and covers all relevant dimensions to answer the research question. From a practical perspective, the researcher may be faced with time or budget constraints (Maykut & Morehouse,
From the purposive sampling approach the critical feature is not the number in the sample, but rather the rationale given for the particular sampling approach.

The original intention was for a small sample of children to be selected from each of the three schools. In practice, and since the number of parents consenting to their child’s involvement in the study was smaller than originally conceived, a purposive sampling strategy was employed only in the case of Brook School, from which 19 children took part in Research Stage One. Eight children were identified as those having a relatively high dissonance\(^5\) between their scores on the Feeling Good and the Living Life sub-scales of the spiritual wellbeing measure, and were interviewed in two groups of four. In each of the other schools, all the children who had taken part in Stage One were selected to be interviewed, with the children from Willow School interviewed in two groups (one of three and one of five, as one child was absent at the time of the interviews) and the children from Fern School interviewed in one group of four.

With regard to the semi-structured interviews for the classroom teachers of the selected children, one small-group interview was conducted in each of Brook and Willow School (three teachers and four teachers respectively). The sole classroom teacher of Year 6 level at Fern School did not agree to be interviewed.

3.3.2.3 Instruments.

Stage One – Empirical Measures

A range of empirical measures was used to gather data for each child participating in the study:

- Spiritual wellbeing
- Social development
- Emotional development

\(^5\) Fisher describes spiritual dissonance as “a significant difference between the idea and lived experiences in any of the four domains of spiritual well-being” (2009, p. 84). See further elaboration below, within the next section.
• Educational attainment

While there are obvious limitations in selecting and using empirical measures, based upon a particular author’s theoretical understanding, to sample such multi-dimensional and personal constructs as these, the measures were selected to enable the collection of quantitative data relating to each child on the domains to be studied. All understanding is biased according to the particularity and perspective of the knower. Husserl (1976) maintains “that genuine understanding is really only ever of aspects of things. That is to say, one can never really come to understand things as they ‘really are’, or actually are. One can only come to understand aspects of things” (as cited by Hyde, 2005, p. 112).

**Spiritual WellBeing – The Feeling Good, Living Life Scales**
To measure the participants’ spiritual wellbeing, the Feeling Good, Living Life questionnaire was used (Fisher, 2004). Fisher developed the Feeling Good, Living Life measure as a self-reporting survey specifically for use with younger children. It built on his previous conceptual work on the spiritual health of Australian adolescents (Fisher, 1999), the applicability of which to widely accepted views of childhood spirituality is discussed in Chapter Two. As discussed by Francis, Penny, and Baker (2012) in their large-scale study of 13- to 15-year-old pupils in England and Wales, Fisher’s conception of spiritual wellbeing, although developed primarily in Australia, does resonate well with wider discussions of the educational implications of spirituality in the United Kingdom and in the United States. For example, The Feeling Good, Living Life questionnaire has been used as the primary tool to gather quantitative data on spiritual wellbeing of young children from across America by Minor and Grant (2014), to test a closely related element of Hay and Nye’s (2006) theory of children’s spirituality with 183 children, aged 5 – 12. It was also selected as the instrument of choice by Sauln (2013) who researched 32 children, aged 6 – 12, from the San Francisco Bay area, using the Feeling Good, Living Life
questionnaire to correlate children’s spiritual awareness with data collected about their dreams.

The 16 items (see Appendix K), with four being in each of the four domains (self-concern, family, environment and relation with a God or a transcendent power), compare primary-school-aged children’s ideals for spiritual health (what makes them Feel Good) with their actual life experience (Living Life). A 5-point Likert scale is used to answer questions for each of the 16 items from both the perspective of what students believe influences their Feeling Good, the other reflecting their perceptions of Living Life in the four domains. It was felt to be important to assess both the ideal (Feeling Good) and lived expression (Living Life) of the students’ spiritual wellbeing as, according to Wiley (1996), “it has been suggested that when persons focus on their spiritual sides, they are focusing on the way they feel rather than specifically how they function” (p. 122). Therefore, Fisher developed his Feeling Good, Living Life questionnaire with the two separate sub-scales for comparison. Fisher describes spiritual dissonance as “a significant difference between the idea and lived experiences in any of the four domains of spiritual well-being” (2009, p. 84). A significant difference in the two scores is regarded as being any difference that is more than one standard deviation from the sample mean (J. Fisher, personal communication, July 18, 2016). Scores obtained from the Feeling Good, Living Life questionnaire can be used to gain insight into important aspects of young children’s spiritual well-being. “Carers can be made aware that for some children aspects of life measured by this instrument are not positive experiences. Improving awareness by using FGLL can be seen as the first step to enhancing their quality of life” (Fisher, 2004, p. 314).

While accepting that the factors sampled by the Feeling Good, Living Life instrument can never be claimed to represent, nor fully measure, all of the features of either spirituality or spiritual wellbeing, it can be used to give an indication of a child’s spiritual wellbeing. It is an indicative rather than representative measure. As
Moberg (2002) discusses, measuring spirituality is particularly complicated because any measure only reflects the phenomenon or its consequences as it cannot be measured directly. Furthermore, any measure will also reflect a particular cultural understanding of spirituality. While the Feeling Good, Living Life questionnaire does not appear to have been utilised in any New Zealand research, it was selected in preference to other measures (for example, *Spiritual Well-Being Scale*, Ellison, 1983; *Spiritual Orientation Inventory*, Elkins, Hedstrom, Hughes, Leaf, & Saunders, 1988; *Mental, Physical and Spiritual Well-being Scale*, Vella-Brodrick and Allen, 1995; *Spiritual Assessment Inventory*, Hall and Edwards, 1996), primarily since Fisher developed and validated it with children in the target age range, rather than using an instrument that was created for adolescents or adults. Also, at the time of study, it was recognised as the only spiritual wellbeing questionnaire for children or adults that both equally sampled the four domains of spiritual health (Sauln, 2013) and the only questionnaire that was able to be take account of both religious and nonreligious perspectives of spirituality (Francis, Penny & Baker, 2012). A critique of the range of quantitative spirituality measures used in research is detailed by Fisher, Francis & Johnson (2000). In the year following this study’s research phase, a measure called the *Spiritual Sensitivity Scale for Children* (Stoyles, Stanford, Caputi, Keating and Hyde, 2002) was created specifically designed to address the gap noted between qualitative and quantitative methods, and utilising contemporary understanding of the full dimensions of childhood spirituality.

The Feeling Good, Living Life questionnaire was used to rate spiritual wellbeing to investigate the existence of any correlation with the following markers of social development, emotional development and educational attainment. Additionally of interest was to consider if there was any correlation with the same markers, based on observed dissonance between the Feeling Good and Living Life sub-scales.
Social Development – School Social Behavior Scales, 2nd Edition

To measure the participants’ social development, the relevant classroom teacher used the School Social Behavior Scales (Merrell, 2002) to provide data about each child. The use of teacher rating scales to assess the social behaviour and social competence of pupils is a widely established practice (Merrell, 1993). Rating scales that are completed by teachers have some additional advantages since they reflect cumulative judgments that teachers make based on their observations of children over time. In developing the original School Social Behaviour Scales (SSBS), Merrell sought to develop a tool which could be used to screen pupils (for example to identify students at risk, or to determine eligibility for intervention programmes), or for use as a research instrument when studying the social competence of primary school aged children (Kreisler, Mangione, et al., 1997; Merrell, 1993). In developing the Second Edition (SSBS-2) a much larger norming sample was utilised and the scale was revised to give greater comparability to a companion rating scale, the Home and Community Social Behavior Scale. SSBS-2 is comprised of two 32-item scales to assess social competence (peer relations, self-management/compliance, academic behaviour) and anti-social behavior (hostile/irritable, antisocial/aggressive, defiant/disruptive), with each item scored on a 5-point scale (Appendix L). The items rate both peer-related and adult-related social adjustment. Reviews of the SSBS-2 indicate that it is a psychometrically sound instrument (Flanagan, 2005; Furlong, 2005).

In this research context, therefore, the use of teacher ratings on SSBS-2 was selected to provide a measure of children’s overall social competence.

Emotional Development – BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory: Youth Version, Short Form

To measure the participants’ emotional development, the youth version of the BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory (Bar-On & Parker, 2000) self-report instrument was utilised. Since the concept of emotional intelligence received wide-spread attention
following Goleman’s *Emotional Intelligence* (1995), various empirical measures have been developed (Leong, 2005). The BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory: Youth Version (EQ-i:YV) was developed from the original adult version (originally published in 1997), and is, therefore, based upon the same theoretical construct of emotional intelligence, that is “an array of emotional, personal and interpersonal abilities that influence ones overall ability to cope with environmental demands and pressures” (Bar-On, 1997, p. 33). The measure identifies five major dimensions of emotional intelligence, namely intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, stress-management and general mood (Appendix M). The short version omits the general mood scale (Ballard, 2005). Reviews indicate that both the regular and short forms of this instrument have good psychometric properties (Ballard, 2005; Leong, 2005), and that it may be usefully employed for research purposes” (Ballard, 2005).

**Educational Attainment**

Primary schools in New Zealand make use of a wide range of measurement tools for assessing, and reporting on, pupil achievement. While each school is free to make its own decision about which instruments to use when assessing attainments in each area of the curriculum, there is some commonality. Once the three schools were identified for inclusion in the present study, the principals were contacted to ascertain which standardised tests were in use to assess the reading and mathematics attainments of pupils. From this survey, three measures of educational attainment were selected, as they were in use at the Year 6 level in each of the three schools in question. Each school was able to provide current standardised test scores for each pupil, obtained from the PROBE reading comprehension assessments (Parkin, Parkin, & Pool, 2009), the STAR Reading Test (Elley, Ferral, & Watson, 2011) and the Progressive Achievement Test for Mathematics (Darr, Neill, & Stephanou, 2006).

**PROBE Reading Age**

To give an indicative level of reading attainment, the class teacher of each participant was asked to report the child’s reading level. While teachers typically use a wide
range of assessment information to report reading attainment, in each of the three schools included in this study the PROBE reading comprehension assessments were in use. Developed and normed within New Zealand by TRiUNE Initiatives, the PROBE tests are primarily designed as a controlled in-depth interview to assist teachers of reading to understand how readers engage with and comprehend text. From this, teachers are able to determine a norm-referenced “reading age” score, largely determined using the Elley Noun Frequency Method, with cross checking using other rating tools. Technical information regarding this grading of the texts used in the PROBE assessment is outlined within the test Manual (Parkin, Parkin, & Pool, 2009).

For the purposes of this study, each pupil’s reading age was subtracted from their chronological age (as at the time of their assessment) to provide a score reflecting the number of months difference.

**STAR Reading Test**

Developed and standardised for use in New Zealand schools by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research, the STAR Reading Test was in use in each of the three schools. Designed to assess a range of reading skills that are closely aligned with the reading curriculum in New Zealand schools, the STAR Reading Test supplements assessments that teachers make about their students’ reading attainments. With respect to the STAR Reading Test, validity and reliability issues have been carefully examined and are reported, along with detailed normative information, within the technical information reported in the Teachers Manual (Elley, Ferral, & Watson, 2011).

**Progressive Achievement Test, Mathematics**

The Progressive Achievement Tests are a series of standardised assessments, developed and normed by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research, specifically for use in New Zealand. Using multi-choice questions, the tests are
widely used in New Zealand schools to assess students' Mathematics, Listening Comprehension, Punctuation and Grammar, Reading Comprehension, and Reading Vocabulary. With respect to the Mathematics Progressive Achievement Test, validity and reliability issues have been carefully examined and are reported, along with detailed normative information, within the technical information reported in the Teachers Manual (Darr, Neill, & Stephanou, 2006).

In this study, stanine scores were available for each participant from the Mathematics test, which is specifically designed to assess number knowledge, number strategies, algebra, geometry and measurement and statistics understanding.

**Stage Two – Semi-Structured Interviews**

The collection of data from semi-structured interviewing was used in this study as the research tool to gather further information from participants for the qualitative phase, to provide rich data (Bodgan & Biklen, 1992), particularly with regard to Research Questions 1 and 4, and to further illuminate the analysis of information gained from the quantitative phase. While reliance upon semi-structured interview data alone has risks, its use in combination with other research tools can mitigate against some of the inherent shortcomings. In this instance, information coming from the interview transcripts was able to be considered alongside information gathered using quantitative research tools.

I made the decision to interview the children from each school in small groups, principally since the interviews were the first time that the participants had met me, the researcher and, given the sensitive and personal nature of the topic, I felt that small group interviews provided the children with an additional level of protection and security. As members of the same year group, the children already knew each other. Experienced researchers have noted that group interviews with three or four participants can be very productive (Hopkins, 2014). This was evident in this study, as while each group interview was being conducted, it was also noted that, rather
than inhibiting each other, the individual replies to questions stimulated further responses from other members of the group. This in turn led to sensitive and perceptive discussion of the issues, where the children contributed freely, and listened respectfully to each other. Similarly with the class teachers, ideas from one triggered memories from others. In comparison, the perceived intensity of a one-on-one interview involving the potential for disclosure of personal beliefs is likely to have led to the decision by the sole teacher from Fern School to withdraw from the interview.

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2000) suggest that research interviews can serve three purposes. They can be a recognised method for gathering information relating to the research objectives, as a means used to test hypotheses (or suggest new ones) and to validate data collected by other methods. While all purposes are relevant here, it is the first of these three which, in the context of this research, is seen as the major reason for selecting semi-structured interviewing as the qualitative research tool by which rich and meaningful data might be collected.

Interviews are typically described as structured, semi-structured or unstructured (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982; Mutch, 2005; Patton, 1990). The essential characteristic distinguishing between these three types is the degree to which the interview format follows a set of prescribed questions and categories (a questionnaire format), is more of a guide listing some key, open-ended questions to be covered, or an interview method which might begin with a broad theme or open-ended question and where the subsequent responses shape the direction of the interview. Fully open-ended interviewing has the advantage of increased relevance of the questions, which can be tailored to the context and the individual. This strength needs to be considered against a potential weakness, namely that the data collected be difficult to group and analyse. By utilising an interview guide, interviews can still be relatively open, but the method strengthened further as data collection can be more systematic (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2000). Mishler (1986) sees the interview as “a joint product of
what interviewees and interviewers talk about together and how they talk with each
other” (p. vii). Interviews also avoid a potential short-coming of written
questionnaires or surveys as reading ability need not be a concern, the
understanding of the respondent can be continuously checked, and there is a higher
chance of successful completion (Mutch, 2005).

While structured interviews, by their very nature, tend to be avoided within
qualitative research (Stenhouse, 1984), nevertheless some structure is needed both to
focus and for consistency (between interviewees, between interviewers). Measor
(1985) believes that a “typography” of even an unstructured interview is critical,
discussing the useful transition from relatively innocuous questions early on to more
personal “danger zone” questions once rapport has been established. This might be
an interview of the type described by Mutch (2005) as an outline of broader topics or
questions to be covered. In this research, the interviews were given structure by the
use of themes and starter questions, based on previously reported studies of
semi-structured approach was appropriate for Part Two of the interviews as the
intent was to test the extent to which a model of spiritual wellbeing developed by
Fisher (2004) in Australian schools was applicable in the context of the Aotearoa
New Zealand primary school. The open-ended questions were developed to focus
participants’ discussion toward each of the four domains of the spiritual wellbeing
model. Similarly, in Part Three of the interviews, the open-ended questions selected
were to explore children’s expressions of spirituality in areas identified in the
literature (see Appendix N for indicative questions).

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) differentiate between situations where the researcher
already knows the subjects (as in participant-observation studies) with those,
perhaps where interviewing is the main data collection method, where the person to
be interviewed is a stranger. While in the former case the interview might begin as a
conversation slipped in at a convenient time, in the latter case the interview is more
likely to be at a scheduled time and will almost certainly need to begin with small talk to “break the ice”. While typically over the course of the interview there will be some “rambling” off topic, there is a trade-off to be balanced here between the researcher temporarily losing some control over the structure of the interview with the prospect that, in focussing on issues that are of concern to the person being interviewed, a rich vein of data may be uncovered. The goal is to have the person at ease, able to talk freely about their points of view and thereby to share their unique perspectives. And, as Lofland and Lofland (1995) remind, the researcher must enter, remain in and leave the field with sensitivity and respect.

As with any research method, interviewing techniques have a range of issues which the researcher must consider. In reviewing her own interviewing practices, Measor (1985) identified four critical elements to successful interviewing. Firstly, gaining access to participants can be a significant issue within the school context both for the busy practitioner researcher and for the pupils alike, each with their own competing schedules. Teachers can be reluctant to excuse pupils from classes (potentially affecting who are sampled), pupils can be reluctant to attend interviews during their break time (with ramifications for building rapport) and it can be difficult to secure a suitably private place to conduct the interviews in an uninterrupted manner. In each of the three schools, the researcher was careful to negotiate mutually agreeable timeframes for both the interviews with the groups of children and the teachers. This was completed with due weight given to the many other demands on the classroom timetables. A quiet room, large enough for a small group to sit in a circular formation with the researcher was provided in each school. The timing of the interviews was carefully considered to avoid children’s break times, and any other school activities that the participants might have seen as a higher personal priority.

Measor (1985) believes that the interviewer’s ability to establish rapport is critical; gaining quality data can be seen to be directly related to the quality of the relationship established between the interviewer and the interviewee. Measor (1985)
discusses the building of “research relationships”, the ability to discuss shared interests, to present as pleasant and trustworthy, and to attend to the non-verbal aspects of the encounter such as eye-contact and smiles as well as the projection of empathy and concern. “People do need reassurance when they are being interviewed. You do have to listen, but you also have to look as if you are listening” (p. 62). Similarly, Patton (1990) reminds that the quality of information obtained during an interview is dependent upon the skills of the interviewer, as the essential task “is to make it possible for the person being interviewed to bring the interviewer into his or her world” (p. 279). The ability to “probe” effectively is an essential part of the open-ended interviewer’s role. While various writers categorise the types of probes differently (Bernard, 2006; Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005; Patton, 1990), essentially the researcher is attempting to keep the interview open. In attempting to stay relatively neutral, the need to build rapport can force decisions about how much the researcher should reveal about one’s own life and interests. The researcher’s age, gender and ethnicity, for example, can influence rapport and, therefore, affect the kind of information gathered from an interview (Saldana, 2011). In this study, the researcher’s background and experience as a primary school principal allowed the children and teachers to be comfortable sharing their thoughts. Each interview began with the researcher sharing some personal background and the research context within which the interviews could be seen as an integral component. While, at times, the discussions touched on personal and potentially sensitive topics, the groups of children appeared relaxed with each other, and were seen to be very respectful and accepting of the personal viewpoints expressed. The children readily became engrossed in the discussions, and the length of the interviews ensured that concentration levels did not wane.

The interviewer must be able to remain critically aware not only of the interview situation itself, but also of the respondents’ replies, constantly on the lookout for clues into the meaning of what is being said. Measor (1985) suggests that “a partial solution comes through the strategies of respondent validation” (p. 64). During the
course of the group interviews, the participants were often seen to make responses which validated another’s thought or, having been challenged by a comment made by a peer, put forward a contrary or contrasting point of view. A key requirement for the researcher was the requirement to keep alert to one’s own performance and reactions during the interview, and to the monitoring of one’s own predispositions (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000).

A central concern for all researchers is to build trustworthiness into the research process. Trustworthiness, the criteria by which the researcher seeks to persuade others that the findings are worthy of attention, needs to consider issues of validity, credibility and believability (Harrison & Morton, 2001). Triangulation, the use of different sources of information, alternative methods, multiple investigators and, perhaps, different theories can also increase the likelihood that the research will be judged to be credible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Further, a rich description and clear, detailed information about the research process enables readers of the research to judge for themselves the trustworthiness of the inquiry (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). Triangulation is the most often discussed method to validate data obtained from interviewing (Hammersley, 1979; Measor, 1985; Patton 1990). Bogdan and Biklen (1982) caution against the use of the term triangulation without describing exactly what method is used for verification. Often, by using a range of methods to collect information from a variety of sources, confirmation of emerging findings can be obtained. This avoids the danger inherent in relying on one source of information. For example, interviews might be held not only with pupils but also with teachers. In the current study, the interviews were structured around themes previously reported by earlier studies of children’s spirituality, primarily in other countries, to investigate their relevance with New Zealand primary-school aged pupils. By interviewing groups of teachers from the same schools, any similarities or differences in the emerging discussions could be identified.
3.3.2.4 Procedures.

**Stage One – Empirical Measures**

Once all consent forms had been received from each of the participating schools, the questionnaire forms to gather data relating to spiritual wellbeing, social development and emotional development were mailed to the lead teacher of Year 6 classes. The class teachers were also asked to record and return their pre-existing assessment results for PROBE reading comprehension assessments, the STAR Reading Test and the Progressive Achievement Test for Mathematics. This achievement information was collated by the lead teacher in each school, in time to be mailed to the researcher along with the completed questionnaires.

**Stage Two – Semi-Structured Interviews**

**Interviewing the Children**

A mutually convenient time for the researcher to visit each school was negotiated with the principal, to avoid major events in the school calendar. In each case, the interview visit followed the school’s return of the quantitative data, which enabled some preliminary interpretation of the spiritual wellbeing questionnaire to inform the selection of children to be interviewed from Brook School. The small groups of children were released from their classwork to meet with the researcher in a quiet space, away from significant distractions.

The interviews for the selected children made use of a list of open-ended questions, used to serve as a guide and to provide focus (Appendix N). The interview for each group was broken into two separate sessions to reduce the length to an average total time of 30 minutes in each case.

A flexible structure was adopted to allow the group participants freedom and leeway in discussing their responses to the questions. This also allowed for points of interest to be clarified and for fresh insights and new information to emerge. The strategy of probe and pause was employed to encourage responses from each
member of the group. At times, with some groups, a less structured conversational
type of interview naturally developed, where questions arose from the responses
given. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed into an interview log.

**Interviewing the Teachers**

The research intent had been to interview the classroom teachers, at each school,
who were responsible for the day-to-day curriculum delivery for the Year 6 children
included in the study, to enable the interview data obtained from the groups of
teachers to be compared with that received from their respective students.

Kennedy and Duncan (2006) interviewed ten teachers in Catholic schools in New
Zealand to examine teachers’ understanding of children’s spirituality. The teacher
interviews (Appendix O) in this research were designed to follow a similar semi-
structured, focus-group approach (see also Fisher, 1998).

However, in practice, the teacher interviews in each school were not able to be
completed as planned. The primary reason for this was due to the withdrawal of
consent by the sole teacher who might have been involved from Fern School.

A group interview of the class teachers who had contributed to the data gathering in
the quantitative phase of the research was held at Brook School and Willow School.
The interview was conducted on the same day as the children’s interviews, during
non-contact release time for the teachers which had been negotiated with the school.
The length of each interview was approximately 90 minutes. The interviews were
audio-recorded and transcribed into an interview log.

**3.3.3 Analysis.**

With regard to the quantitative phase of the study, data collected were imported to
SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) to undertake statistical analyses.
Descriptive statistics were calculated for each quantitative scale used in the study.
For Research Question 2, to measure spiritual wellbeing based on group differences, including school, gender, ethnicity and regularity of family religious affiliation, a one-way ANOVA or independent samples t-test was conducted as appropriate. To test group differences under Hypothesis 2.1, the TukeyHSD post hoc test was used. For Research Question 3, bivariate correlation coefficients were computed to measure whether or not spiritual wellbeing was correlated with children’s social and emotional development, and educational achievement.

With regard to the qualitative phase of the study, thematic analysis was undertaken with the qualitative material collected from the stage two small-group interviews conducted. An outline of the data analysis steps followed is presented here, to address credibility issues with qualitative research that rely on the researcher following established and rigorous data analysis procedures (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Patton, 1990). This was particularly important in the current study as the researcher worked in isolation and, in any event, the transfer of interview data from transcripts into categories and themes, via the process of coding, is not an entirely objective process (Patton, 1990; Punch, 2005; Saldana, 2011).

A thematic analysis of the recorded interviews, following the phases recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006), was conducted after all interviews were completed. As the first step, the recorded interviews were carefully transcribed. This enabled the researcher to become very familiar with the data. It allowed for frequent re-listening to the interview recordings as the transcription process took place, ensuring that the transcriptions were accurate, and that other relevant information heard on the recordings (such as changes of tone of voice, periods of silence and laughter for example) was also noted.

Following this, the transcripts were re-read several times and, as a first activity to start the analysis of the transcripts (Punch, 2005), initial codes were generated across all the interviews. Codes can be words or a short phrase that captures the meaning from related sections of text. Codes are used to lead the analysis from the data to the
central ideas within the data (Morse, 1991; Saldana, 2011). An organising or coding framework, used to “sensitise the researcher and facilitate focusing the inquiry at an early stage” (Morse & Mitcham, 2002, p. 9), was created to group themes and theme indicators against each of Fisher’s (1998) spiritual wellbeing domains. Each interview transcript was then rechecked against the coding framework to ensure that the coding was consistent across all interviews.

The initial codes were then collected into categories and collated into themes, which were then reviewed for relevance to the study questions. In this way, themes from the transcripts were identified through an open coding process. These themes were then also rechecked for consistency across the interviews by once again reviewing each of the transcripts. The themes are described and illustrated within the findings chapter with extracts taken directly from the interview transcripts. Narrative data from the group interviews are included to address the research questions. As would be expected in a mixed methods research study, both types of data have been integrated in the same section, rather than in separate sections (Plowright, 2013). The analysed data is discussed with reference to the research questions, particularly with reference to any implications pertinent to the balanced development of the “whole child”.

In addition, and to specifically address Research Question Four, further thematic analysis was undertaken utilising factors from within the four domains of Fisher’s (1999) model of spiritual wellbeing to explore the applicability of this construct within the Aotearoa New Zealand primary school context. Fisher’s domains of spiritual wellbeing were operationalised (see Table 5.1) in a similar manner to that employed by Sauln (2013). The various indicators and contexts used in the study to identify children’s expressions of spirituality from the rich qualitative data, building on and in addition to those expressions identified and used by Fisher, are listed in Table 5.1.
### 3.4 Participant Description

All 32 Year 6 student participants had information returned on their behalf, contributing to the quantitative phase of this study, from the three schools. There was only one incomplete return. In the case of child 7, the Social Behavior scale was not returned, and so for this measure the analysis was based on 31 responses. Scores for each of the other instruments were returned for child 7. For the qualitative phase, 20 children across the three schools were selected to take part in small group interviews. The participant breakdown by gender, ethnicity and religious affiliation is shown in Table 3.2.

#### 3.4.1 School attended.

Of the 32 students taking part in the study, the largest number \((n = 19)\) was from Brook School, comprising 39.6\% of the total sample. Fern School contributed 15.3\% of the total sample size \((n = 9)\), while four students who were from Willow School (13.3\% of the total sample) took part.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Brook School</th>
<th>Willow School</th>
<th>Fern School</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
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<td>36.8%</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
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<td>12</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>100.0%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Willow School</th>
<th>Fern School</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ European</td>
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<td>68.4%</td>
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<td>Māori</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>31.6%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific other</td>
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<td>total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2. Participant Description Information
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious Affiliation</th>
<th>Brook School</th>
<th>Willow School</th>
<th>Fern School</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>often</td>
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<td>5.3%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
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<td>47.4%</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>66.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Brook School**

Brook School was a full primary school (Years 1-8) located in the North Island, and with a total pupil roll of 322. At the time of the study, the school’s Year 6 ethnicity breakdown was New Zealand European 65%, Māori 27%, Pacific 1% and other ethnic groups 7%. Of the total number of Year 6 pupils enrolled (48), consent to participate was received from 40% (n = 19) of the pupils eligible for inclusion.

Over the years preceding this study, Brook School had operated a well-attended interdenominational Christian Religious Programme (CRE)6. As regulated by the Education Act 1964 section 78, the school was officially “closed for instruction” for 30 minutes each week, at Year 5 and 6 levels, at which time local volunteer adults, trained by the National Churches Education Commission came into the classes to deliver the national syllabus. The CRE programme is described as weaving together Bible stories with the values as set out in the New Zealand Curriculum. Bible stories are used to illustrate and teach different values such as loving your neighbour, personal worth, courage, inclusion and forgiveness. CRE programmes are designed to be a fun, engaging 30 minute lesson which allows students to learn about positive Christian values and beliefs (*Our Programmes*, 2018).

At the time of the research, participation in the CRE programme had been changed from requiring parents to “opt out” to having to “opt in” for their child to be part of

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6 A comprehensive, critical review of the Bible in Schools programme (often known in recent years as CRE) in Aotearoa New Zealand state schools is provided by Bradstock (2016).
the weekly lessons. Nevertheless, some two-thirds of Years 5 and 6 parents and children were still choosing to participate in the programme. It was evident in interviews with both children and teachers at Brook School that the topics of discussion in CRE programmes were transferring into other areas of school and classroom conversation.

**Willow School**

Willow School was a primary school (Years 1-6) located in the South Island. At the time of study, the total pupil roll was 280. The school’s Year 6 ethnicity breakdown was New Zealand European 84%, Māori 10%, Pacific 2% and other ethnic groups 4%. Of the total number of Year 6 pupils enrolled (59), consent to participate was received from 15% \( (n = 9) \) of the pupils eligible for inclusion. Weekly religious education classes, known as “Bible in Schools”, were withdrawn from Willow School in the late 1990s. At the time of the research project, there was no CRE programme in operation at the school.

**Fern School**

Fern School was a full primary school (Years 1-8) located in the South Island. At the time of study, the total pupil roll was 294. The school’s Year 6 ethnicity breakdown was New Zealand European 71%, Māori 26%, Pacific 0% and other ethnic groups 3%. Of the total number of Year 6 pupils enrolled (30), consent to participate was received from 13% \( (n = 4) \) of the pupils eligible for inclusion.

“Bible in Schools” weekly lessons at Fern School had been withdrawn by School Board decision by 2009, as the number of parents choosing for their child to opt out had steadily increased in the years leading up to this.

### 3.4.2 Gender.

As shown in Table 3.2, the sample comprised of more girls than boys. There was variability in the numbers of students from each of the three schools that agreed to
participate in the study. While the gender ratios in the schools with the smaller numbers of subjects were both close to 50% split between the number of girls and the number of boys involved, it was in the larger group from Brook School where this difference in gender ratio was most pronounced (63% girls and 37% boys).

3.4.3 Ethnicity.
The participants' teachers were asked to record the primary ethnicity of each participant. As can be seen from Table 3.2, 68.8% of the students (22) were of New Zealand European background and 31.2% (10) were reported as Māori. No other ethnicities were represented in the sample. The ethnicity distributions for Brook and Willow school participants were similar to their respective Year 6 populations, while the smaller sample from Fern School had a 50% split between New Zealand European and Māori participants (as compared with their school Year 6 percentages of 71% and 26%).

3.4.4 Regularity of family religious affiliation.
The Feeling Good, Living Life spiritual wellbeing instrument asked participants “Do you go to church?” giving the three response options of often, sometimes or never. Of the total sample of 32 students, only one (from Brook School) self-reported as “often” going to church/religious group, while 40.6% (13 participants) noted that they “sometimes” go, and the largest percentage, 56.3% (18 participants) said that they “never” attend church/religious group.

Participants from Brook School were equally spread over the “sometimes” and “never” categories while, in contrast, the children from Willow School and Fern School had significantly more selecting “never” over “sometimes” (at 67% and 75% of their full sample, respectively). It is of note that Brook School, with the highest number of “often” and “sometimes” respondents, was also the only school of the three to have a regular and ongoing Christian education component to its weekly life. These two factors could conceivably have an impact on the results.
3.4.5 Children interviewed.

Semi-structured interviews, with small groups of children and, separately, with their teachers, were conducted to provide qualitative data with regard to Research Questions 1 and 4. As very little research into contemporary children’s spirituality has been conducted in New Zealand, and specifically at the primary school level, the study aimed to investigate New Zealand Year 6 children and teachers’ understandings and expressions of spirituality. The interviews were based on a schedule of open-ended questions and expressions of childhood spirituality (Appendix N), drawn from research into childhood spirituality in other countries as previously discussed in Chapter Two. The interviews also sought to investigate the applicability of Fisher’s (1998) model of spiritual wellbeing in the New Zealand primary school context, as a way to understand how children make sense of spirituality.

20 children across the three schools were selected to take part in small group interviews. The participant breakdown by gender, ethnicity and religious affiliation are shown in Table 3.3. While all of the participants from Fern School were interviewed in one group, the children from Willow School were randomly split into two separate groups, to keep the size for each interview group approximately equal. In the case of Brook School, which had a total of 19 children consenting for the study, two groups each of four children were selected. Using preliminary interpretation of the spiritual wellbeing questionnaire to inform the selection of children, four children were randomly selected from those with high dissonance scores and four children were randomly selected from with those with low dissonance scores to participate in the group interviews. Therefore, there was a total of five group interviews. As discussed in Chapter 3, Fisher (2004) describes spiritual dissonance as the difference between the ideal and lived experiences in any of the four domains of spiritual wellbeing. In this way, the selected interview participants from Brook School included children from across the range of variance in spiritual wellbeing.
scores, when comparing their Feeling Good and Living Life subscale scores, being
the two components of the Feeling Good, Living Life questionnaire.

Table 3. 3. Participant Description Information – Children Interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Brook School n</th>
<th>Willow School n</th>
<th>Fern School n</th>
<th>Totals n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>3 37.5%</td>
<td>3 37.5%</td>
<td>2 50.0%</td>
<td>8 40.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>5 62.5%</td>
<td>5 62.5%</td>
<td>2 50.0%</td>
<td>12 60.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>8 100.0%</td>
<td>8 100.0%</td>
<td>4 100.0%</td>
<td>20 100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ European</td>
<td>7 87.5%</td>
<td>6 75.0%</td>
<td>2 50.0%</td>
<td>15 75.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Māori</td>
<td>1 12.5%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>other</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>8 100.0%</td>
<td>4 100.0%</td>
<td>20 100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Affiliation</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0 0.0%</td>
<td>0 0.0%</td>
<td>1 5.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sometimes</td>
<td>5 62.5%</td>
<td>3 37.5%</td>
<td>1 25.0%</td>
<td>9 45.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>never</td>
<td>2 25.0%</td>
<td>5 62.5%</td>
<td>3 75.0%</td>
<td>10 50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>total</td>
<td>8 100.0%</td>
<td>8 100.0%</td>
<td>4 100.0%</td>
<td>20 100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5 Ethical Considerations

The current study can be seen as an intrusion into the personal lives of young primary school aged children (Bone, 2007). Research related to spirituality can be seen as a sensitive issue, delving into what for some participants might be a relatively private and rarely discussed facet of their life. The sensitivity of the information given by participants in both stages of the project required particular respect for, and protection of, the privacy and dignity of the children and teachers
involved (Kannan, 2010). Research interactions with children must not confuse or pressure children. Therefore, throughout this study the following issues were given careful consideration.

Every effort was taken to ensure that quantitative instruments and the interviews were conducted in a way that was respectful of any ethnic protocols that are the usual practice of the particular school, and that the timing of the interviews provided the least possible disruption to regular classroom timetables.

As the children involved were all Year 6 level (typically 10 to 11 years of age), it was important to ensure that informed consent was obtained from both the children themselves and their parents or caregivers. When working with young children, the researcher has a responsibility to ensure that the rights of the child, including confidentiality and anonymity are upheld. To this end, assurances were given (both in the pre-study consenting process and at the start of each group interview) that all replies and comments would remain confidential, and that no individual would be identified in any report about the findings. It was made clear that pseudonyms would be used in the write-up, to replace the actual school name and the names of individual children. Furthermore, assurances were given regarding the security of data, including interview scripts, and that no contact details would be passed on to anyone else. The consent letters, for parents and children, included statements to provide information about informed consent to participate in the study, and highlighted the right to withdraw.

As the interviews were all conducted within a small group setting for both the children and teachers, care was taken to ensure that no one felt put “on the spot” when question starters were introduced. Participants were free to contribute to the ensuing sharing of responses, and the group discussion that emerged at times, as ideas from one sparked responses from another. While some disadvantages in group interviewing are acknowledged (for example, individuals’ own opinions may be
suppressed or swayed by peer pressure, the personal nature of the topic may inhibit free sharing of experiences and beliefs and a dominant group member could influence the direction of discussion), the group dynamic may in fact assist children to feel less inhibited and more comfortable with their classmates (Halsted & Waite, 2001). Secondly, meeting with groups of children provides, at a practical level, a degree of personal safety for both the children and the researcher, since it can be seen to be inappropriate for a relatively unknown researcher to meet with children on an individual basis.

At the outset of each interview, participants were reminded that they could leave if they felt uncomfortable, and they were encouraged to “pass” if there were any topics to which they did not feel they could contribute. As the children were of Year 6 level, they were of an age where they were competent to make decisions about their involvement and about their ongoing willingness to participate in the group interview. While, on the advice of the school principal in each case, additional support was able to be provided should any child or teacher become upset, in practice this was not required.

3.6 Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the methodology and data collection methods used to address the research questions. The underlying philosophy of pragmatism was outlined, along with the rationale for selection of a mixed-methods design. The study consisted of a quantitative phase to collect empirical and demographic data, which was followed by a qualitative phase where semi-structured interviews were conducted with a smaller set of the participants. The procedures used to select the participants, and to administer the research tools, at each stage, were described. This was followed by a discussion of the processes used to analyze the quantitative and qualitative data, and to synthesize the findings. The
A descriptive analysis of the participants was presented. The chapter concluded with a discussion of the key ethical issues considered within the study.

The next chapter presents the findings from the analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data collected.
Chapter Four

Findings

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the findings are presented in two sections, in reverse order of the data gathering. The qualitative findings, which focus on Research Questions 1 and 4, are presented. They illustrate a rich context for the later discussion. This is followed by presentation of the quantitative findings, with a focus on Research Questions 2 and 3, providing further insights into spiritual development, particularly with the overall hauora/wellbeing of the child in mind.

The qualitative findings are based on the semi-structured interviews conducted with small groups of students from each school, and with a group of teachers from both Brook School and Fern School, while the quantitative findings include data from each of the 32 Year 6 children involved in the study.

4.2 Qualitative Findings

In the following section, interview data obtained from the children is presented with respect to three key focus areas of this study: What is spirituality; Fisher’s four domains of spiritual wellbeing; and expressions of childhood spirituality.

4.2.1 What is spirituality?

Although it was clear that the concept or the word “spirituality” was often used by children of this age, and that this was not a regular topic of conversation, each interview group was able to discuss their perceptions of its meaning amongst themselves, with the ideas of one sparking contributions from others. Four themes of spirituality emerged from the interviews with children, as shown by Table 4.1, and as discussed below.
In three of the five group interviews, one participant began the conversation with the idea that spirituality had to do with “spirits”, that is something external to the individual, “there’s spirits” (child 10), for example, and child 21 who summed this aspect up as “spirits like someone who hasn’t gone to heaven or hell”. This theme was not discussed by children from Fern School.

Table 4.1. *Analysis of Spirituality Themes by School*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Spirituality Themes</th>
<th>Theme Indicators</th>
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<tbody>
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<td><strong>Brook School</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirits</td>
<td>Spirit(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal characteristics</td>
<td>Personal spirit, personality, happy, calm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs and powers</td>
<td>Belief in God, in heaven, extra powers, spiritual, healing powers, energy, non-belief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner purpose</td>
<td>Self-belief, purpose and meaning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Willow School</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirits</td>
<td>Spirit(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal characteristics</td>
<td>Feelings, happiness, nice person, sadness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs and powers</td>
<td>Beliefs, God, personal aura, personal thoughts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner purpose</td>
<td>Personal spirit, self-determination, soul-driven</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fern School</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spirits</td>
<td>Like, don’t like, feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal characteristics</td>
<td>religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beliefs and powers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inner purpose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Personal Characteristics**

However, this line of thought did not hold the children’s attention for long at all as, in contrast, most of the interview time for children from all three schools, and all of the other responses were characterised by children’s interpretation of spirituality being something quite personal, and internal to the individual. This comparison was expressed by child 14 who stated that “some people think that spirituality has to do with spirits and energy and stuff like that, and other people think spirituality could be to do with, like, personality.” The majority of the children were able to discuss spirituality as a character trait or personality type. From this perspective, the children were able to discuss what a “spiritual person” was like, mentioning traits
such as “calm”, “very happy” and, for child 31, “it’s what you like to do and what you don’t like to do” and for child 24, “if you are nice and stuff, if you are happy”.

Beliefs and Powers
Additionally, from the personal perspective, one third of responses focused on spirituality being concerned with people’s beliefs and, sometimes, powers. Child 23 spoke about people’s beliefs and being able to “think what they want”. In this category responses extended from several references to a belief in “God and a belief in heaven above” (child 2, child 21), to belief in a religion or people’s beliefs in general (child 23). Child 14 openly told the group that his family “is quite spiritual” and went on to explain that spirituality referred to a person’s aura, being able to feel the energy of another person, and that some spiritual people have healing powers “with crystals and energy”. In this regard, child 14 thought that “some people are spiritual and some people aren’t”. Defining an aspect of spirituality in this way, in terms of the beliefs or special powers that some people have, was common to children from each school.

Inner Purpose
To some children, from both Brook and Willow Schools, spirituality had a motivational aspect to the way that it might guide or lead their decisions. For example, to child 28, spirituality was more to do with “the spirit right inside you. Like you have your own feelings and you don’t have to copy others’ feelings.” Or as child 26 stated, “it’s how you feel, it’s part of you”. Several children also referred to the spirit within them that controls their body, an inner force that you can feel within yourself, or “like your soul” (child 24). Child 24 went on to elaborate that, “it’s the spirit that controls your body”. Similarly, child 2 stated that it is “your spirit that keeps moving you forward”.

Looking across these themes, it is evident that there were differences in the responses of children from each of the three schools. However, as can be seen from
Table 4.1, the common spirituality theme discussed by children from all three schools was that of personal characteristics and personal beliefs and powers.

It was children from both Brook and Willow schools who expanded their understanding of spirituality to include the idea that there are spirits around us that are beyond the physical and directly observable phenomena. And it was also children from these same two schools who talked about spirituality in terms of bringing an inner purpose, personal drive and meaning to one’s daily life. These two schools, Brook and Willow, together contributed 16 of the 20 children interviewed in this study. And half of this number, that is eight children, were from Brook School, which was the only school with a religious education programme operating.

There was no obvious pattern of difference based on ethnicity or gender in the way that children responded. With one quarter (5) of children interviewed identifying as Māori, analysis showed that the children contributed responses to the discussion of spirituality proportionately equal to their group size, and that both ethnic groups had responses spread over the four themes identified. There were no obvious patterns of difference in responses based on the vocabulary or images used between the two ethnicities. None of the children identifying as Māori used Te Reo concepts or language in their explanations.

4.2.2 Spiritual wellbeing domains
The second section of the interviews was designed to understand the extent to which Fisher’s (1998) four-domains model of spiritual wellbeing (Figure 2.1) might resonate within the New Zealand primary school context and, potentially, provide a useful framework against which to categorise, understand and interpret expressions of childhood spirituality.

As was evident from the findings in the preceding section, children generally found the construct of spirituality difficult to discuss. In the second section of the semi-
structured group interviews, a question or statement was used to lead participants into discussing each of the above spiritual wellbeing domains in turn. Across each of the four domains, there were no obvious patterns of difference in responses found based on the ethnicity or gender of the child. All of the children interviewed contributed responses in each domain, and all of the themes within each domain were noted in the responses of boys and girls from all three schools and of Māori and New Zealand European children alike.

**Personal Domain**

In this domain Fisher (1998) emphasises key knowledge aspects of meaning, purpose and value in life. The key inspirational aspect of this domain, namely “self-awareness”, can be seen in the expressions of spirituality relating to self-esteem, identity, joy and peace. In this study, New Zealand children’s reflections on aspects of self-awareness were sought. The children’s conversations flowed freely and naturally. As shown in Table 4.2, three major themes emerged, namely positive feelings about family or friends, achievements, and self-worth or identity. Children from each school readily attributed feelings of personal happiness to positive relationships within their family grouping.

*Table 4.2 Analysis of Themes Relating to Spiritual Wellbeing Personal Domain by School*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Domain</th>
<th>Theme Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brook School</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family, friends</td>
<td>friends, playing, there for each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>achievements</td>
<td>proud, doing well, achieving, going up a level, gymnastics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-worth, identity</td>
<td>feeling good, called a “good” person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Willow School</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family, friends</td>
<td>Dad, cares for me, family, reliable, love, friends, pets, helping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>achievements</td>
<td>Art, try hard, succeed, proud, sport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-worth, identity</td>
<td>humour, compliments, unique, different, feeling good in my heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fern School</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family, friends</td>
<td>friends, helping someone, getting along, having fun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>achievements</td>
<td>doing my best, sport, playing hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-worth, identity</td>
<td>feel good inside, in my heart</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Child 24 shared feelings of personal happiness when his family paid compliments and the general feeling that the family is there when you need them. For example, “my dad [makes me feel happy] because he cares for me and tells me what to do and stuff” (child 24). In a similar vein, child 26 said she was most happy because of “everything I get from my mum and dad … love, care and all that” while another (child 28) added pets to her close family members, as she “can love them and they can love me back”. While family members were often associated with feelings of happiness, the 10- and 11-year-old participants also frequently acknowledged the contribution of their close and special friends. Being with friends, and playing with friends, received frequent mention (child 2, 10, 13, 17, 28, 31, and 33).

The positive impact of personal achievement was another aspect frequently reported by the children from all three schools. “Playing hard. It makes me feel good cause I’m trying my best”, said child 31. Similar sentiments were shared by child 26 who felt happy about himself after “you try and try and try and you can’t do it and then you can do it and that feels good”, and for child 20 who also focussed on the feeling when you succeed in the end after “you try really, really hard for something”. Specific accomplishments, and areas of personal talent and interest, were often named by the children. For one child it was art, and for another gymnastics and three children referred to sporting achievements. Accomplishments which made the children proud of themselves led to feelings of personal happiness. This was also true of “doing well at school” (child 6) or, more specifically as described by child 8, “Getting to the next level makes me feel good, cause it makes you want to work to get to the next level”.

It was also clear that feelings of self-worth had a major impact on personal happiness. For child 4 it was “when people call me a good person” and for child 24 it was when being complimented. Helping other people was mentioned by child 31, who said that “made me feel good and happy. It made me feel good inside … well in my heart.” Personal identity was also discussed by some children in this context. For
example, child 23 stated that “I have a different personality … and [I am] different”. This aspect was consistently raised by children in each group interview.

Communal Domain

Fisher’s (1998) Communal Domain emphasises key knowledge aspects of morality and culture. The key inspirational aspect of this domain, that is the quality and depth of inter-personal relationships between self and others, can be seen in the expressions of spirituality relating to love, justice, hope and faith in humanity.

Not surprisingly, given the age group, the children frequently mentioned playing together with their friends when discussing ways in which they were connected to others. As can be seen from Table 4.3, children from each of the three schools commented on the close connection with special friends and family members that built up over time through being together “hanging out with them (child 6), “talking with them and interacting” (child 24), “saying nice things about them” (child 8) and “hugging them” (child 4).

It was also evident that for a number of children who did not see members of their family as regularly as others, that the special times when they did (for example, weekend or holiday visits) were particularly important in nurturing the connections. For child 24, it was important to make the most of Sunday afternoons as that was when he was with his dad and his brother and, as child 32 put it, “It’s cause most of my family live in Wellington and whenever I go up there I always feel special cause I don’t see them that much”.
Table 4.3. Analysis of Themes Relating to Spiritual Wellbeing Communal Domain by School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communal Domain</th>
<th>Theme Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brook School</strong></td>
<td>family and friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>shared activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>enduring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Willow School</strong></td>
<td>family and friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>shared activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fern School</strong></td>
<td>family and friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>shared activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>enduring</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The children were able to reflect on their connections with significant others, and discuss reasons for the closeness of the relationship beyond simply the regular contact. Two major themes were evident here. Firstly, many children spoke about the special understanding that can develop between people over time and, secondly, that the connectedness is heightened when trust develops.

As a relationship builds over time, the connection between the participants and their significant others was often reported as leading to a close, reciprocal understanding of each other. This was affirmed for child 17 and her close friends by the knowledge that “they are always there for [me], and [I am] there for them”. Another sign for the children, of the connectedness with close family and friends, was the observation that “friends and family members copy each other”, with many examples given such as making sporting choices based on another person’s choice, horse riding together, bouncing together on the trampoline. Sometimes this was the case even when such activities had not always been the individual’s prior preference (child 10, 13). This aspect of connectedness was particularly evident also for child 22, sharing the
observation that she and her mother “do things a lot like each other” and that she aspired to “grow up like her [mother]”.

Children from all schools also reflected on the trust that builds over the longer term, “like if you’ve known them from when you were little” (child 8) and child 13 who described his friends, in his words, as “trustful”. For a number of children (particularly child 17, 8, 21 and 33) this trust was especially important with members of the immediate family group. Being able to rely on, love and trust your caregivers and siblings were repeated themes. While child 30 was able to express connection, and gratitude, to her parents “cause they feed me and they put a roof over my head”, she identified this connection as being “in [her] heart”, and therefore as being at a much deeper level than simply the food and shelter that she could rely on.

Interestingly, in an interview at Brook School, the virtues of forgiveness and justice (Fisher, 1998) were also touched on, when child 13 and 17, bouncing ideas from each other, discussed how strong connections allow for friendships to endure testing times. “[S]ometimes you fight, but then it gets worked out. Cause you fight and they go off to other friends, and they come back” (child 13). And this then prompted child 10 to contribute that he was unlikely to make up with one of his friends, for “being real mean to [him]”, because he had given his previously close friend “heaps of chances”. From this comment, it can be seen that this child was considering how many times it might be possible to forgive a friend.

Environmental Domain
In his Environmental Domain, Fisher (1998) emphasises key knowledge aspects of care, nurture and environmental stewardship. The key inspirational aspect of this domain, namely connectedness with nature and the environment, can be seen in the expressions of spirituality relating to a sense of awe and wonder. In this current study, of children in Aotearoa New Zealand, the key themes to emerge in this section of the interviews were ideas centred on the children’s sense of connections with
animals and insects, trees, gardens and plants, and ideas about nurturing the earth, seas and the air that we breathe (see Table 4.4).

Table 4.4 Analysis of Themes Relating to Spiritual Wellbeing Environmental Domain by School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environmental Domain</th>
<th>Theme Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brook School</strong></td>
<td>connection,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>companionship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Willow School</strong></td>
<td>connection,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>companionship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fern School</strong></td>
<td>connection,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>companionship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The children interviewed revealed close connections with pets, bugs and beetles and animals in general. A number of conversations were centred on the companionship and friendship that the animals in children’s lives provided them. There were also deeply held views about human responsibility to protect and care for a wide range of invertebrates (specifically mentioned were spiders, beetles and bugs), summed up by child 23 who stated matter of factly, “you just see that they deserve to live too, cause they are living creatures in some things just like us”. Child 20, however, spoke of a connection based on respect for animals “the way they act compared with us”, revealing his belief that animals can be more virtuous than humans. During one interview, respect for the life of animals was developed further by child 14, coming as he did from a vegan perspective. “[P]eople who are vegan they disagree with people killing animals, they don’t eat meat, they don’t eat eggs and stuff like that that’s come from an animal. They don’t wear clothing that has animal products.”
This child then can be seen to be linking a belief in the value of all life with choices and practices that play out in daily life decisions.

That children love to climb trees was reflected in many responses (for example, child 10, 13, 17, 20). For child 13, trees were important for climbing so he could “go to the top ... and think”. This was reinforced by child 2 who felt that trees “can just help you to reflect about new things or other things”, and child 28 who said, “I quite like being alone outside, cause I have space to think”.

However, the main theme with regard to trees, plants and gardens was the clearly articulated responsibility that a number of the children felt for playing their part in the stewardship of nature. For child 10, this was expressed as, “if nature wasn’t around you wouldn’t be able to climb trees. You wouldn’t be able to live, you wouldn’t have air ... and trees make air.” Child 31 was clear about nurturing the environment when he stated, “the environment keeps us alive. Oxygen.” And, in another group, child 21 spoke of the leadership that she and her father took within the family for environmental awareness, sharing that “we just think of the earth as our own mothers.” This then led to another of the recurring themes when children thought about their connections with the environment, namely their efforts to reuse and recycle, as again child 21 put it, “[some people] are like more worried about the earth than getting rid of their rubbish.” Another child in this group (child 22) discussed recycling and reusing instead of “not chucking”, which was followed by child 24 explaining how her father is “quite environmental cause he doesn’t use much power” and how he conserves energy. While in yet another interview, child 4, 6 and 8 reflected on their connections with beaches and their stewardship of the seas. Child 8 expressed a connection with “the beach, cause we live right next to it”, and for child 4 the connection felt was because “I go there every day” to swim. With respect to stewardship, child 6 volunteered this as “from not polluting it”.
Transcendental Domain

In this domain Fisher (1998) emphasises the key notion of a relationship of self with some-thing or some-one beyond the human level, beyond the “here and now”. This involves faith towards and worship of some ultimate concern, force, transcendent reality, or God. As was the case in the part one interview findings, the children generally found more difficulty discussing aspects of this domain than for the preceding three. And, as is evident from Table 4.5, the interviews in each of the three schools showed considerably more variability than those for the previous three spiritual wellbeing domains.

Table 4. 5 Analysis of Themes Relating to Spiritual Wellbeing Transcendental Domain by School

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transcendental Domain</th>
<th>Theme Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brook School</strong></td>
<td><strong>Theme Indicators</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>belief</td>
<td>Prayer, Jesus, God, church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-confidence, self-belief</td>
<td>Support, comfort, upset, safe and secure, happy, joyful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Willow School</strong></td>
<td>religion, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, church, God, a spirit, evolution v/s creation, personal beliefs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>belief</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-confidence, self-belief</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fern School</strong></td>
<td>Prayer, God, church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>belief</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-confidence, self-belief</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Across the five group interviews, a total of 15 children (of the 20 included in the interviews) were able to contribute to the discussions relating to the transcendent, with the children from Brook School in particular, which had the ongoing Christian education programme, being able to discuss this domain more freely, in more detail and in more depth. As was shown in Table 4.1, 75.0% of the children interviewed from Brook School self-rated their regularity of family religious attendance as either “often” (one child) or “sometimes” (five children). Collectively, the children from Brook School responded from both a general perspective and from a very personal perspective, openly discussing how their beliefs played out in their daily life. In contrast, the responses from the children from Willow School were restricted to a
more impersonal reflection, while the children from Fern School were very reluctant to engage and the discussion closed down relatively quickly. In these latter two schools, regularity of family religious attendance was self-rated as “never” by 62.5% and 75.0% of the children respectively.

It was also evident, within the children from each school group, that the ideas were put forward, and discussed in more detail, by some members of the group, while other children did not contribute to the discussion on this domain. This was not linked to differences in religious affiliation. This was in contrast to the discussions pertaining to each of the personal, communal and environmental domains where, typically, each member of the group discussion put forward their ideas and the resulting discussion was more evenly spread across group members.

Of all the 20 interviewees, it was child 2, 4, 8, 13 and 21 who openly stated a belief in God. Two children both said, in their respective interview groups, that “I believe in God”, with child 8 adding “but [I] don’t go to church”. Child 13, following up on child 2, said “God is there for you. You can talk to him”. Child 4 was able to articulate a positive benefit from his belief, explaining to his group that his connection with something bigger “makes us happy and joyful”. Child 2 was also able to discuss what this meant for her at a personal level. For example, quite matter-of-factly making comments such as “God is there for you”, and “[I] ask God to help so I don’t hurt myself.” This same child spoke of her frequent use of prayer, in reference to her connection to Jesus.

I pray at night. It makes me feel safe and secure. If I pray for something or to help me, it does help, cause like God may not do it for you but you believe in yourself. God can help you through it.

This then sparked other children in the group (child 10, 13 and 17) to speak about their respective use of prayer, with comments such as “I pray when I am upset” and “[I] pray so I don’t have bad dreams.” Conversely, in the second interview group,
child 14 speaking from a contrary point of view, reminded his group about the school’s religious teacher who told a story about the use of prayer to help find a set of lost keys, a story that “everyone in class just thought was a coincidence.”

Some children referred to past family connections that were not so relevant now. For child 24, religion and “a big God” was not something she believed in. However, she acknowledged that her father had been a regular church attendee when he was younger. And child 21 didn’t think she came from “such a religious family. We just don’t ask a lot of questions.”

There were other children who discussed the place of religion in people’s lives from a less personal perspective. In two interview groups, there was at least one child who approached this question by listing a range of faith traditions. Child 24 had Buddhism, Islam and Christianity in her list of world religions before stating “I don’t believe in God”, while child 20 offered that “It’s like a spirit you believe in. You get people who are Christian and you get Buddha people. You get people who believe in different things”. At this more impersonal level of sharing, the children offered the thought that this enables people to “believe in what they believe in” rather than “being afraid to believe”. And from an even wider belief perspective, child 28 offered the thought that some people choose to “live poorer, but they know they live poorer than other people. But it’s part of their belief as well”. Across all of the interview groups, there was a solitary reference to “spirits”, when child 4 noted that “some people say they are possessed.” It appeared from this comment that while the child was reserving personal judgement on this topic, he was open to the consideration that this idea may be a genuinely held belief by another.

4.2.3 Expressions of childhood spirituality.
In the third section of the group interviews, open-ended questions, which had been shown in previous research into childhood spirituality to be useful starters to facilitate discussion (Bone, 2007; Hay and Nye, 1998; Hyde, 2005; Fisher, 1998), were
posed to each group of children. These questions were used specifically to elicit
expressions of childhood spirituality from the Aotearoa New Zealand Year 6
primary school children. Fisher’s four domains of spiritual wellbeing were used as
the basis upon which to report the interview findings. The children’s responses are
summarized, by spiritual wellbeing domain, in Table 4.6. The percentages across
each row are calculated based on the number of spirituality expressions counted,
from within the interview transcripts, that related to each domain. It is important to
note that, as only one coder was involved in this process, the following percentages
are given as indicative of frequency of response.

Table 4.6. Analysis of Expressions of Childhood Spirituality by Spiritual Wellbeing
Domains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>Family or Communal</th>
<th>Environmental or Nature</th>
<th>Transcendental or God</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When were you totally focussed?</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is most important to you?</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What really, really matters?</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are your top three wishes?</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you wonder about?</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is it that you can’t explain?</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you think about when looking at stars?</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you have a special place to think?</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>subtotals</strong></td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within the responses to each interview question, there were no differences in
response rates or domain coverage found based on the ethnicity, school or gender of
the child. The responses given by boys as compared with girls, and by Māori as
compared with New Zealand European children, were as for the distribution over all children. No use of Te Reo Māori concepts or language was noted.

“Can you tell me about a time when you were so wrapped up in doing something, you forgot about everything else? Didn’t notice anything else?”

The children were able to recall times when they had been particularly focussed, and they were unaware of what was happening around them. They used words such as “very focussed” and “totally engrossed” to describe their behaviour at the time of this experience, and they often said that they were “oblivious” to whatever else was occurring simultaneously. Situations described included total focus when playing sport, when being fully engaged with a friend, and being engrossed with a classroom activity and being able to block out noise and activity happening around them.

Almost all of the responses related to the personal domain, with some of the discussion relating to friends and family. When discussing this question, the children typically recalled personal examples of times when they were totally focussed on their own activity or concern. Across all interviews, there were only four instances where the focus was on a mother, father or friend. There were no expressions of spirituality that related to the environmental or transcendental domains.

“What things are most important in your life?”

As was noted in section two of the interviews above, children frequently discussed family, and their parent or parents in particular, as very important aspects of their life. Also of note was that, invariably, when children reported multiple things that were very important to them, family and friends were also listed. In the words of child 8 “Family is the most important thing you’ve got for you. They are always there for you, through rough patches”. Over all of the interviews, one half of the responses to this question related to the child’s family or friends. When discussing the importance of parents, other children included the facts such as “they pay for food, clothes [and your] house” or “without parents we wouldn’t be born”.
The second most frequently noted response to this question was pets and animals in general. Again, this reflected the special connections that many children have with the special animals in their life, and the importance attributed to that relationship. The thought of her lost special pet prompted child 24 to share “I still remember Diesel. I was there when he was put down.” While responses relating to pets were coded to the environmental domain, arguably the children’s often close relationship with a particular pet could equally have been associated with the family domain.

There were six responses coded to the personal domain, of which all but one related to personal interests, hobbies or possessions. For example, four children listed their computer or device as being most important, and for one child it was “having fun on my motorbike”. In contrast to this line of thought, the sixth comment was made by child 28, who responded with “my health”. There were no responses to this question that related to the transcendental domain.

“I wonder what you think really, really matters?”

There were two responses to this question that related to the transcendental domain, with child 10 referring to God and another who responded with “family and friends, and life after death” (child 31).

The majority of the responses were spread relatively evenly across the remaining three domains, with slightly more being coded against family/communal. The responses in this domain centred on the importance that children placed on their family in general, and the support and care provided. For example, this was expressed by child 2 as “you wouldn’t be like what you are without your family” and by child 21 as “they have been there for me”.

Along with some responses again noting animals, this question elicited several environmental references. Children from Brook School discussed the importance of a
range of environmental aspects, specifically carbon dioxide, of “heat for life” (child 8), and volcanoes, while for child 4 it was water that really mattered. Of note also is that from three separate interviews, two children said that water was the most important thing for their life (child 4, 31) when answering the previous question.

Responses that related to the personal domain were very similar for children across all three schools. In this regard, what really mattered for seven children was self-confidence, belief in yourself, not being bullied and “everyone getting a fair go” (child 20).

“Imagine that you had three wishes. What might you wish for?”
In response to this question, approximately two thirds of the discussion was related to aspects of the personal domain consistently across each of the three schools. It was relatively common for children to aspire to a range of personal possessions (for example, lots of money, be a millionaire, buy a mansion or live in Hawaii), or to wish for superhuman powers (for example, superpowers to fly, be invisible, become an All Black, run faster or be Spiderman). Less frequently, three responses (one child from each school) also coded to this domain reflected more sophisticated, deeper thinking with comments that revealed personal satisfaction with the current status quo. Child 14 stated “I don’t need to wish. I’ve got everything I need. Money is not important”, child 20 who said “I can’t change anything. I’m happy with what I have got” and for child 24 the wish was to “be healthy [with] no diseases”.

There were a total of 11 responses that reflected concern for the family domain. Along with, again, focus on particular members of the family and close friends, these comments related to a wish for family to be present forever or to have family safe and protected. Child 2, for example, expressed a wish to have her “family and dog with me till I die”.

One tenth of the responses had wishes focusing on pets, animals and general environmental concerns, while the three responses coded to the transcendental
domain expressed a desire for “eternal youth”, an ability to live forever and one child discussed a wish for a closely missed member of the family to return from the dead.

“I wonder what sorts of things you wonder about?”
“I wonder if you’ve ever wondered about something you can’t explain?”

The children’s comments in response to these two, closely related questions were associated principally with the transcendental domain. This was in marked contrast to the other questions asked where, most often, it was the transcendental domain which received the least number of responses. Another notable difference in the responses to these questions was that there were either none, or very few expressions of spirituality that fell into either the family or the environmental domains of spiritual wellbeing.

Many of the children’s wonderings related to their beliefs, and questions, regarding creation and evolutionary theories. Children wondered about God, and indeed about “how God was made” (child 6), or “how God was created” (child 14). There were children who wondered about how the earth was first made (how the earth and seas began), and those who wondered about the beginnings of life (for example, the first animal, the first human) or the beginnings of the ability to think or to speak.

Another category of “big questions” for the children centred on philosophical and ethical dilemmas (“Why do people smoke when they know it is bad?”, “Why do TV programmes model drug deals?”). Other things that children wondered about included issues such as “some people say what you can’t see isn’t there” (child 20) and similarly child 26 who wondered about “what you can’t see, like wind”. Responses from children relating to themselves (for example, “what it is like to be rich” or questions about their particular personality or body) were coded to the personal domain of spiritual wellbeing.
“Have you ever seen the stars at night? What do they make you think about?”

While slightly less than half of the children’s responses to these questions were focussed on the personal domain, there was also one quarter of the responses relating to both the family and transcendental domains, with only three responses coded to the environmental domain.

Within the discussion coded to the personal domain, many children stated that gazing at the stars at night helped them to feel calm, happy, “nice and peaceful” (child 10) or helped them to relax and bring back memories. The memories cited were often about themselves. For example, reflecting on the day just passed, they wondered what they would be doing tomorrow or how they might improve on a task the next day. Another theme within this domain related to feelings of thankfulness, about “how lucky I am compared to other people” (child 14), about the joy of friendship or more general feelings of gratitude for essentials such as food and the sun.

Another theme within the personal domain were feelings of sadness associated with looking up at the stars. For a number of children memories of lost family members, and pets, were associated with the stars. Child 24 stated that stars made her think of people who had passed away, as her father had told her that “they turn into a star”. This type of memory was discussed by children from each of the three schools.

Aspects of these discussion topics were also coded to the family domain because while the stars were eliciting personal, emotional responses from the children, they were also triggering memories of connections with significant others, with nanas, grandads and deceased siblings all mentioned. For two children, stars evoked memories of family breakups.

A similar number of responses were coded to the transcendental domain. This included child 10 who reflected on a relative’s “near death experience”, and
reflections on life beyond earth, with questions about aliens and UFOs featuring. Two children from Willow School shared that the stars made them think of God. For example, child 22 stated that “He’s over there, watching us” and child 24 added, “[He’s] trying to protect us. This prompted child 23 to add from his perspective that “I don’t believe in God but I believe in Heaven”.

The three comments coded to the environmental domain were two references to animals, and child 6 who stated that the stars evoked memories of playing in the park after school.

“Do you have a special place where you go to wonder about things?”
In response to this question, children from all schools readily described their special places. While the largest number of responses reflected the children’s connections with physical places, with several references to nature and animals, a relatively similar number of responses were associated with the personal domain as children discussed their personal reflections, emotional responses and heightened self-awareness.

Many of the special places noted included discussion of places such as a special rock, tree, tree-house, the beach or for some children it was their bedroom at night. Generally, it was apparent that the special place was somewhere significant for the family, a place which evoked memories, or a place which was recognised as comfortable, safe, quiet and/or peaceful. For child 21 the special place was “sitting beside my mum … talking to her”. For others it was an enjoyable, relaxing activity that was noted, such as gardening or horse-riding.

Thinking about a special place enabled children to reflect on a wide variety of topics. Central to these were memories of deceased relatives and pets. Children also reported being particularly tuned into nature at these times. For example, child 23 talked about focussing on the birds he could hear while for child 2 it was listening
intently to cicadas and trees that was special and for child 13 this was when focussing on listening to the sound of the sea. Another group of responses mentioned being spellbound by a spectacular sunset or sunrise or, picking up on earlier discussion, star-gazing.

Irrespective of the location, most of the responses showed that this special place was very personal to the child, and the experience was generally heightened when alone, allowing memories to flow. Child 17 stated, “sometimes [just being] by myself is important”. At these times, children reported heightened emotional states, such as feeling sad or crying, or joy, amazement and wonder.

4.2.4 References to animals and pets.
A recurring theme noted, across the expressions of spirituality reported in the preceding section, was the references that eleven of the twenty children made with regard to animals and pets. This was particularly evident in response to the interview starter prompts of “I wonder what you think really, really matters?” and “What things are most important in your life?”. While some percentages are reported here, alongside actual numbers of children, to show an indicative frequency, it is noted again that they have been obtained using one coder.

In response to “I wonder what you think really, really matters?”, 21% of the children’s responses (eight children) across the three schools referred to a close connectedness with family pets. In addition to support received from close family and friends, children also mentioned animals and, in particular, pet dogs and cats with which they had a particularly close bond with. For example, in one interview when discussing the importance of animals, two children responded:

Child 10: “My dog is very special to me.”
Child 17: “You can talk to them, and they won’t talk to you back, if there is something you won’t do or if there’s something wrong they tell you.”
Child 10: “They keep secrets.”
Child 17: “Yeah. They keep secrets really well. They talk to you with their eyes and their ears.”
Child 10: “And their body position.”

The discussion in response to the most important things in life also highlighted the place of animals in the children’s lives, again with 21% of the responses (ten children) relating to animals and pets. Child 23 listed “pets and other creatures” alongside “family” as being most important, while other children mentioned dogs, cats and, for child 21, it was “pet sheep”. This discussion also prompted memories of deceased pets. For child 24 the memory was in relation to her dog, Diesel, who had died, reflected in the comment “I still remember Diesel. Ah, well, I still remember him and stuff. I was there when he got put down.”

While the children were reflecting on what they would ask for if they had “three wishes”, 11% of the responses (seven children) related to animals. Within in this, two children talked about their desire to “bring back from the dead” their special pets. Child 30 wished that her cat was still alive, while child 32 longed to have her pet mouse back with her. Also within this question was the response from child 2, expressing her wish that “Chester will stay with me till I die”. Child 17 signalled a significant connectedness to her pet, stating that “I [wish] that I could understand my pet when he tries to tell me something”.

There were also comments that picked up this theme of the children’s close feelings about the animals in their lives, when reflecting on the “special place” that one might have to “think about things”. For example, for child 2 the special place was “on my horse, Chloe, and I talk to her. I think about things”. Child 20 described his special place saying “I just go out in the paddock and pat the animals and things. I can tell them my problems and things like that. They seem to understand”. This then prompted child 26 to say, in response “It’s almost like they can hear you but they
can’t talk to you. Cause when you are sad or you’re happy. When you are sad they always come up and curl into your lap and all that”. It was, therefore, evident that various children had a connectedness with animals in the way that the child viewed the animal or pet. In this way, the pet became a close confidante, allowing the child to relax and feel comforted, to feel safe to share inner-most thoughts or to reflect on big questions and issues that they might be grappling with.

4.2.5 Qualitative findings for the children’s teachers

An interview with the Year 6 classroom teachers, at each of Brook (3) and Willow (4) School was conducted on the same day that the respective children were interviewed. The seven teachers were asked to discuss what the concept of childhood spirituality meant to them. The intention here was investigate whether there was any evidence to suggest that the acknowledgement and understanding of spirituality on the part of teachers was in any way linked to the children’s ability and willingness to discuss spirituality.

From the perspective of the Brook School class teachers of the children in this study, spirituality related to the quest that was seen in many children to know “where I fit in the world”, and a desire to have “big questions” answered, as can be seen in Figure 4.2, showing the notes made by the teachers of Brook School during their discussion.

One teacher (Teacher B2) noted that spiritual children are often

naturally quite relaxed about unknown things, and others you need to talk to them about unknown things and ask them “is this really a big issue?” There are some children who seem to know that, about big picture stuff, and little detail stuff, like you don’t have to teach them about, about what’s important and what’s not.
Another point discussed by teachers was the extent to which spirituality was something innate in each child, or more likely to be centred on the beliefs and traditions of the family, “or it can be a church thing” for some families. It was noted that some children wish to join in the school’s optional religious education classes because “their friends are more religious than they are” but they want to be part of it. As can be seen in Figure 4.2, teachers from Willow School expressed a wider view of spirituality that fits with definitions in contemporary literature. When one teacher (Teacher W1) commented that, from a religious perspective “we are not that much into it now as we used to be”, another was prompted to reply

> I think it probably has a wider meaning now than what it used to mean, in that it used to be narrow in that you believed in God, now it maybe means that … it’s a lot to do with values, you might believe in something but it might not necessarily be linked to God (Teacher W2).
References were made to the school promoting strong values, and that this had the potential to influence children’s spiritual development, again from an external influence rather than from a child’s innate potential.

The spirituality thread of connectedness was reflected in the teachers’ discussions relating to the child’s connections with, and influences coming from, their peers and family and, for some children, from the family’s religious practices and a belief in God. The aspect of a sense of belonging could be seen to be reflected in that part of the teachers’ discussion at Brook School which focussed on the children’s wonderings about “where do I fit in the world”, while children’s self-awareness was alluded to in the Brook School teachers’ discussion with regard to the ability of some children to “see the bigger picture”.

Figure 4. 2. Spirituality brainstorm, Willow School Year 6 teachers.
Overall, there was no evidence to suggest that the acknowledgement and understanding of spirituality on the part of teachers from either of the two schools was linked to the children’s ability and willingness to discuss spirituality. It is noted here, however, that these findings for the children’s teachers should be treated with some caution being based, as they are, on a single group interview in two of the schools.

4.2.6 Summary of qualitative findings.
The findings from the semi-structured interviews with groups of children and teachers covered the three key areas under investigation.

Firstly, children were asked to consider and discuss what is understood by the term “spirituality”. While it was evident that this was not a usual topic of conversation for children, they were able to relate it to both external spirits and, more personally, to personal characteristics, beliefs and a sense of inner purpose which influenced life decisions.

Secondly, when the discussion was guided by open-ended questions to guide participants to consider each of Fisher’s (1998) four domains of spiritual wellbeing in turn, children readily provided examples of their self-awareness, inter-personal relationships, connectedness with nature and understandings of beliefs about aspects of the transcendental domain. The spiritual wellbeing domains provided a useful and readily accessible language and framework for children to share aspects of their developing perceptions of spirituality.

In the third area of investigation, again the open-ended questions, drawn from the childhood spirituality literature, allowed the children’s discussion to flow freely providing a rich narrative of personal and naturally occurring expressions of spirituality.
In all three areas covered by the interviews, there were no differences noted when comparing gender or ethnicity. The responses given by boys as compared with girls, and by Māori as compared with New Zealand European children, were as for the distribution over the sample of all 20 children interviewed. As with the child interviews, the teacher interviews highlighted two key issues. Namely, that a child’s spiritual development was seen to be largely driven by influences external to the child, and secondly that teachers did not appear to have an understanding of spirituality (on the basis of the one interview conducted), or the language to support professional discourse, beyond a tentative conceptualisation of spirituality within a religious context.

4.3 Quantitative Findings

Following discussion of the reliability findings with regard to Fisher’s (2004) spiritual wellbeing questionnaire, the results for both the Feeling Good and Living Life subscales are presented in four tables. Finally, a table summarising the results for the remaining quantitative measures is given.

In developing his instrument (Appendix K), Fisher (2004) conducted factor analyses on the responses from over 1000 pupils from a range of school types in Australia. According to Fisher, the Alpha reliability of the four sub-scales on the Feeling Good, Living Life questionnaire (Self, Other, Environmental and Transcendental) were satisfactory (ranging from .71 to .84). Cronbach’s alpha statistic was used to test the reliability of the sub-scales within the context of this research with primary school children in New Zealand. As is shown in Table 4.7, overall the reliability scores did not match the levels demonstrated by Fisher (2004) with Australian primary school children. While acceptable reliability levels were obtained for the Transcendental subscale and the Other sub-scale, for both Feeling Good and Living Life questions, the reliability levels obtained on both the Self and Environmental scales were below what would usually be acceptable. Further work is required in this regard, to
establish whether the unacceptable reliability scores were due to the small sample size of 32 children or if the Self and Environmental sub-scales are not reliable within the New Zealand context.

Table 4. 7. Reliability of the Feeling Good and Living Life sub-scales for this study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Environmental</th>
<th>Transcendental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feeling Good</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living Life</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.1 Descriptive Statistics.

The answer frequencies for each individual question on the Feeling Good and on the Living Life sub-scales are included as Appendix P. As can be seen from Table 4.8, within the Feeling Good scale the highest mean scores for all children were reported on the Communal domain followed by the Personal domain.

Table 4. 8. Descriptive Statistics for the Spiritual Wellbeing Feeling Good Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Māori</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14.60</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ European</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>14.68</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All children</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>14.66</td>
<td>15.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>10</td>
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<td>15.00</td>
<td>16.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ European</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>15.27</td>
<td>16.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All children</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>15.19</td>
<td>16.00</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Māori</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11.20</td>
<td>11.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ European</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10.77</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10.91</td>
<td>11.00</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>10.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>16</td>
<td>9.77</td>
<td>12.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All children</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9.88</td>
<td>11.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feeling Good scoring key, for each of the four questions per domain:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>YES     if it makes you feel REALLY GOOD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>yes    if it makes you feel good just a little bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>?       if you are not sure how good it makes you feel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>no      if it does not make you feel good, just a little bit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>NO      if it REALLY does NOT make you feel GOOD</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It was also within these two domains that both the highest minimum scores and, correspondingly, the smallest range of scores was shown. Scores within the Environmental domain were at a lower level ($M = 10.91$), and showed a greater range (from 8 through to the maximum possible score of 16). The lowest mean scores were shown on the Transcendental domain ($M = 9.88$). There was also a much broader range of scores noted here for all children.

Of the 32 children, seven children (Māori 1; New Zealand European 6) recorded their score at 7 or less. In this domain, the scores were seen to be clustered toward the lower and upper ends of the range, with relatively fewer mid-range scores, irrespective of ethnicity. While children identifying as Māori also had a mean score higher than for other children on this domain (the difference in mean scores being 0.33), it was less than the difference for the Environmental domain.

Table 4.9 reports the scores for children on the Living Life subscale. In a similar pattern to that noted on the Feeling Good sub-scale, the highest mean scores were reported on the Communal and Personal domains ($M = 14.38$ and $M = 13.59$). Again, the mean score for the Environmental domain was correspondingly less ($M = 9.63$), with the Transcendental domain mean being the lowest ($M = 7.53$). This pattern of scores was consistent across Māori and New Zealand European children. Also consistent with the findings for the Feeling Good sub-scale, within the Living Life subscale minimum scores recorded were highest in the Personal and Communal domains, with lower minimum scores noted in the Environmental and Transcendental domains. Therefore, it was also here in the Environmental (range of 12) and Transcendental (range of 16) domains that the broader spread of scores was
evident. This pattern of increasing range within scores was consistent across both Māori and New Zealand European children.

Table 4. 9 Descriptive Statistics for the Spiritual Wellbeing Living Life Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
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<tr>
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<td>16</td>
<td>7.53</td>
<td>8.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Living Life scoring key, for each of the four questions per domain:
4 YES if you do this ALL the TIME
3 yes if you do this fairly often
2 s if you do this sometimes
1 no if you hardly ever do this
0 NO if you NEVER do this

On the Living Life sub-scale, the differences in the domain mean scores for Māori children as distinct from New Zealand European children were all greater than the differences reported on the Feeling Good sub-scale. On the Living Life subscale, the greatest difference between the ethnic groups was noted on the personal domain (difference in means 1.61) and the smallest in the Environmental domain (difference in means 0.84).
Comparing the two sub-scales, in the case of all four domains the mean score for all children was lower than the respective means on the Feeling Good scale. The children rated the way that the aspects of spiritual wellbeing made them feel, higher than their lived experience. The smallest difference between the two scales was seen on the Communal domain (difference in mean scores 0.81), through to the largest difference (of 2.35) recorded on the Transcendental domain.

In the only published work sourced which reports findings from the use of Fisher’s (2004) questionnaire, Sauln (2013) studied 32 children, aged 6 – 12, from the San Francisco Bay area, using the Feeling Good, Living Life questionnaire to correlate children’s spiritual awareness with data collected about their dreams. Table 4.10 compares the sub-scale means reported by Sauln with those obtained in the current study. While Sauln (2013) describes the mean scores which she reported in the Communal, Transcendental and Personal domains, on both the Feeling Good and Living Life sub-scales, as “high” (p. 121), the children’s mean scores in the current study can be seen to be at considerably higher self-rating levels in all but the Transcendental domain. For Sauln (2013), it was the mean scores obtained within the Environmental domain, on both sub-scales, which were the lowest.

*Table 4. 10 Comparison of Spiritual Wellbeing Mean Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Feeling Good</th>
<th>Living Life</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sauln (2013)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9.17</td>
<td>8.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>current study</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>14.66</td>
<td>13.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communal</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sauln (2013)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9.51</td>
<td>8.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>current study</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>15.19</td>
<td>14.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environmental</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sauln (2013)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>7.65</td>
<td>5.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>current study</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10.91</td>
<td>9.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transcendental</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sauln (2013)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9.40</td>
<td>8.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>current study</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>9.88</td>
<td>7.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the case of the current study, both Environmental sub-scale scores are higher than those reported by Sauln, and it is on the Transcendental domain that the Aotearoa New Zealand children self-rated at lower levels than for their scores on the other three domains. Although for the current study it is the Transcendental mean scores which are the lowest of the four domains, interestingly they are relatively similar levels to those recorded by Sauln (2013).

When comparing Māori children with New Zealand European children, another possible difference between the groups can be seen in what Fisher (2004) describes as spiritual dissonance (see section 3.3.2.3). As can be seen in Table 4.1, children identifying as Māori showed a lower mean difference, than did other children, between their Feeling Good score and their Living Life score. For the children identifying as Māori, there was less variability between their mean scores on the two sub-scales than was the case for the New Zealand European children. While the maximum dissonance score for Māori was 2.0, one third (7) of the non-Māori children had greater dissonance scores. For this group of seven children, their scores showed that they were self-rating their ideals for spiritual health (what makes them Feel Good) at higher levels than for their actual life experience (Living Life).

Table 4.11. Descriptive Statistics for Spiritual Wellbeing Dissonance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dissonance (Feeling Good mean score – Living Life mean score)</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Māori</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>-1.8</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NZ European</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>-1.0</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All children</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-1.8</td>
<td>7.3</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the Māori children as a group, the Living Life scores were more likely to be at similarly high levels to their Feeling Good scores. A larger percentage of children identifying as New Zealand European were experiencing lower feelings with regard to their actual life experience when compared with their ideals for spiritual wellbeing.
It is important to note that the above observations are based are only descriptive statistics and, therefore, no conclusions regarding statistical significance can be drawn. Similarly, these findings need to be considered with some caution, given the relatively small sample sizes in the current study. The differences discussed above are noted as potential patterns of interest for further investigation, rather than having been demonstrated as statistically significant. Further study with larger groups of children from the different ethnic groups is suggested to investigate if these observations are indeed generalisable to the wider population of Year 6 children in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The results obtained from each of the other quantitative scales demonstrated that the Year 6 children in the sample showed a reasonable spread of scores, with few scores on the extreme ends of the respective scales (see Table 4.12). Results on the three markers of academic achievement showed that the sample was spread across achievement levels, with the mean stanine for Reading and Mathematics scores being in the mid-range of 5 to 6. There were no results recorded at stanine 1. Similarly, with the Reading Age scores, the mean difference between the child’s actual age and their respective reading age was a little over one year in advance of their chronological age, with the minimum score being recorded by a child who was reading at a level approximately nine months below their chronological age.

Table 4.12 Descriptive Statistics for other Quantitative Scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional Quotient</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>100.72</td>
<td>14.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Competence</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>70.10</td>
<td>22.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Stanine</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.91</td>
<td>1.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics Stanine</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.06</td>
<td>2.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Age +/-</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>-0.83</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Emotional Quotient mean score of 100.72 placed the sample mean within the average range (scores from 90 to 109) of the original norming population for the
BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory: Youth Version scale, where 68% of the population recorded scores within a range of 1 standard deviation ($SD = 15$) either side of the mean of 100.

The Social Competence mean score of 70.10 lies just below the average level from the School Social Behavior Scales norming population, where 60% of the population demonstrated raw scores in the range 83 to 142 ($M = 111.03$, $SD = 30.38$).

Overall then, the sample of children participating in this study showed a range of scores on each instrument, with the group means being within, or close to, average mean scores for the respective normative populations.

### 4.3.2 Hypotheses testing.

The quantitative data were analysed to test a number of hypotheses. These aimed to answer research questions 2 and 3.

**Question 2:** Does a measure of spiritual wellbeing vary based on children’s school, gender, ethnicity and/or regularity of family religious affiliation?

2.1 There is no significant difference in the spiritual wellbeing of children attending different schools
2.2 There is no significant difference in the spiritual wellbeing of children based on gender
2.3 There is no significant difference in the spiritual wellbeing of children based on ethnicity
2.3 There is no significant difference in the spiritual wellbeing of children depending on the regularity of family religious affiliation

**Question 3:** To what extent does a measure of spiritual wellbeing correlate with children’s social and emotional development, and educational attainment?
3.1 There is no significant relationship between spiritual wellbeing and social development

3.2 There is no significant relationship between spiritual wellbeing and emotional development

3.3 There is no significant relationship between spiritual wellbeing and academic attainment, as indicated by the STAR stanine, Reading Age, and PAT Mathematics stanine.

**Hypothesis 2.1 There is no significant difference in the spiritual wellbeing of children attending different schools**

In order to test hypothesis 2.1 a one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine if there was any significant difference on spiritual wellbeing based on the children’s school. There was a significant effect for school with the Feeling Good scale, $F(2,29) = 3.73, p = .036$. This means that the school attended appears to be impacting on the children’s score on the Feeling Good scale for children attending different schools. In order to determine where the difference occurred, the TukeyHSD post hoc test was used. This determined that there was a significant difference ($p = .03$) between Brook School ($M = 13.09, SD = 1.35$) and Fern School ($M = 10.83, SD = 1.47$). Children from Brook School had significantly higher scores on the Feeling Good scale than did children attending Fern School.

A significant effect for school using the Living Life scale was not demonstrated ($F(2,19) = 3.28, p = .052$). This means that the children did not obtain significantly different scores on the Living Life scale based on their school.

**Hypothesis 2.2 There is no significant difference in the spiritual wellbeing of children based on gender**

Because the independent variable had only two levels, an independent samples $t$-test was used to determine if there was any significant difference in the spiritual wellbeing scales based on the children’s gender. For both the Feeling Good and the
Living Life scales there was no significant difference noted (both \(p\)’s < .05). Therefore, while the sample was reasonably evenly spread between boys and girls (at 41% and 59% respectively), the spiritual wellbeing scores did not vary significantly based on the gender of the respondent. Based on this indicator, the null hypothesis was not rejected; the \(t\)-test failed to reveal any significant difference in the spiritual wellbeing of boys and girls.

**Hypothesis 2.3 There is no significant difference in the spiritual wellbeing of children based on ethnicity**

Within the sample of 32 children, 69% identified their ethnicity as New Zealand European and 31% as New Zealand Māori. There were no other ethnicities represented in the sample. An independent samples \(t\)-test was used to determine if there was any effect on the spiritual wellbeing scales based on the two ethnicities represented in the sample. For both the Feeling Good and the Living Life scales there was no significant difference noted (both \(p\)’s > .05). Therefore, while the ethnicity of the children was identified as New Zealand European (68.8%) or New Zealand Māori (31.2%), the spiritual wellbeing scores did not vary significantly based on the ethnicity of the respondent. Based on this indicator, the null hypothesis was not rejected; the \(t\)-test failed to reveal any significant difference in the spiritual wellbeing of children based on their ethnicity.

**Hypothesis 2.4 There is no significant difference in the spiritual wellbeing of children based on regularity of family religious affiliation**

With regard to the self-reported regularity of family religious affiliation, the three response categories were “often”, “sometimes” or “never”. Only one respondent reported his attendance at church as “often”. For the purposes of the statistical analysis, this response was grouped with those reporting their level of family religious affiliation as “sometimes”. Overall then, 44% of the children reported that the family attended a church on an “often” or “sometimes” basis, while 56% of the children said that the family “never” attended a church. An independent samples \(t\)-
test was used to determine if there was any effect on the spiritual wellbeing scales based on these two categories of family religious affiliation. There was a significant effect on the Feeling Good scale for regularity of family religious affiliation, \( t(30) = 2.42, p = .022 \), with children reporting that the family did attend a church scoring higher than children reporting that the family never attended a church. There was not a significant effect between the two levels of church attendance demonstrated on the Living Life scale \( (p < .05) \). From these results, self-reported levels of family church attendance would appear to be having an impact on children’s beliefs with regard to those aspects of spiritual wellbeing that make them feel good (Feeling Good), while family church attendance was not shown to impact on children’s lived expressions of spiritual wellbeing (Living Life).

**Hypothesis 3.1** There is no significant relationship between spiritual wellbeing and social development

In order to test hypothesis 3.1, a bivariate correlation was conducted to test if the measure of spiritual wellbeing correlated significantly with the children’s social competence score from the School Social Behaviour Scales. With regard to the Feeling Good scale, the two variables were positively correlated, \( r(30) = .59, p < .01 \). The coefficient of determination was calculated as \( r^2 = .35 \). Approximately one third of the variability observed in scores on the Feeling Good scale was associated with the children’s social competence scores.

In the case of the Living Life scale, the two variables were correlated, \( r(30) = .42, p > .05 \). The coefficient of determination was calculated as \( r^2 = .18 \), meaning that approximately 20% of the variability observed in scores on the Living Life scale was associated with the children’s social competence scores.

With both spiritual wellbeing scales then, a moderate (Smith, Gratz, & Bousquet, 2009) correlation effect was shown. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. A positive correlation was shown to exist between spiritual wellbeing and social
development. This means that children who scored higher in spiritual wellbeing on either their ideals for spiritual health or their life experience were likely to also demonstrate higher social competence.

**Hypothesis 3.2 There is no significant relationship between spiritual wellbeing and emotional development**

In order to test hypothesis 3.2, a bivariate correlational analysis was conducted to test if the measure of spiritual wellbeing correlated significantly with the children’s emotional quotient, as determined using the BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory. With regard to the Feeling Good scale, the two variables were positively correlated, \( r(30) = .49, \ p < .01 \). The coefficient of determination \( (r^2) \) was .24, meaning that approximately one quarter of the variability observed in scores on the Feeling Good scale was associated with the children’s emotional quotients.

In the case of the Living Life scale, the two variables were also significantly correlated, \( r(30) = .43, \ p > .05 \). The coefficient of determination \( (r^2) \) was .19, meaning that approximately 20% of the variability observed in scores on the Living Life scale was associated with the children’s emotional quotients.

With both spiritual wellbeing scales then, a moderate (Smith et al., 2009) correlation effect was shown. The null hypothesis was therefore rejected. A positive correlation was shown to exist between spiritual wellbeing and emotional development. This means that children who scored higher in spiritual wellbeing on either their ideals for spiritual wellbeing or their life experience were likely to also record higher levels of emotional competence.

**Hypothesis 3.3 There is no significant relationship between spiritual wellbeing and academic attainment, as indicated by the STAR stanine, Reading Age, and PAT Mathematics stanine**
In order to test hypothesis 3.3, a bivariate correlational analysis was conducted to test if the measure of spiritual wellbeing correlated significantly with each of the indicators of the children’s academic attainment.

There was no significant correlation shown between spiritual wellbeing and the children’s reading ability, as recorded by their STAR stanine or Reading Age (all p’s >.05). On these measures of academic attainment then, the null hypothesis was not rejected; there was no significant correlation between the children’s spiritual wellbeing scores and two measures of their reading attainment.

With regard to the indicator of mathematical attainment, namely the PAT Mathematics Stanine, a significant correlation with the Feeling Good scale of spiritual wellbeing was shown. The two variables were correlated, \( r(30) = .36, p < .05 \). The coefficient of determination was calculated as \( r^2 = .13 \), meaning that only 13% of the variability observed in scores on the Feeling Good scale was associated with the children’s mathematics attainment. With the Feeling Good scales then, a weak (Smith et al., 2009) correlation effect was shown. There was no significant correlation shown between the Living Life scale and the children’s mathematics attainment score (\( p > .05 \)). In the case of mathematics attainment then, the null hypothesis was therefore rejected with regard to the Feeling Good scale only. A positive significant correlation was shown to exist between the children’s ideals for spiritual wellbeing measure and mathematical attainment. This means that children who score higher in spiritual wellbeing on their ideals for spiritual health are likely to also record higher levels of mathematical competence. Children who scored higher in spiritual wellbeing on their lived experiences were not more likely to also show higher levels of mathematical competence.

### 4.3.3 Summary of quantitative findings.

Across the seven hypotheses tested using data gathered using the quantitative measures, the following conclusions are supported:
• The school attended was shown to impact children’s scores on the Feeling Good spiritual wellbeing scale, however, there was no significant difference on the Living Life scale. The null hypothesis that there was no significant difference in the spiritual wellbeing of children attending different schools was rejected on the Feeling Good scale, and not rejected on the Living Life scale. The post hoc analysis showed that children from Brook School had significantly higher scores on the Feeling Good scale than did children attending Fern School.

• Gender was not shown to have a significant impact on the spiritual wellbeing of children across either spiritual wellbeing scale. The null hypothesis that there was no significant difference in the spiritual wellbeing of children based on gender was not rejected.

• Ethnicity was not shown to have a significant impact on the spiritual wellbeing of children across either spiritual wellbeing scale. The null hypothesis that there was no significant difference in the spiritual wellbeing of children based on ethnicity was not rejected.

• Self-reported levels of family church attendance were shown to have an impact on children’s beliefs with regard to those aspects of spiritual wellbeing that make them feel good (Feeling Good), while family church attendance was not shown to impact on children’s lived expressions of spiritual wellbeing (Living Life). The null hypothesis that there was no significant difference in the spiritual wellbeing of children based on regularity of family religious affiliation was rejected on the Feeling Good scale, and not rejected on the Living Life scale.

• A significant positive correlation was found between children’s social competence scores across both spiritual wellbeing scales. The null hypothesis that there was no significant relationship between spiritual wellbeing and social development was rejected.

• A significant positive correlation was shown between children’s emotional quotient across both spiritual wellbeing scales. The null hypothesis that there was no significant relationship between spiritual wellbeing and emotional development was rejected.
• A significant positive correlation was shown to exist between the children’s mathematical attainment and their ideals for spiritual wellbeing (Feeling Good), while mathematical attainment was not shown to impact on children’s lived expressions of spiritual wellbeing (Living Life). The null hypothesis that there was no significant relationship between spiritual wellbeing and academic attainment, as indicated by the PAT Mathematics stanine, was rejected on the Feeling Good scale, and not rejected on the Living Life scale.

• There was no significant correlation shown between spiritual wellbeing and the children’s reading ability, as recorded by their STAR stanine or Reading Age. The null hypothesis that there was no significant relationship between spiritual wellbeing and academic attainment, as indicated by the STAR stanine or Reading Age was not rejected.

4.4 Summary of Findings

The findings indicate that while this group of Year 6 children in Aotearoa New Zealand experienced and expressed their personal spirituality in ways that resonated with contemporary literature, spirituality was not part of the common discourse for children or their teachers. The findings also provide some evidence to suggest that spiritual development occurs “hand in hand” with other areas of development and the overall hauora/wellbeing of the child.

There was no evident difference in the way that children responded based on ethnicity or gender. With one quarter (5) of children interviewed identifying as Māori, analysis showed that the children contributed responses to the discussion of spirituality proportionately equal to their group size. Both ethnic groups had responses spread over the four themes identified, and had expressions of spirituality covering the four domains in similar percentages as to those demonstrated for all children.
The quantitative findings of this study demonstrate some tentative support for the central tenet of Durie’s (1994) whare tapawhā model, namely, the importance of all areas of life being in balance. The findings have provided some evidence that children with higher spiritual wellbeing scores may also be seen to have higher scores in other developmental areas. The spiritual wellbeing scores of children demonstrating higher self-reported self-awareness and connectedness to others and to other things were seen to be positively correlated with scores relating to emotional and social development and, in some cases, to higher mathematic scores. It was also noted that, as a group, Māori children had less variability between their spiritual wellbeing ideals and lived experience, rating both at similarly high levels. A larger percentage of children identifying as New Zealand European experienced lower feelings with regard to their actual life experience when compared with their ideals for spiritual wellbeing.

The findings raise questions for discussion and further consideration. Particularly relevant within the Aotearoa New Zealand primary school context are questions relating to the way in which children’s spiritual development, and spiritual wellbeing, is acknowledged and nurtured within the classroom, given findings showing that participants in this study did not necessarily recognise expressions of spirituality for what they were, and did not always have an accepted common language with which to discuss and nurture development in this important area. It would be useful for possible differences in self-reported spiritual wellbeing to be explored further with larger groups of children and, potentially, with a wider range of ethnicities represented.

In the discussion chapter which follows, the implications of the various findings are considered in terms of three key questions: what is spirituality?; how do children make sense of spirituality?; and what are the implications for the children and teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand?
Chapter Five
Discussion

5.1 Introduction

For something to grow, it is necessary to create the right conditions. Spirituality grows when the teacher is attuned to the children at a spiritual level, this is when he or she notices and recognises spiritual language and actions (Kennedy & Duncan, 2009, p. 901).

To restate the purpose, this study set out to examine what some children in Aotearoa New Zealand, and their teachers, understand by spirituality. In the process, there was a focus on two issues: first, the relationship between primary students’ spiritual wellbeing and other markers of childhood development (namely social development, emotional development and educational attainment), and second, the applicability of Fisher’s model of spiritual wellbeing as a way of better articulating children’s spirituality within the context of Aotearoa New Zealand primary schools.

The chapter begins by considering how the findings of the current study help to inform an understanding of childhood spirituality, particularly within the context of the New Zealand state school sector, synthesising the findings from the qualitative and quantitative findings. The discussion then examines Fisher’s (1998) four domain model of spiritual wellbeing in the light of these findings, and discusses the fit with the whare tapawhā model of hauora. The potential of Fisher’s model to shape our understanding, and to create the right conditions for spirituality to grow (Kennedy & Duncan, 2009) is discussed, before considering the implications that the various findings of this study have for schools, teachers and children in Aotearoa New Zealand.
The discussion summarises the study findings, and considers whether or not the necessary conditions are present to foster childhood spirituality, within an overall focus on the hauora/wellbeing of each child. While a small number of New Zealand researchers have considered issues of spiritual development and wellbeing within the Aotearoa New Zealand context, the concern remains that, notwithstanding various references to spirituality within curriculum documents, this remains an important area of childhood development that is largely ignored, or avoided, at the school and classroom level.

In the qualitative phase of the study, findings from the interview data showed that, while spirituality was not a regular topic of conversation for the children, they were able to relate the concept of spirituality to both external spirits and, more personally, to personal characteristics, beliefs and a sense of inner purpose which influenced life decisions. The analysis demonstrated that, when the discussion was facilitated by open-ended questions to guide participants to consider each of Fisher’s (1998) four domains of spiritual wellbeing in turn, irrespective of their ethnicity or gender, children readily provided examples of their self-awareness, inter-personal relationships, connectedness with nature and understandings of beliefs about aspects of the transcendental domain. The spiritual wellbeing domains provided a useful and readily accessible framework for children to share aspects of their developing spirituality. Similarly, open-ended questions, drawn from the research into childhood spirituality of other authors, allowed the children’s discussion to flow freely providing a rich narrative of personal and naturally occurring expressions of spirituality.

The quantitative findings of this study indicated that while gender did not impact on children’s spiritual wellbeing scores, there were some differences noted in the way that Māori children, as compared with New Zealand European children, rated their spiritual wellbeing. There was an impact demonstrated based on the school attended and on regularity of family church attendance. A significant positive correlation was
found between the spiritual wellbeing scores and children’s social competence, emotional quotient and mathematical attainment, but not with either measure of reading attainment. This suggests that primary school aged children’s spirituality may somehow be linked to other markers of childhood development.

5.2 What is Spirituality?

While the primary focus of this study was on the child participants, some additional information gathered by interviewing a group of the children’s teachers, from two of the three schools, is included to further inform this discussion.

5.2.1 How do the findings inform an understanding of childhood spirituality?

5.2.1.1 From the children’s perspective.

As discussed in the review of spirituality literature, there have been historically, culturally and nationally many significant differences in the ways that people around the world perceive and experience spirituality. The concept of spirituality has moved out of theological and religious worldviews, and into public discourse (Watson, et al., 2014). Contemporary definitions tend to view spirituality less in a religious sense, and more on an inclusive spirituality that includes environmentalism and feminism and that is conscious of other people, other cultures and of the spiritual side of daily life (Eckersley, 2004). For example, Egan (2009) notes that “the universalist position argues that to be human is to have a spiritual dimension” (p. 13). As such spirituality is increasingly recognised as an essential human trait (de Souza, 2016).

Generally, as we have seen, contemporary spirituality definitions highlight the positive and beneficial aspects for humans and the world that they live in. The child-centred research in the UK (e.g., refer Hay & Nye, 1998) at the forefront of this research, with its notion of relational consciousness, was being proposed at the same
time as Fisher (1998) was developing his concept of quality of life for spiritual wellbeing within the Australian school context. This relational dimension of being human is seen as the individual’s response to something outside of his or herself, and often beyond the physical world, or as a response to something deep within self (de Souza, 2016, Hyde, 2008). Based on her findings from within New Zealand early childhood centres, Jane Bone’s (2007) concept of an “everyday spirituality” resonates, also being based on an inclusive and relational view of childhood spirituality, that states

spirituality connects people to each other, to all things, to nature and to the universe. Spirituality is a way of appreciating the wonder and mystery of everyday life; it alerts me to the possibility for love, happiness, goodness, peace and compassion in the world (p. 9).

Not surprisingly, given the age of the Year 6 children participating in the current study, it was evident from the interviews that spirituality as a concept was not something that was often referred to, or openly discussed, by the children. Similarly, in Australia, for example, Mason, Singleton, and Webber (2007) have noted that spirituality is, particularly for the young, not generally the top day-to-day priority. Nevertheless, the children in this present study did have ideas relating to what they saw to be the characteristics of a spiritual person, as distinct from someone who might not be seen to be acting in a spiritual manner (Champagne, 2001; Emmons, 2000; Seligman, 1990). Approximately half of the children in this study were able to discuss what they saw as the attributes of a “spiritual person”, mentioning traits such as “calm” and “very happy”, and relating these to aspects of one’s personality.

The one over-riding theme that emerged from the interviews with the children, however, was that the majority of them primarily viewed spirituality as being an intrinsic quality, as something very personal and internal to the individual. This understanding of a personal spirituality, that every human has, resonate with those of Mott-Thornton (1998), who argues that “each individual has a framework of belief
and value which informs, and is informed by, lived experience” (p. 140). The children viewed one’s spirit as an internal force that drove feelings of self-belief and self-determination as they sought purpose and meaning in their daily lives.

Most of the children from Brook School (which had both the CRE programme operating, and the highest self-reported level of family religious affiliation), and some children from Willow School, saw spirituality in the way that it might guide or lead daily decision making for the individual. Overall, one third of the children were able to discuss spirituality in terms of people’s beliefs, making reference to transcendent powers, to a God and to life beyond death.

In the current study, the children generally found it difficult to consider “spirituality” as a concept. However, when their attention was turned specifically to aspects of their self-awareness, and to the connectedness that they experienced with and between themselves, others, the environment and nature, and the transcendent, examples of spirituality in their daily lives were shared freely. It was shown that this discussion was facilitated by the introduction of Fisher’s (1998) model of spiritual wellbeing as a conceptual framework. Many of the contemporary definitions of spirituality, which refer to the concepts of connectedness, belonging and identity, and which are also regularly reflected in the literature on childhood spirituality (Bone, 2007; Fisher, 1998; Hay & Nye, 1998; Hyde, 2008), were clearly evident. The following discussion first elaborates how the findings relate to these concepts and then how they relate more broadly to key themes in the wider literature.

All of the children from all three schools readily reflected on the connectedness experienced with family and close friends. They spoke of the positive feelings of love, care and happiness that flows from close relationships with others, and that builds up over time through shared activities, special celebrations and holidays spent together. The children talked about the deeper levels of respect, understanding, tolerance and empathy that comes from their connectedness with the
special people in their lives. The theme of connectedness with nature and the environment was also very apparent in the children’s daily life experiences, and in their strongly held beliefs. Closely felt connections with animals and special trees, their feelings of awe and wonder with regard to gardens and flowers, and beliefs about the general sanctity of all forms of life reflected the children’s feelings of respect, responsibility and stewardship of nature and the Earth. With regard to their feelings of stewardship for the Earth and the environment, the majority of children talked about nurturing the Earth, along with the responsibility they felt for valuing and, therefore, protecting and using in sustainable ways its air, water and energy resources. The theme of connectedness also extended to children’s thoughts and beliefs about things transcendent beyond their immediate physical world. Approximately one third of the children were able to share the connections they experienced with God, and the happiness and joy felt by belief in “something bigger” than the here and now. The children’s experiences of connectedness to the transcendent were also evident in, for some, their frequent reflection on the place of prayer in their daily life. This was illustrated by comments with respect to their God (“you can talk to him”) and the opportunities provided by times of prayer and deep reflection to connect with, and gain comfort from, talking to and sharing with deceased relatives and/or pets that had previously been close to the child.

The closely aligned spiritual dimension of belonging was also readily noted in the responses of the Year 6 children in this study. Particularly related to their experiences of connectedness, as discussed above, the children obviously drew personal strength from the sense of belonging that came from their strong connections. In this regard, the most frequently mentioned contexts for a sense of belonging came from the children’s family, but also from participating as members of a team and, for a minority, as a member of a religious group. It was the ongoing experience of positive relationships that children attributed to the growth of the sense of belonging. That is to say that as trust builds up over time, and the connectedness is enduring, children reported that they experienced protective
feelings along with harmony with others, and a consequent growth in compassion and empathy. The sense of belonging also facilitated increased respect and tolerance towards others, and opened the door to expressions of forgiveness when another otherwise trusted member of the group made a poor choice.

The third theme of contemporary definitions of spirituality, identity and self-awareness, was also very evident from the responses of the children who were interviewed in this study. One third of the children spoke about their feelings of personal strength and the empowerment that came from their positive self-awareness and a strong sense of personal identity. This sense of identity was closely aligned with the other two aspects of spirituality, namely a sense of belonging and a sense of connectedness. The children also reported drawing personal strength from successful personal achievements in a wide range of pursuits. These personal achievements led to feelings of joy, satisfaction, of feeling proud of oneself and reinforced feelings of being a successful, capable person. Some described the feelings of personal happiness, of “feeling good in my heart”, and others described the personal empowerment that came from being regarded by significant others as “a good person”. With regard to the environmental domain, many children discussed the fulfilment and focus experienced during quiet moments deep in thought, often in some place that had special significance. In the silence of a safe and secure space, children could dream of the future, and plan ahead. Some children were able to reflect on the increased sense of identity that they were able to draw from the transcendent domain, attributing positive personal growth and self-awareness that came from their belief in God. Another set of responses came from children speaking, in the third person, about the sense of identity that they observed other people had achieved from particular religious and personal beliefs, even when contrary to the beliefs of the child speaking.

Across the findings of this study, woven through the many expressions of spirituality, I noted in my analysis that the children often made reference to creatures
and animals in general. There were also more specific references to family pets with special significance in their daily lives, pointing to the role that they may play in spiritual expression. The review of childhood spirituality literature did not reveal this to have previously been a specific topic of enquiry. Given the finding that, in response to some of the open-ended interview questions, approximately 10 to 20% of the children’s responses referenced animals or pets, this may be a useful area for further enquiry. The question is posed as to the possible role that pets (and animals in general) play in the spiritual development of young children. I suggest that the close connectedness to a special family pet has the potential to play an important role in nurturing the child’s developing spirituality, every bit as much as connections to significant others in the child’s life. I also suggest that the close bond with an animal enables the child to reflect on the puzzling issues of meaning and purpose in a safe and non-threatening manner. With other authors having noted that spirituality is both a private affair (Hart, 2003; Hyde 2008), and often hidden from view for fear of ridicule (Hay, 1985), it may be that the opportunity to experience a close relationship with a special pet is another way in which childhood spiritual development might be enhanced. Perhaps pets, and animals generally, are of relatively greater importance to children within the Aotearoa New Zealand context? Many children in New Zealand live in, or are close to, a rural setting, and it may be that there is a greater prevalence of families having a range of animals and pets within their larger urban sections and lifestyle land holdings.

The findings of this study of some young children in New Zealand, then, are strongly aligned to the definitions of spirituality found throughout the contemporary literature relating to childhood spirituality. For example, the findings in this study have much in common with aspects of childhood spirituality, as noted by de Souza (2016), an experienced researcher in the field of childhood spirituality, introducing the book which she co-authored (Spirituality across Disciplines: Research and Practice), which examines the notion of spirituality as it is being used in today’s world across a variety of disciplines. She writes:
Accordingly, we hear words like – awe, wonder, compassion, freedom, liberation, joy, suffering and empathy. As well, the words associated with spiritual practices are rituals, sacred readings, prayer, contemplation, meditation, dreams, solitude, silence and reflection. These words are not only indicative of the connectedness that the individual experiences and expressed to Other but they also suggest changes in the level of consciousness, that is, the awareness and response of the individual self in relation to Other. (de Souza, 2016, p. 4)

And similarly the current findings resonate with Tacey’s (2003) notion that spirituality is a search for the sacred in the everyday where “such encounters change lives and expose young people to the mystery and presence of the sacred within themselves, even as they are moved by the sacred in nature” (p. 181). When confronted with the direct question, “What do you think the word “spirituality” means?”, the children in this study were found to be challenged to put forward suggestions at the conceptual level. However, it is readily apparent from examination of their responses that when asked more specific questions relating to their self-awareness, connectedness and a sense of belonging that they are, nevertheless, experiencing the spiritual dimension in their daily lives, although not directly attributing this to things of a spiritual nature.

This issue of a possible lack of vocabulary and/or the lack of an accessible framework to facilitate an understanding of spirituality at a conceptual level is a recurring theme throughout this discussion. Hart (2003) discusses the “invisibility” of children’s spiritual life, describing their spiritual world as a secret one: rich and varied, but largely hidden from the adult world. And as Adams reminds us, “given that serious discussion of spiritual experiences is not common in daily discourse, children often feel a fear of ridicule or dismissal and for that reason often retreat into silence” (2009, p. 814). With direct questioning to legitimise the topic and to provide the lead, and feeling the safety and support of a small group of their classmates, children in
the study were open and sufficiently trusting to share private and personal experiences from their daily lives.

5.2.1.2 From the teachers’ perspective.
While the primary focus of this study was on the children and their understanding and expressions of spiritual development, the opportunity was taken to undertake an interview with a small group of teachers, at each of Brook and Willow School. The growing literature on how one might best facilitate the spiritual development of children within a school environment has at least two commonly recurring themes. Firstly, given the often secret and hidden nature of this realm of children’s lives, it is very easy for many teachers to miss it entirely (Adams, Hyde, & Woolley, 2008). Secondly, the literature often notes that an ability to recognise expressions of spirituality is closely linked both to the teacher’s own perceptions of what spirituality is and to the teacher’s self-awareness and acknowledgement, or otherwise, of their own spiritual journey (for example, refer Adams, 2016).

As shown in the findings section, the class teachers of the children in this study largely related spirituality to something that was influenced by factors external to the child, rather than viewing it as innate to each child. One teacher was aware that spirituality had a meaning wider than being connected with a religious understanding of spirituality, and others were able to relate spirituality to the quest that was seen in many children to know where they “fit in the world”, and a desire to have “big questions” answered. However, it was evident that daily expressions of spirituality on the part of pupils were not recognised or acknowledged for what they were by these teachers.

The spirituality thread of connectedness was reflected in the teachers’ discussions relating to the child’s connections with, and influences coming from, their peers and family and, for some children, from the family’s religious practices and a belief in God. The aspect of a sense of belonging could be seen to be reflected in that part of
the teachers’ discussion at Brook School which focussed on the children’s wonderings about “where do I fit in the world”, while children’s self-awareness was alluded to in the Brook School teachers’ discussion with regard to the ability of some children to “see the bigger picture”.

However, as for the children, it was readily apparent that professional discussion about spirituality was not a common part of daily discourse. In both teacher interviews, there was an awkwardness felt as the teachers often struggled for words to express their opinions and, in contrast with the children’s interviews, teachers kept the discussion separate from their own personal spirituality. The teachers appeared to have trouble finding non-religious language to describe spirituality. As de Souza (2016) notes, “discovering secular or non-religious language to describe this innate human characteristic has provided a significant challenge to both philosophers and researchers alike” (p. 3). The teachers in this study did not readily perceive or, therefore, describe spirituality as an intrinsically human characteristic. Rather, with a religious connotation to spirituality at the forefront of mind, they saw hurdles in providing for a child’s spiritual development within a secular schooling environment.

In general then, the teachers in this study were not attuned to children’s everyday spirituality, and viewed spirituality as coming from influences external to the child. The teachers perceived difficulties in supporting spiritual development outside of a religious school and, fundamentally, may not have been aware of their own spirituality. Combining all of this with the earlier discussion regarding the often secret and hidden nature of childhood spirituality, the issues surrounding promotion of the spiritual health of children within a primary school context are readily apparent. Some of the implications that this raises for teaching are highlighted in the following sections.
5.2.2 What is the significance of conclusions drawn from the quantitative findings between spiritual wellbeing and the other factors considered?

The literature review explored the rationale supporting the role that spirituality plays, both in education and in health, to support and nurture children to find meaning and connectedness, and to promote overall wellbeing. It is a holistic approach to education of the whole child, which links the otherwise separate strands of spirituality, health and wellbeing within an educational setting. Authentic acknowledgement of spirituality in education is seen as a way to nurture children into wholeness and wellness (de Souza, 2014). And, since spiritual wellbeing can be seen as the expression of one’s underlying state of spiritual health (Ellison, 1983), measures of spiritual wellbeing may shed light on the path of one’s developing spirituality.

The quantitative phase of the current study used Fisher’s (2004) measure of spiritual wellbeing, the Feeling Good Living Life questionnaire, firstly to investigate whether spiritual wellbeing related to demographic factors (Research Question 2) and, secondly, to investigate whether there was any correlation between spiritual wellbeing and children’s social and emotional development, and educational achievement (Research Question 3). In particular the study sought to ascertain whether there was evidence to suggest that children with higher spiritual wellbeing scores were also more likely to have higher scores in other areas of their overall development.

5.2.2.1 Children’s school, gender, ethnicity and regularity of family religious affiliation.

The findings of this study showed that there were no statistically significant differences of the spiritual wellbeing scores in terms of gender or ethnicity. However, from the descriptive statistics, some ways in which Māori children, as compared with New Zealand European children, rated their spiritual wellbeing were tentatively discussed. Noting that the respective sample sizes in this study are
relatively small, further research with larger groups of children and with a greater range of ethnicities represented would be useful to investigate further.

Interestingly, with regard to the school attended, there were statistically significant differences on children’s spiritual wellbeing scores on the Feeling Good sub-scale (that is, the factors which children believed influenced their spiritual wellbeing), but not on the Living Life sub-scale (pertaining to the children’s self-ratings of how they were actually experiencing life). The post-hoc analysis showed that children from Brook School had significantly higher scores on the Feeling Good scale than did the children attending Fern School. Equally of interest, with regard to the children’s self-reported level of regularity of family religious affiliation, it was also found that this factor had an influence on the Feeling Good sub-scale scores (but also, as with the above result, not on the Living Life sub-scale).

There were two obvious ways in which Brook School differed from the other two schools in the study. Firstly, as highlighted in the Findings chapter (see Table 4.1), it was the children from Brook School who reported higher levels of family religious affiliation (the “often” and “sometimes” categories combined at 52% of the children, including the only child in the study who rated himself at the “often” level) while the children from Willow School (at a combined 33.3%) and Fern School (at a combined 25%) can be seen to be much less likely to come from a family with a regular religious affiliation reported. And secondly, it was Brook School which at the time of study was the only one to offer a weekly Christian Religious Education (CRE) programme for pupils, being taken up by some two-thirds of its Year 5 and Year 6 children (described in more detail in section 4.2.1), and attended by 12 of the 19 children participating in this study.

It is conceivable that either or both of these factors, more evident in the Brook School sample than the other two schools, could have positively influenced the higher scores evident on the Feeling Good subscale. As noted in the literature (Adams, 2009;
de Souza, 2016; Hart, 2003), and as highlighted above within the discussion pertaining to the qualitative findings, many people struggle to find secular, non-religious language with which to talk about aspects of spirituality. Conversely, therefore, it is possible that the Brook School children in particular, with their higher levels of church attendance, family religious beliefs and/or regular participation in their school-based CRE programme were more readily able or confident to conceptualise and discuss aspects of spirituality using religious language. This could also have led these children to higher self-ratings on their expressed ideals for spiritual wellbeing. This potential conclusion begs the question, if children had more regular exposure to a wider understanding of everyday spirituality, and had the opportunity to hear and use the language of secular spirituality would these factors contribute to higher self-ratings on a measure of ideals for spiritual wellbeing? And, similarly, would this also potentially contribute to higher self-ratings on a measure of daily experience of spiritual wellbeing?

It is worth remembering at this point that any quantitative instrument can never be claimed to represent, nor fully measure, all of the features of either spirituality or spiritual wellbeing. The use of a self-report questionnaire can only give an indication of aspects of a child’s spiritual wellbeing; it is an indicative rather than representative measure. Measuring spirituality is particularly complicated because any measure only reflects the phenomenon or its consequences as it cannot be measured directly (Moberg, 2002). Any measure will also reflect a particular cultural understanding of spirituality. The bigger question here, then, is not whether scores themselves would increase but rather, if children had more regular exposure to a wider understanding of everyday spirituality, would this enhance their own spiritual development?

5.2.2.2 Social and emotional development, and educational attainment.

The children’s scores on the spiritual wellbeing questionnaire sub-scales were also tested against other aspects of children’s development, namely social and emotional
development, and educational attainments. This aspect of the current study sought evidence to validate aspects of Durie’s (1994) whare tapawhā model of wellbeing or hauora, included in the New Zealand Curriculum for Health and Physical Education (Ministry of Education, 1999) to illustrate the importance of all aspects of life being in balance. To reiterate, the four elements of this model show the four walls of an integrated and strong whare (house) as taha whanau/social wellbeing; taha hinengaro/mental and emotional wellbeing; taha tinana/physical wellbeing; and taha wairua/spiritual wellbeing.

A positive correlation was shown between children’s social competence scores across both spiritual wellbeing scales. Developing satisfactory levels of social competence has been found to be a critical factor for overall wellbeing during not only childhood, but also for later success and adjustment in life (Merrell, 1993). Social competence has an impact on children’s ability to form lasting friendships, and to generally get along with others. The scale of school social behaviour used in this study (see Appendix M), asked the child’s teacher to consider, for example, the extent to which the child cooperates with peers, will compromise when working with others, is respected and asked to join in by others. Skill in and the regular use of indicators of social competence indicators such as these can be seen to have a positive impact on how children view themselves, and how they experience connectedness with their peers and family members. Not surprisingly then, the findings in this study showed that children with higher ratings of social competence also exhibited higher levels of spiritual wellbeing.

Similarly, a positive correlation was demonstrated between children’s emotional quotient across both spiritual wellbeing scales. The BarOn Emotional Quotient instrument (Bar-On & Parker, 2000) used in this study sampled intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, stress-management and general mood, five dimensions commonly associated with definitions of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995). There are obvious links with contemporary conceptions of human spirituality and
the dimensions of self-awareness, connectedness and a sense of belonging. A child’s ability to show empathy and respect for his or herself, and for others, along with an ability to be conscious of and manage one’s own emotional state are key skills for childhood development that also have significant implications for success and happiness in later life. These same abilities are likely to also impact directly on the child’s self-awareness, connectedness to others and a sense of belonging.

Durie’s (1994) model includes mental wellbeing alongside emotional wellbeing as one of the essential elements required to build overall hauora/wellbeing. A central aspect of mental wellbeing is realising one’s potential, and the final hypotheses tested in this research related to children’s academic attainment, a primary goal of the schooling. As noted in the discussion of the study’s qualitative findings, a positive sense of identity, self-worth and self-respect were often mentioned aspects of the self-awareness dimension of spirituality. There were many responses from the children, particularly with relation to self-awareness, where theme indicators included personal achievements such as, with reference to academic work, doing well, doing my best, going up a level and succeeding. The children described the affective feelings emanating from these achievements, such as feeling proud and feeling good inside, feeling good in my heart. Similar positive feelings were attributed to praise from others when academic goals were met, which resulted in compliments being shared from significant others.

While there was no significant correlation shown on either measure of reading attainment with spiritual wellbeing, a positive correlation was shown to exist between the children’s mathematical attainment and their ideals for spiritual wellbeing (the Feeling Good subscale), while mathematical attainment was not shown to relate to children’s lived expressions of spiritual wellbeing (Living Life subscale). Again noting the small sample sizes involved in this study, it would be important for these results to be replicated in further research for confirmation of this possible correlation. However, it is interesting to reflect on this result, and to
wonder if this is indeed a reliable and valid finding suggesting that the positive image and feelings of self-worth that might come from success in the academic realm could be another aspect that has the potential to enhance a child’s feelings of spiritual wellbeing. It is certainly not difficult to imagine that repeated failure in the school setting, and all of the negative feelings that could develop from this being a constant message that a child receives about his or herself, would lead to a decrease in feelings of self-worth and self-respect in particular. Taken to an extreme, one’s sense of identity could be seriously impacted.

The relationship between the closely related conceptual lenses of spiritual development, spiritual intelligence and spiritual wellbeing were discussed in the earlier review of the literature, noting that when children have their spiritual intelligence nurtured their potential for healing and happiness is realised (Erricker, 2009; Painton, 2009). Adams et al. (2008) also believe that young children use their spiritual intelligence to address issues of meaning and value in the own lives, as well as to enhance their sense of resilience and wellbeing. When considering the potential impact of a spiritual intelligence, Hyde (2009) concluded that

SQ [Spiritual Intelligence] has a definite role to play in a person’s sense of wellbeing and that it should sit alongside the notions of social and emotional wellbeing. If an individual has a sense of connectedness with others, and is able to draw upon this as a spiritual resource in addressing issues of meaning and value in life, then this will surely impact upon the resilience and general wellbeing of that individual. If schools are envisaged as places of connectedness, where the quality of relationships between all members of the school community are valued and nurtured, then again, this enhances the notions of resilience and wellbeing, since those belonging to the school community are able to draw upon this as a spiritual resource to increase their sense of wellbeing. (p. 861)
This study’s findings also suggest that higher levels of social competence and higher levels of emotional intelligence can be seen to develop “hand in hand” with a child’s spiritual wellbeing, and vice versa. Cautiously, there may be some indication that academic attainment might also be related positively with increased spiritual wellbeing. Given the particularly small and biased nature of the case study approach taken here, these findings can only be regarded as suggestive, rather than necessarily truly representative of the wider Year 6 population. To this extent, then, the study provides some validation for Durie’s (1994) *whare tapawhā* model of wellbeing, by demonstrating that a child’s developing strength in one area of wellbeing might be related to, and supportive of, development within the other areas. Nevertheless, the findings do raise the question as to what extent schools are purposefully addressing all aspects of a child’s overall development and wellbeing. If one area is not being nurtured and supported, it may be that there is an impact not only on that aspect, but on the child’s overall development.

### 5.3 How do Children Make Sense of Spirituality?

As noted and discussed in the preceding sections, while children in the current study were very challenged when asked to describe spirituality at a conceptual level, when discussions were framed by specific reference to Fisher’s (1998) domains of spiritual wellbeing and when guided by open-ended questions adapted from previous research into childhood spirituality (Bone, 2007; Fisher, 1998; Hay & Nye, 1998; Hyde, 2005), their reflections flowed freely. The children’s responses contained many indicators of personal expressions of the spirituality themes commonly attributed to a contemporary understanding of spirituality.

In her study of 23 young English-speaking American children from the San Francisco Bay Area, ages 6 - 12, Sauln (2013) used Fisher’s domains to transform qualitative data from the children’s dreams into spiritual domains, utilised as an indication of spiritual awareness. The aim was to find out if there was support for the hypothesis
that some dreams might be connected to children’s spiritual awareness, or be influenced by their spirituality, beliefs, and practices. Using a mixed-methods approach, major dream themes were identified using indicators drawn from interview and questionnaire data, and the resulting dream data were correlated to participants’ spiritual awareness, as measured by Fisher’s Feeling Good, Living Life instrument. As Francis (2009) has also noted, a major attraction of Fisher’s model of spiritual wellbeing is that “it is well defined, coherent and open to operationalisation” (p. 10). The language and the clear visual representation used in Fisher’s model makes it readily relatable to readers.

5.3.1. How do the findings relate to Fisher’s domains?

Fisher’s (1998) model of spiritual wellbeing was developed, and refined, at the same time as other contemporary understandings of childhood spirituality were coming to the forefront of the literature, and can be seen to have a very similar conceptual basis. For example, Hay and Nye’s (1998) categories of awareness sensing, mystery sensing and value sensing as areas that support the spiritual, Champagne’s (2003) sensitive, relational and existential spiritual modes and Hart’s (2003) five spiritual capacities of wisdom, wonder, relationship between one’s self and the other, seeing the invisible and wondering about ultimate life issues can all be seen as the views of different researchers, from differing research and professional backgrounds describing the same larger construct from alternate perspectives. From the health and wellbeing discipline, Fisher (1998) categorised his interpretation of the interrelated and multi-dimensional aspects of spiritual knowledge, spiritual inspiration and spiritual expression across four domains.

In the current study, Fisher’s domains of spiritual wellbeing were operationalised in a similar manner to that employed by Sauln (2013). The various indicators and contexts used in the study to identify children’s expressions of spirituality from the rich qualitative data, building on and in addition to those expressions identified and used by Fisher, are listed in Table 5.1. In this way, children’s expressions of
spirituality were identified within the interview transcripts, as shown in the findings chapter, and coded against the four domains of spiritual wellbeing. Across all of the open-ended questions, shown in the childhood spirituality literature to be fertile ground for expressions of daily lived expressions of spirituality (Bone, 2007; Fisher, 1998; Hay and Nye, 1998; Hyde, 2005), the children’s responses in this study were spread across each of the four domains, as shown originally in Table 4.6 (Chapter 4).

Table 5.1. Contexts and Indicators Used to Code Expressions of Childhood Spirituality by Spiritual Wellbeing Domains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spiritual Wellbeing Domain</th>
<th>Personal</th>
<th>Family/Communal</th>
<th>Environment/Nature</th>
<th>Transcendent/God</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-awareness</td>
<td>in-depth</td>
<td>connectedness with nature</td>
<td>faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>interpersonal relations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Indicators of expressions of spiritual wellbeing ...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fisher (1998)</th>
<th>joy</th>
<th>love</th>
<th>awe</th>
<th>adoration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>peace</td>
<td>forgiveness</td>
<td>wonder</td>
<td>worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>patience</td>
<td>justice</td>
<td>peak experiences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>identity</td>
<td>hope</td>
<td>faith</td>
<td>trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>self-worth</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contexts and additional indicators utilised in the current study</th>
<th>kindness</th>
<th>oneness with…</th>
<th>God, Jesus, church</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>focus, concentration</td>
<td>connections</td>
<td>animals, pets,</td>
<td>spirit(s), aura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>engrossed, meaning</td>
<td>connections</td>
<td>insects</td>
<td>prayer, aura</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strength</td>
<td>groups</td>
<td>nature, gardens</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>personal power, soul</td>
<td>friends</td>
<td>sun, stars</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-discipline</td>
<td>grandparents</td>
<td>trees, beach</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>achievement</td>
<td>parents, mother,</td>
<td>water, air, oxygen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>self-esteem</td>
<td>father</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While there was some variability from question to question, overall the majority of children’s expressions can be seen to relate to the personal domain (at 37% of the total expressions of spirituality), with the communal and transcendental domains accounting for approximately one-quarter of the expressions each (22% and 26%
respectively). It was the environmental domain to which the smallest percentage (15%) of expressions were attributed. Interestingly, in Sauln’s (2013) research, it was noted that the children’s dreams which involved nature, animals and positive relationships to the environment were less prevalent than dreams relating to other domains. No significant quantitative differences were found between dream content and the expressions of children’s spirituality in Sauln’s questionnaires or when accounting for differences in ethnicity, age or gender. It was also noted by Sauln that while at least three of Fisher’s (1998) four domains were referenced in the dreams of every child studied, no significant quantitative differences were found in any of the comparisons between boys and girls. Given the young age of the participants in this study, it is not surprising that the highest percentage of expressions of spirituality was attributable to the personal domain. This was particularly evident in the questions relating to a time when the child was totally focussed and when asked for their top three wishes. The two related questions about what is most important to you, and what really, really matters both had the highest percentage of expressions that related to the family or communal domain. As shown in the findings, children revealed their deep thinking about the importance of family connectedness for them. Children rated their relationships with family and friends most highly; their sense of belonging largely came from these fundamental relationships.

Expressions of spirituality that related to the transcendental domain, and often to God directly, made up just over one quarter of the children’s responses. However, when talking about things that they wonder about, and things that they cannot explain, the greatest percentages (at 86% and 73% respectively) were associated with this domain. On these same two questions, almost all of the other expressions were of a personal nature.

With regard to expressions of spirituality that could be seen to relate to the environmental domain, it was, not surprisingly, the opportunity to reflect on a private, special place in which to think that brought up most references to nature and
the environment. Approximately one third of the responses to the questions about what is most important to you and what really, really matters were also associated with the environmental domain. This reflected the children’s general concerns, and an understanding of their stewardship responsibilities, for nurturing the Earth and nature.

While the findings of this study show that children’s responses contained many indicators of personal expressions of the spirituality themes commonly described in contemporary literature, the study also highlights the general lack of understanding and awareness of spirituality amongst both the teacher and pupil participants. Arguably, without such awareness and acceptance, the findings of this study highlight a disconnection at the classroom level between curriculum statements of intent and the realities for spiritual development within regular classroom programmes. These findings add weight to Fraser’s (2014) concern that spirituality education might be seen as largely superfluous, and easily minimalised or made redundant. Furthermore, within the Aotearoa New Zealand bi-cultural context, indigenous understandings of the importance and centrality of spiritual wellbeing may not be filtering through to daily classroom experiences and interactions between teachers and their pupils, let alone reinforcing the value of spiritual awareness for all.

5.3.2 How can Fisher’s domains therefore help shape our understanding of childhood spirituality?

To date Fisher’s (1998) four domain model of spiritual wellbeing has largely untested potential to help shape both adult and child understanding of everyday spirituality, particularly within the context of the New Zealand primary school classroom.

Referring back to the earlier discussion above, spirituality is not a regular topic of conversation for most people. In the Western world to this point in time understanding of spirituality comes, for most people, from either a traditionally
religious basis or from vague notions of unfamiliar, mystical new-age spiritual practices, both of which tend in today’s world to be regarded with not insignificant scepticism. And associated inseparably with this is, most often, a relatively fragile understanding of one’s own spirituality (Sunley, 2009) and, consequently, a very shaky position from which to notice, let alone support and nurture, someone else’s spiritual journey (Fraser, 2004; Fraser & Grootenboer, 2004; Kennedy & Duncan, 2016; Scott, 2004; Sunley, 2009). While these comments refer to the wider Western context, which has influenced both the literature reviewed and the participants involved in the current study, this is not of course necessarily the case for all children in Aotearoa New Zealand. This may be particularly so for the children identifying as Māori in this study, but also generally for the growing numbers of ethnicities represented within the increasingly multi-cultural contexts of our primary schools. For these children the “spiritual” may well be a much more natural and integral part of the shared beliefs and conversations within the communities with which their respective families identify (Bone, 2007; Egan, 2000; Kennedy & Duncan; 2016). As de Souza (2016) for example, has noted, studies of Eastern and indigenous perspectives show spirituality to be much more of an everyday affair within these contexts. Within the current study, the findings relating to the five children interviewed who identified as Māori did not differ from the findings reported for all children interviewed. The children of Māori ethnicity discussed spirituality, and shared expressions of spirituality in very much the same ways as non-Māori. Results did differ in terms of ethnicity in relation to the quantitative spiritual wellbeing measure, where Māori children reported higher levels of spiritual wellbeing with regard to their lived experiences and, therefore, showed lower levels of spiritual dissonance when comparing their scores on the Feeling Good subscale with scores on the Living Life subscale. For the children identifying as Māori, scores on the two subscales were more closely aligned. To the extent that spirituality may have been more of an everyday affair within their family and community circles, it could be for Māori children that they experience and feel more personal harmony with regard to the spiritual dimensions of their lives.
Because an understanding of contemporary definitions of spirituality in terms that would be readily accessible and comprehensible (such as, for example, using self-awareness, a sense of belonging and connectedness) are not in common discourse, most people have little idea of the various but distinctly related notions of a universal spirituality that are supported in current literature and research in this area. The current study appears to support the contention that there is not a commonly held understanding of, as Egan (2000) states when defining *taha wairua*/spiritual wellbeing, spirituality defined as “peoples’ values, beliefs, meaning and purpose in life, awareness and identity” (p. 16). Even the often heard statement that “I am spiritual, but I am not religious” is a commonly held belief (de Souza, 2016) that is not actually founded on any real knowledge of how to talk about one’s spirituality (Hood, 2003). Being a spiritual person, or having a spiritual dimension to one’s life, might be understood to some extent in terms of seeking answers to some of the big questions of life, making meaning of life, or a search for an ultimate value or purpose in life (Coles, 1990; Eaude, 2001; Fisher, 1999; Kennedy & Duncan, 2016). Palmer (1999) describes spirituality as “the ancient and abiding human quest for connectedness with something larger and more trustworthy than our own egos” (p. 6), while Crawford and Rossiter (2006) equate young people’s search for meaning, identity and spirituality with the very reasons for living. However, we have seen in the findings of this study that the children, and their teachers, struggled to articulate definitions of spirituality. While those with some exposure to a religious language might have more words at hand with which to talk about spirituality, these descriptors from a religious framework can also, unhelpfully, restrict or narrow the view and understanding of what is encompassed by a spiritual awareness.

Fisher’s model of spiritual wellbeing has been described in the literature as being well defined, coherent and accessible (Francis, 2009; Sauln, 2013). The current study demonstrates that there is potential for this four domains model to open the door to a wider understanding of spirituality, using readily understandable and relatable
constructs and non-religious language, for children and teachers alike. The four domains of the personal, communal, environmental and the transcendent provide a framework upon which, and within which, to acknowledge and understand more deeply, expressions of spirituality which may otherwise not be recognised for what they are. Only then, also, is the potential available to nurture the spirituality of another more purposefully, within a secular language and setting that is the experience of many. While Fisher’s model was developed in schools in Victoria, Australia, the findings of this study validate the use of the model within the Aotearoa New Zealand context. The model sits comfortably with the holistic, everyday nature of Māori spirituality, as described by Fraser (2014, 2004) and Bone (2014), where spirituality is seen to be central to wellbeing, and founded on a connectedness to the land which ensures an inbuilt sense of belonging and responsibility. The study has shown that the four domains of Fisher’s model can be used as a tool to help children express their understanding of spirituality.

When the children in the current study were asked to reflect on their connectedness within each of the four domains in turn, the spiritual wellbeing domains provided a useful and readily accessible framework for children to share aspects of their developing spirituality. Within their responses could be seen examples of their self-awareness and sense of belonging to each domain of self, others, nature and of the transcendental domain. Similarly, when the open-ended discussions were led by rich contexts, the children’s expressions of spirituality were spread across all four domains. Without the lens of a spiritual wellbeing model, there was much, rich narrative that would not be readily attributed to spiritual awareness.

When the teachers interviewed in the current study were shown Fisher’s four domain model of spiritual wellbeing, the general consensus from each teacher was that the model “made sense” in theory. This was represented by one teacher, who said
We touched on some of those things. It makes sense that you have got to start with yourself before you figure out how you fit within the community in the wider sense, and within the environment, and then obviously you’ve got your own thoughts [teacher pointed to the transcendental domain]. (Teacher B, Brook School)

For the teachers at Brook School, the well-attended, weekly Christian Religious Education (CRE) classes were seen as having a significant impact on the children’s language around spiritual awareness that did not necessarily relate to their own personal stage of spiritual development. As an example, the teachers spoke about the dilemma that their children were currently facing, with the class teachers showing documentaries in class about the formation of the earth, and the fact that “they are getting completely opposite stories” in CRE. The teachers also noted the influence of the beliefs and religious practices of the parents, and the peer group, and their observation that while some children “just take everything that is told to them” as absolute truth, other children question more deeply.

However, what was evident from having Fisher’s domain model “on the table” was that it facilitated reflection on a much wider understanding of spirituality, and much freer, less personally awkward, professional discussion. As discussed by Kennedy and Duncan (2016), shifting the boundaries of spirituality, particularly in the Western world, has allowed it to be recognised outside of a religious framework and by people who do not wish to be part of a religious structure or institution but are interested in seeking answers to some of the big questions in life such as: people’s relationships, identity, meaning in life and what, for them, is of ultimate value in their lives. (p. 892)

There was general agreement, from the teachers’ professional knowledge of child development stages, regarding the progression of spiritual development from the self to others, and to the environment. However, the teachers had not previously
considered, and certainly not discussed together, the spiritual development of their pupils with regard to aspects of the transcendental domain. Here again what was evident was the tendency for teachers to view spiritual development from largely a religious framework, the prevailing view that religious education was beyond the remit of the state school curriculum. Furthermore, while each teacher had their own personal views with regard to religious matters, spirituality was “a term that few teachers volunteer when discussing their own professional lives. Teachers rarely get opportunities to talk about themselves, to reassess where they are in terms of their own learning journeys, or to value their own voice” (Sunley, 2009, p. 801). In the current study, it was noted that when one teacher verbalised their personal position quite assertively, by pointing to the environmental domain, and saying, “I’m definitely here, but there’s a big leap between me and this one” (pointing to the transcendental domain), that this lead to an awkward break in the conversation.

Fisher (1998) describes his definition of spirituality as a functional understanding, when he writes:

Spirituality is concerned with a person’s awareness of the existence and experience of inner feelings and beliefs, that give purpose, meaning and value to life. Spirituality helps individuals to live at peace with themselves, to love (God and) their neighbour, and to live in harmony with the environment. For some, spirituality involves an encounter with God, or transcendent reality, which can occur in or out of the context of organised religion, whereas for others, it involves no experience or belief in the supernatural. (NB: ‘These words were placed in parentheses as they will be meaningless to those people who do not relate with God). (p. 190)

Fisher’s model of spiritual wellbeing frames an awareness of spirituality in this wider way, opening the mind to a definition which sees spirituality as an innate human quality, and one which focusses attention on an awareness of relationships with one’s self and with others, with the environment and, for some, with a God. The
definition, based on beliefs and values, helps to define one’s identity and make meaning from the experiences and realities of everyday life (Fisher, 1999; Hay & Nye, 1998; Kennedy & Duncan, 2016). Simultaneously, Fisher’s model provides a very accessible and largely non-religious language by which to communicate with others. The four domains model gives a framework that readily makes sense. It is one that has a natural flow from the intimate, personal aspects of one’s spirituality, extending beyond that to one’s connections with family and others. Thirdly, the environmental domain reminds one of the many ways in which connectedness, a sense of awe and wonder, a sense of belonging and stewardship is an integral part of our experience. And in the fourth and final domain, our beliefs about something beyond the physical here and now are considered. Fisher’s “head and heart” metaphor is a similarly accessible concept for most. The knowledge aspect (the head) of each domain, is expressed in everyday language (using words, for example, such as meaning, purpose, nurture, stewardship, ultimate concern). While the inspirational aspect (the heart) in each domain of self-awareness, in-depth interpersonal relations, connectedness with nature and faith are terms that are within the language and everyday experience of children and adults and are, therefore, also readily relatable terms. Helpfully then too, Fisher’s model has within each domain examples of expressions of spiritual wellbeing that would be evident for a spiritually healthy person when, within any particular domain, the knowledge and the inspirational components are in harmony.

In the current study, Fisher’s four domain representation of spiritual wellbeing, with its accessible and non-religious language was demonstrated to be a representation that “made sense” for participants. The visual nature of the model resonated at a conceptual level, and the expressions of spiritual awareness, which were identifiable throughout the interviews with Year 6 children, provide practical real-life examples.
5.4 So What? – The Implications for the Primary School Context in Aotearoa New Zealand

Since spirituality is widely understood to be a basic quality of all humans (Groome, 1998), spiritual wellbeing can be seen to be a fundamental dimension of people’s overall health and wellbeing. As Fraser (2014) discusses, this is doubly important in the bi-cultural context of Aotearoa New Zealand, wherein spirituality is integrally important to te ao Māori (the Māori world) and is also recognised as one of the paths to learning (Pere, 1995). In addition, for Māori, the spiritual dimension of human existence includes values and ethical decision making, along with the expectation that one’s spirituality is used in the service of others (Bevan-Brown, 1996). It includes the idea of oneness, or unity, expressed by Māori as kotahitanga, and defined essentially as in knowing one’s self, one is able know others. For as Fraser (2004) states, “to ignore the spiritual is to expect Māori to divide and fragment their lives and their values. When this happens, schooling limits the human capacity, driving the soul underground” (p. 93). The limitations inherent in failure to address any aspect of childhood development can be expected to have a significant impact on any child’s hauora/wellbeing, irrespective of ethnicity.

From within the Aotearoa New Zealand context, Bone (2007) has noted that Te Whariki, the early childhood curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996), uses the metaphor of a woven mat (whāriki) to illustrate the integrated nature of the curriculum principles of whakamana/empowerment; kotahitanga/holistic development; whanau tangata/family and community; and nga hononga/relationships. These principles mesh with the strands of mana atua/wellbeing; mana whenua/belonging; mana tangata/contribution; mana reo/communication; and mana aoturoa/exploration. As discussed earlier, the inclusion of Durie’s (1994) whare tapawhā model of wellbeing or hauora in the New Zealand Curriculum for Health and Physical Education (Ministry of Education, 1999), illustrating the importance of all aspects of life being in balance, added a uniquely Aotearoa New Zealand context to the current
study. *Hauora* includes a spiritual dimension in this model (Fraser & Grootenboer, 2004). The model pictures the whole *whare* (house) as more than the sum of its parts, representing the four walls as *taha whanau* / social wellbeing; *taha hinengaro* / mental and emotional wellbeing; *taha tinana* / physical wellbeing; and *taha wairua* / spiritual wellbeing.

### 5.4.1 How well does Fisher’s model of spiritual wellbeing fit with the *whare tapawhā* model, and thinking about *hauora*?

Education, as an integrated and holistic process, provides for the development of all aspects of the student. For O’Higgins-Norman (2006) “education for spirituality, care and wellbeing is an integrated process whereby the overall wellbeing of a student is understood as intrinsically linked to the spiritual dimension of his/her life” (p. 937). As we have seen in Aotearoa New Zealand, models for wellbeing and holistic development and learning include the spiritual dimension. Bone (2016) attributes this to her belief “that in New Zealand spirituality has been kept alive by Māori as *tangata whenua* (people of the land) who act as *kaitiaki* or spiritual guardians of indigenous spirituality and the spirituality of others” (p. 887). As a result, “successive governments have been ethically impelled to consider Māori models of health and wellbeing” (Egan, 2009, p. 21).

Durie’s (1994) *whare tapawhā* model of wellbeing or *hauora*, illustrates the importance of all aspects of life being in balance. The model reminds us that education of the whole child must attend to the development of each aspect of mind, body and soul. It demonstrates, pictorially, that in strengthening each wall, the *whare* becomes inherently stronger; that in strengthening each aspect of a child’s development, the overall *hauora* of the child becomes greater than the sum of each part. We have seen in this study, some tentative evidence of links between Year 6 children’s social, emotional and academic development, and their spiritual wellbeing.
In the busy life of a modern day classroom, all too often the meeting of a raft of achievement objectives, particularly with regard to literacy and numeracy goals and targets, can lead to the marginalisation of other areas of learning (Fraser, 2014). While the mind, and to a lesser extent the body, might receive attention within the mainstream curriculum offering, it is likely that the soul does not. Within the Aotearoa New Zealand classroom, evidence can be found of schools attending to the social, mental, emotional and physical wellbeing of their pupils (Egan, 2000). Furthermore, the increase in schools adopting aspects of positive psychology and the growth in mindfulness programmes is becoming well documented (for example, Brown & Ryan, 2003; Mazza-Davies, 2015; Rix & Bernay, 2014). In their 2014 research into the effects of mindfulness education in five New Zealand primary schools, Rix and Bernay highlight the positive wellbeing benefits that they discovered. And while they discussed the synergy that mindfulness programmes have with Durie’s (1994) whare tapawhā model of wellbeing (including the spiritual dimension), the ongoing controversies related to parental concerns with the place of spirituality and religion within our schools led teachers to avoid explicit links with spirituality being highlighted.

Thus the spiritual dimension of a child’s development remains problematic for most teachers, being largely not acknowledged or nurtured at the school level (Fraser & Grootenboer, 2004). And yet, as Fraser (2004) argues,

> what is valued in classrooms and schools reflects our view of what counts as important learning. To ignore the spiritual realm is to communicate clearly that such issues are irrelevant or unnecessary. A natural acceptance of spirituality … creates a moral space in which people’s values and beliefs can co-exist without excuse or apology in secular education. (p. 94)

While it is not argued here that Fisher’s (1998) model addresses the full range of factors contributing to one’s overall hauora, it does provide a vehicle which has the potential to address a central aspect of wellbeing. Spirituality is, arguably,
fundamental to each of the other aspects of wellbeing, going as it does to the very reason for living (Crawford & Rossiter, 2006), that age-old human search for self-awareness, connectedness, and sense of belonging that comes through a healthy spiritual awareness.

5.4.2 The difficulties inherent in addressing *taha wairua*/spiritual wellbeing within the classroom.

The current study has found evidence, within the Aotearoa New Zealand primary school context, to support three recurring themes in the literature. These themes highlight a lack of a commonly accepted, secular understanding and language of spirituality, the impact of adults’ often own fragile spiritual self-awareness, both of which combine to further exacerbate the third significant issue, that of the hidden and largely unrecognized nature of children’s day-to-day expressions that reflect their emerging spirituality. The study findings also pointed to the possible role that family pets might play in supporting spiritual wellbeing.

5.4.2.1 Lack of clarity and acceptance of things spiritual.

Adams (2009) reminds us that what constitutes a spiritual experience can be a matter of perception, and that this places considerable onus on adults working with children to be well informed. While a plethora of definitions can been seen within a review of contemporary literature relating to childhood spirituality, the consistent themes that emerge relate to “a relationship with self, others, a Transcendent Other or the world and often express a sense of connectedness, or a need to feel connected” (Hay & Nye, 2006). To the extent, then, that Fisher’s (1998) model of spiritual wellbeing can be seen to be in harmony with these themes, it offers a practical way for the many daily expressions of spirituality within the classroom to be noticed for what they are; to be understood and acknowledged by teachers. Fisher’s four domains model of spiritual wellbeing offers a pathway by which secular school
communities might become engaged in nurturing spirituality as an essential, and core, element of a child’s overall wellbeing.

Findings from the interviews conducted for this study demonstrated that the conceptual framework, and the language, offered within Fisher’s model worked to allow participants to discuss the various aspects of spirituality more freely, and to both recognise and usefully categorise expressions of childhood spirituality in a way that “made sense” for children and their teachers. It has been noted from studies of Eastern and/or indigenous perspectives that questions of definition, and acceptance of spirituality within daily discourse, do not seem to be such an issue (Watson et al., 2014). “Spirituality appears to be an everyday affair for people who come from these latter cultures” (de Souza, 2016, p. 3). The difficulty in conceptualising spirituality in a manageable and workable format that is accepted in everyday discourse, de Souza believes, applies particularly to western perspectives of spirituality, based historically on Western Christianity. The findings of the current study have also noted that children and teachers struggle to find non-religious language to use when discussing spirituality, and that this may not be helped by the lack of a broad, contemporary understanding of a wider secular based definition of human spirituality.

Within Aotearoa New Zealand, and embedded within official curriculum documents, we have models for holistic wellbeing and learning that clearly include the spiritual dimension, kept alive by the indigenous Māori. What we do not have, at this point, is an open understanding and ready acceptance of the importance of spiritual development within our mainstream schools. Recent curriculum statements in New Zealand have failed to explicitly mention spiritual development (Bone, 2014). Critically, teachers do not have a clear understanding of a universal spirituality or the professional pedagogy, let alone the confidence and professional support to openly acknowledge and nurture a child’s spirituality (Adams, et al., 2008; Fisher, 1998; Fraser & Grootenboer, 2004). The introduction to Fisher’s model of spiritual
wellbeing as part of the teacher interviews conducted during this study had an immediate impact. The teachers related readily to his diagrammatic representation of four interconnected domains. The model provided the structure and the language for teachers to engage in professional dialogue about an otherwise private part of their personal lives and a largely uncharted and hidden dimension within most classrooms.

5.4.2.2 Teachers’ awareness of their own personal spirituality.

Secondly, issues of how best to address a child’s spiritual development are typically confounded by a teacher’s own lack of personal awareness about spirituality. Sunley (2009) reminds us that relationships with children and with colleagues are at the heart of a teacher’s role but also, critically important, are the relationships within the different aspects of the teacher’s own life. Sunley sees teachers as “the gatekeepers to the spiritual dimension in the classroom” (p. 793) and laments the fact that little attention has been paid to teachers’ own understanding of spirituality. The current study confirmed Sunley’s finding that few teachers are confident to talk about spirituality in their own lives, fitting also with Hay’s view that spirituality is typically a very private matter (Hay & Nye, 1998) which is not openly part of professional dialogue. Many writers have noted that being aware of one’s own spiritual journey is necessary before a teacher can nurture a child’s journey (Fraser & Grootenboer, 2004; Adams, Hyde, & Wodley, 2008; Kennedy & Duncan, 2016; Scott, 2004). As Hart (2003) puts it, spirituality can easily pass teachers by, unless they are supported to become aware first of their own spirituality; and we know that what teachers value, and how they understand themselves and others, will impact on how they hear children’s voices (Erricker & Erricker, 2016).

It is therefore evident that teachers need personal space, opportunities and professional encouragement to develop their own self-awareness and the self-acceptance that, in turn, is a fundamental condition to enable recognition and support of the spiritual development of children in our schools. Before teachers can
embark on a spiritual development journey with their pupils they first need to come to terms with their own spirituality. For as Palmer (2003) believes, it is a significant challenge for teachers to let their personal spirituality shape their teaching practice. For most teachers in the current study, their view of spirituality was closely linked to a traditional religious context, and they did not readily have non-religious language with which to consider a more fundamental view of childhood spiritual development. There was little evidence that the teachers had previously consciously reflected on their own spirituality. This finding with Year 6 teachers in non-religious primary school settings adds to similar findings reported with teachers at other levels of schooling, and in schools with religious affiliation. While paying attention to children’s experience is key to understanding their spirituality, an important precondition is that the teacher is able to notice their own (Scott, 2004).

A further point here relates to potential problems with the term “development”. Familiar as teachers are with their role to provide for the academic, physical and, increasingly social and emotional development of their pupils, taking responsibility for spiritual development may be, currently, a step too far. Priestly (1996) has highlighted concern that in talking about spiritual development, teachers’ default may be to see this as a linear progression. In today’s world, teachers are very conscious of the expectation to measure and assess children in other areas of the curriculum (Adams, 2009). In this regard Fisher’s model may help teachers to view expressions of childhood spirituality as an aspect to be accepted, supported and nurtured, rather than as another element of the curriculum to be assessed and progress reported accordingly.

5.4.2.3 The secret, hidden nature of spirituality, for children and adults.

Finally, we need to return to the earlier discussion relating to the fact that, generally speaking, spirituality is of both a hidden and very personal nature. As we have seen, Hart (2003) has pictured the spiritual world of a child as a secret one, and one which child may feel a fear of ridicule when discussing. Others (for example, Hay, 1985)
have noted that the impact of this may have a cultural aspect, given a general level of hesitance to openly discuss spirituality in the West. And therefore, the issues compound! The spiritual side of life may be hidden and unacknowledged by teachers at their own personal level, the children themselves may not readily share their spirituality for a variety of reasons and, even when they do, it is likely that in the vast majority of classrooms expressions of everyday spirituality are not recognized by either pupils or teachers for what they actually are (Adams et al, 2008).

This hidden nature of spirituality, for both teachers and children, was observed in the current study. The general lack of awareness within the sample of Year 6 children and their teachers of a broad-based contemporary awareness of an everyday spirituality which is innately human was noted, as was the fact that typically spirituality is not a topic that people generally share with each other in daily conversation. Aside from more traditionally based ideas of spirituality, linked to religious aspects, the adult participants were not used to, or comfortable, sharing aspects of their personal spirituality with colleagues. Within the strongly secular context of most New Zealand schools (Fraser, 2004), teachers can be seen to be reluctant to openly acknowledge let alone have the support and professional confidence to directly address children’s spiritual development.

The child participants readily engaged with the interview discussions sparked by the open-ended questions and shared many examples of personal expressions of spirituality which could be seen to be private and personal reflections. This appeared to occur without the realisation that these expressions were, indeed, markers of spirituality. The sharing and discussion also occurred in an atypical environment, namely within a small group interview conducted by an unknown researcher, who encouraged and supported the discussion. While most of the children appeared to be comfortable joining the discussion, it was apparent that the children did not routinely share personal information of this nature. There was some evidence that children may be more comfortable sharing their deep and personal thinking with
family pets. The exception noted to this was with the teachers and children from Brook School, which had the active CRE programme occurring within the school, who were more readily able to conceptualise and discuss aspects of spirituality using albeit a Christian-based religious language.

These factors can be seen, in combination, to confirm the conclusion that the vast majority of childhood expressions of spirituality that undoubtedly naturally occur on a daily basis within classrooms across Aotearoa New Zealand pass unrecognised for what they are. And even were they to be noted as significant, there would seem to be little requirement, school-level support or personal motivation on the part of most teachers to act upon them.

5.4.3 How could Fisher’s model allow teachers and children to talk and learn together about spirituality in the context of the New Zealand primary school classroom?

To remind the reader, Research Question 4 sought to explore the extent to which Fisher’s model of spiritual wellbeing could be validated within the local context and could, therefore, be adopted to facilitate an understanding of spirituality for both teachers and children in Aotearoa New Zealand primary school classrooms.

Fisher’s conception of spiritual wellbeing has been presented as an accessible, relatable model that may well provide a readily acceptable and non-religious language to allow teachers and children to communicate aspects of spirituality to each other. Without an understanding of spirituality as a basic quality of all humans, as a fundamental dimension of people’s overall health and wellbeing, and without the language to recognise, acknowledge and nurture each other’s spiritual wellbeing, spirituality will continue to be invisible within most classrooms.

I propose here that Fisher’s model has the potential to provide a conceptual framework for a broad and contemporary understanding of human spirituality that
is readily relatable, using a secular everyday language that is likely to be relatively non-contentious within the New Zealand primary school context. Fisher’s four domains of self, others, environment and the transcendent provide a “big picture” view of spirituality that encompasses the spirituality themes presented in the literature which centre on one’s self-awareness, connectedness and sense of belonging to one’s self and things beyond. The domain model uses positive and aspirational language that is already within the daily discourse of children and teachers. It offers a practical vocabulary likely to be acceptable within a secular schooling environment, a vocabulary that is not reliant on religious terminology or definition and a vocabulary that has direct synergy with the existing language found in New Zealand’s recent curriculum documents and individual school charter statements setting out the values that the community believes to matter most.

Furthermore, I propose that should such a broader definition of spirituality become widely accepted within the school sector then, with sufficient professional support, schools and teachers might have a vehicle within which to recognise, acknowledge and nurture a child’s spiritual journey. It might then be possible to envisage a classroom within which a teacher felt the personal and professional confidence to openly embrace this largely ignored aspect of a child’s development, arguably the fundamentally most important of the whare’s four walls.
Chapter Six
Conclusion

This study has documented the understanding of spirituality of some children and teachers, at the Year 6 level of schooling, within Aotearoa New Zealand’s unique bi-cultural context. Children were able to relate spirituality to both external spirits and, more personally, to personal characteristics, beliefs and a sense of inner purpose which influenced life decisions. Fisher’s (1998) domains of spiritual wellbeing proved to be a readily accessible language and framework for children to share aspects of their spirituality. The findings showed that the children’s expressions of daily spirituality encompassed the broad themes of self-awareness and connectedness to other people, stewardship of the environment and, for many, examples of reflection and expression within the transcendental domain. A recurring theme which emerged, not highlighted in the literature, was the frequent references that children made with regard to their connectedness with special family pets and animals in general.

The findings have also provided some preliminary evidence that children with higher spiritual wellbeing scores may also be seen to have higher scores in other developmental areas. The spiritual wellbeing scores of children demonstrating higher self-reported self-awareness and connectedness to others and to other things were seen to be positively correlated with scores relating to emotional and social development and, in some cases, to higher mathematic scores. In this way, the findings demonstrate some tentative empirical support for the key tenet of Durie’s (1994) whare tapawhā model, namely, the importance of all areas of life being in balance.
6.1 Contribution of the Study

From an academic perspective, the study is the first within the Aotearoa New Zealand context to interview, and elicit spiritual wellbeing data, from primary-school-aged children themselves. To date, the primary school child’s spiritual voice from within this context has rarely been reported in the literature. Spirituality has been studied within the pre-school sector by Bone (2007), who was a participant observer for 10 weeks in each of three early childhood centres. From an array of data collected, Bone identified three overlapping and open-ended spiritual spaces of spiritual withness, spiritual in-betweenness and the spiritual elsewhere. Bone discusses the need to ensure that holistic learning and wellbeing encompasses mind, body and spirit. In discussing the concept of an everyday spirituality, Bone discussed the need for holistic educational practices which nurture the spiritual. In the current study, the spiritual voices of some Year 6 children and their teachers have been heard. Some preliminary indication of relationships between spiritual wellbeing and social, cognitive and emotional wellbeing have been presented, and the significance of animals and pets has been highlighted. While the current study did not include periods of observation in natural settings, the findings from the interview data suggest that contemporary understandings of spirituality are not understood by some teachers, and may not therefore be explicitly recognised and nurtured within primary school classrooms in the course of daily school life. This thesis argues that there is a need for spirituality to be openly accepted and acknowledged within primary school classrooms; that there is a need for spirituality to be viewed in terms of self-awareness and connectedness to others, to animals and the environment and in the way that one appreciates the wonder and mystery of everyday life.

Other studies have focussed on teachers (e.g., Fraser & Grootenboer, 2004; Kennedy & Duncan, 2016). Furthermore references to spirituality in official New Zealand curriculum statements (e.g., Egan, 2000; Fraser, 2004) have been documented, as has
the place of spirituality within Māori culture and implications for the secular classroom (Fraser, 2004). A small-scale spiritual wellbeing unit of instruction was delivered to a group of secondary students (Egan, 2000). This present study provides an understanding of how some Year 6 children and their teachers in Aotearoa New Zealand understand spirituality. The study shows that children were able to share and discuss their everyday expressions of spirituality, while not having the understanding or language with which to appreciate these experiences and expressions for what they are. The study proposes that a new language, in the form of Fisher’s spiritual wellbeing construct, be introduced allowing childhood spirituality to be understood, openly discussed and explicitly nurtured, in the modern context. Although childhood spiritual development in this country sits within a unique bi-cultural educational landscape, and although spirituality and spiritual wellbeing are explicitly mentioned in official curriculum statements, the current study did not find evidence of any deliberate or purposeful approach to this central aspect of a child’s development.

In presenting some correlational evidence of relationships between spiritual wellbeing and social, cognitive and emotional wellbeing, this study has also contributed to the literature, demonstrating some tentative support for the key tenet of Durie’s (1994) whare tapawhā model, namely, the importance of all areas of life being in balance. It is suggested that enhancing a student’s development in one area might positively impact development in other areas and that as a result overall wellbeing/hauora is strengthened. The study has also highlighted the possibility that a close family pet might positively contribute to a child’s spiritual development. To the extent that an animal is able to provide a safe and secure context within which the child can consider complex issues of meaning and value in life, then this could be another way to support spiritual wellbeing and spiritual growth in a non-threatening and personally-private setting.
From a professional perspective, this study raises concern that this central aspect of child development, namely spiritual wellbeing, remains largely hidden from view within secular classrooms that are the norm for most children. That, notwithstanding the various references to spiritual development and spiritual wellbeing within official curriculum documents, teachers and children do not have the support or knowledge to openly acknowledge and nurture spirituality within the school setting.

The study introduces Fisher’s model of spiritual wellbeing as a pragmatic and relatable construct that utilises a universal language that is likely to be accessible to teachers and children, and to be non-contentious within the secular environment that is the norm for a New Zealand primary school classroom. The study validates the model within the Aotearoa New Zealand context, and illustrates how the use of this construct could sit alongside Durie’s (1994) whare tapawhā model of wellbeing to provide a way forward, blending contemporary Western and Māori approaches to spirituality, in the post-Christendom, secularising modern society that is today’s reality.

6.2 Limitations of the Study

Limitations of this study are noted in relation to the small sample size, the nature of the group interviews, the limited scope to access the beliefs and views of the teachers and the potential impact that the in-school CRE programme may have had on the results obtained from the children of one school.

First, in sampling relatively small numbers of Year 6 children, and from only three state schools, the findings of this study can only be regarded as suggestive as they are not representative of the wider Year 6 population of children in Aotearoa New Zealand primary schools. Furthermore, the selection of schools and the child participants agreeing to take part can be seen to be biased samples as only children who had a parent consent to their child’s involvement in research investigating
spirituality have been sampled. As discussed earlier, it proved difficult to gain initial enthusiasm to engage as the study topic explicitly included the notion of “spirituality” and, therefore, the personal nature of the proposed enquiry, along with schools feeling over-researched and generally time-poor, may have contributed to this. The three principals agreeing to allow access to their school each had an existing professional relationship with the researcher. Also of note was that the participation rate for Year 6 children across the three schools was, on average slightly less than 25%, meaning that for any number of reasons some 75% of parents and/or children chose not to be involved. While this study had, for reasons previously discussed, a specific focus on the Year 6 level of the primary school, it may be that the findings are not relatable to children in their early years of compulsory schooling.

Second, the study also has limitations with regard to the selection of small-group interviewing as the qualitative method for data gathering. This approach was chosen for a number of reasons. For example, since the interviews were the first time that the participants had met the researcher, and, given the sensitive and personal nature of the topic, it was felt that small group interviews provided the children with an additional level of protection and security. Interviews with individuals may have allowed some children to speak more freely about private and personal experiences and expressions of spirituality. Alternatively, results obtained within the group setting may have been influenced by the contributions of peers, as an idea put forward by one participant developed into a group conversation as the thoughts of other participants were stimulated. A similar effect with the class teachers was also noted, as the ideas from one triggered memories from others. Also, with regard to setting, it is important to note that the interviews gathered data in an artificial setting, with a previously unknown researcher, as opposed to what could be regarded as the more natural, and less intrusive, setting of classroom and playground observation. The often noted personal and private nature of spirituality adds another layer of complexity to research in this field.
Third, this study had relatively limited ability to access the views and beliefs of the
teachers of child participants. More so than for the children, the personal nature of
this topic may have contributed to the group interview setting being an inhibiting
factor for the adult participants. While the children were observed to relax within
their respective interview groups, and seemed quite willing to openly share, this was
not as evident with the two groups of teachers who were interviewed.

Finally, there may have been an impact on the findings as a result of the CRE
programme, which was present in only one of the schools involved in the study. As
discussed above, it was Brook School, with the highest number of children self-
reporting “regularity of family religious affiliation” as “often” and “sometimes”
respondents, that was also the only school of the three to have a regular and ongoing
Christian education component to its weekly school day. These two factors could
conceivably have had an impact on the results.

6.3 Further Research

There are several ways in which the findings of this study could usefully be
extended. Primarily, with a view to corroboration of the current findings, it would be
of interest to undertake similar research with much larger cohorts of primary school
children within Aotearoa New Zealand across a range of age bands, a wider range of
ethnicities and across a representative sample of school types.

In an increasingly secular society, and with the current findings suggesting a lack of
understanding of a broad-based approach to spirituality separate from traditionally
religious points of view, the views of larger samples of teachers, principals, school
trustees, teacher training providers and policy development leaders within the
Ministry of Education would be informative. It would be of interest to understand
the extent to which the current study’s conclusion with regard to teachers’ relative
inability to articulate spirituality is representative of the wider population of teachers
and other adults with influence within education. Similarly, it would be useful to explore with the groups listed above, respective views with regard to why spirituality is generally hidden and guarded as personal and private.

Another area for further research would be with parents of primary school children. Given that participation rates in this study appeared to be relatively low, at less than 25% of those invited to participate, it would be useful to explore these same issues with parents. This could also include exploration of just how well a more explicit acknowledgement, and purposeful nurturing, of spirituality and spiritual wellbeing within primary classrooms might resonate with parents.

Additionally, it would be useful to consider the extent to which the general population is aware of their own spirituality, as it has been suggested that this might have a significant impact on the ability of the groups of adults considered above to recognise, support and nurture the spiritual wellbeing of children.

6.4 Closing Reflection

As I look back on the personal, academic and professional journey that is reflected in this thesis, two issues for the future stand out:

- I see a need for a clearer understanding of a universal, non-religious based spirituality within the primary schools of Aotearoa New Zealand.
- I see a need for a more purposeful approach towards the sustained nurturing of children’s spiritual wellbeing in the Aotearoa New Zealand primary school classroom.

There would appear to be some fundamental issues working to make the way forward problematic on either point. While on the one hand, we wish our children to be well educated in the traditional sense, we also wish them to be optimistic and hopeful, empathetic and generous, and to be happy and fulfilled. “Given the present
situation in society and in education which is producing more conflicts and sufferings by reinforcing the students to be more competitive, it is imperative for people to develop compassion” (Nakagawa, 2009, p. 594).

However, when striving for better educational outcomes, constructs such as happiness and spirituality are generally not considered alongside raising achievement standards in literacy and numeracy (Erricker, 2016). And while New Zealand’s official curriculum statements have had various references to spiritual development and spiritual wellbeing as early as 1937, spiritual development continues to be largely ignored or misunderstood in daily school life. This has led commentators to lament “they’ve [the curricula] got ‘spirituality’ scattered through them, and teachers haven’t a clue what to do about it” (Snook, 2000, cited by Egan, 2000, p. 1). To this, Kennedy and Duncan (2006) add another issue, reminding us of the central issue surrounding teachers’ understanding of their own spirituality, and the need to recognise that spirituality is not a separate component of life, but inextricably embedded in the everyday experiences of life (Bone, 2007).

I think that we need to consider the spiritual development of our children more openly. As the first step in this process, I see the need for a wider discussion around, and ultimately acceptance of, the legitimate place of spiritual nurturing within the secular education system of this country. Delving into the crowded curriculum of today, there is a need to critically examine what is really important, as it would appear that some balance has been lost. There is a need to hear the child’s voice in our schools, to honour the unique spirit within each, and to allow children to speak their minds. For, as Sunley (2009) suggests, children may be the model for adult spiritual development rather than the reverse, and that spirituality for children is a normal everyday phenomenon rather than something elusive or dramatic.

If an understanding of spirituality can be situated in terms of connectedness, belonging and self-awareness of our young people, spiritual wellness may be a way
to face many of the causes of societal problems today (de Souza, 2014). Addressing spirituality within schools is one way forward to promote a sense of belonging and purpose, along with tolerance of others and stewardship of the environment, hand in hand with making possible full realisation of the human potential. Archbishop Tutu described “Ubuntu”, one of the terms from his country, as the essence of being human. Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you can’t exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness. We think of ourselves far too frequently as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas you are connected and what you do affects the whole world. When you do well, it spreads out; it is for the whole of humanity. Archbishop Desmond Tutu (2008). Retrieved 20.04.2011 from http://uwi-usa.blogspot.be/2012/01/ubuntu-brief-meaning-of-african-word.html

In a similar vein, for His Holiness the Dalai Lama, education must address the essential human values of a warm heart, a sense of caring for one another.

Through education we can explain to our brothers, sisters and especially the young children that there is a secret treasure that we all have – whether educated or uneducated, rich or poor, this race or that race, of this culture or that culture: we are human beings. We have tremendous potential. The potentials for kindness, compassion and inner peace.

Kennedy and Duncan (2009) have reminded us of the need for teacher education and acceptance with regard to recognising and nurturing spirituality within the classroom when they reflect, “for something to grow, it is necessary to create the right conditions” (p. 901). Fraser and Grootenboer (2004) described these ideal classroom conditions as non-judgmental, having an accepting climate and as encouraging of actions which were prompted by spiritual motives. One is left to wonder just what might be possible if spirituality was not such a hidden phenomenon, if children had an unfettered access to the language and...
understanding of a contemporary spirituality, and if they were supported by teachers who were aware of their personal spiritual journey.
References


Bone, J. (2016). Environmental issues and spirituality: Tracing the past and making contemporary connections. In M. de Souza, J. Bone & J. Watson (Eds.),
Spirituality across Disciplines: Research and Practice (pp. 245-258). Springer: Switzerland.


Appendix A: Letter to Principals

The Principal
XXX School
[date]

Dear XXX

Educating the whole child: Is there space in the New Zealand primary school classroom to nourish mind, body and soul?

My name is Owen Arnst, and I am a primary school principal undertaking research for the degree of Doctor of Education, under the supervision of Dr Hugh Morrison, at Otago University. I am writing to you about my research plans since I would very much like your school to be one of the three that I hope will participate in this project.

My interest is in childhood spirituality. I am particularly interested to explore the extent to which spiritual well-being is in-tune with a child’s social and emotional development, and with their academic attainment. Since spirituality is understood to be a basic quality of all people, spiritual well-being can be seen to be a fundamental dimension of people’s overall health and well-being.

More than ever today, in setting out the ‘big picture’ goals for a school, almost all would agree that was vitally important to go beyond traditional definitions of academic intelligence to include development of the child’s emotional, psychological, creative, physical, social and spiritual talents and potentials. By conducting this research, I aim to shed light on the extent to which we are developing the ‘whole child’ in the context of the New Zealand primary school classroom.

In order for you to consider my request to involve teachers and Year 6 children at your school, I have enclosed the proposed letters, information sheets and consent forms that would be given to teachers, parents/caregivers and to their children.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Otago University Human Ethics Committee, Reference Number 10/115. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256).

I will make contact with you within a week to see if you might be interested. I hope that you will want to know more, and so I can arrange to speak to you about any questions you might have.

Yours sincerely

Owen Arnst
EdD student
Otago University
Appendix B: Letter to Teacher Participants

[Researcher’s address]
[date]
Dear teachers

Educating the whole child: Is there space in the New Zealand primary school classroom to nourish mind, body and soul?

My name is Owen Arnst, and I am a primary school principal undertaking research for the degree of Doctor of Education, under the supervision of Dr Hugh Morrison, at Otago University. I have been given permission by your school to contact you. I am writing to you about my research plans since I would very much like you, and the children in your class, to participate in this project.

My interest is in childhood spirituality. I am particularly interested to explore the extent to which spiritual well-being is in-tune with a child’s social and emotional development, and with their academic attainment. Since spirituality is understood to be a basic quality of all people, spiritual well-being can be seen to be a fundamental dimension of people’s overall health and well-being. More than ever today, in setting out the ‘big picture’ goals for a school, almost all would agree that was vitally important to go beyond traditional definitions of academic intelligence to include development of the child’s emotional, psychological, creative, physical, social and spiritual talents and potentials. By conducting this research, I aim to shed light on the extent to which we are developing the ‘whole child’ in the context of the New Zealand primary school classroom.

In order for you to consider my request for you to be involved, I have enclosed an information sheet and consent form for teacher participants, and a copy of those that would be given to the parents and children of your class.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Otago University Human Ethics Committee, Reference Number 10/115. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256).

I will make contact with you within a week to see if you might be interested. I hope that you will want to know more, and so I can arrange to speak to you about any questions you might have.

Yours sincerely

Owen Arnst
EdD student
Otago University
Appendix C: Information Sheet for Teacher Participants

Educating the whole child: Is there space in the New Zealand primary school classroom to nourish mind, body and soul?

INFORMATION SHEET FOR TEACHERS

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you of any kind and we thank you for considering our request.

What is the Aim of the Project?

This project is being undertaken as part of the requirements for the Doctor of Education research project. The aim of this project is to investigate the extent to which school attainment, social and emotional development, and the spiritual well-being of children might be related, in the context of the New Zealand primary school.

What Type of Participants are being sought?

The project seeks the participation of Year 6 children and their class teacher. Children with special needs will not be considered because, in the opinion of the researchers and the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee, it may involve an unacceptable risk to them.

What will Participants be Asked to Do?

Should you agree to take part in this project, the parents or caregivers of the children in your class, and the children themselves, will be informed about the project and asked to give their consent.

Child Participants
The children who participate will be asked to complete two survey forms (each on a different occasion), in class, under the supervision of you their class teacher. The Spiritual Well-being survey asks children about the aspects of their lives which make them feel good. This form will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. The Emotional Development survey asks children about five major dimensions of their emotional intelligence, namely intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, stress-management and general mood. This form will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

For Stage Two of the project, three children with a high spiritual well-being score and three children with a low spiritual well-being score will be randomly selected. They will be invited
to take part in two informal group interviews (each lasting a maximum of 30 minutes) with their two other selected classmates to discuss their understanding of spirituality.

**Teacher Participants**

As the class teacher of a child participant, you will be asked to complete a survey to give information about each child’s social development. The form takes between 8 and 12 minutes to complete for each child. You, or your school, will also be asked to provide the 2010 reading and mathematics Progressive Achievement Test results for each child.

You will be asked to also take part in a group interview with any other Year 6 teachers at your school. The length of the interview will be no more than 90 minutes.

**Can Participants Change their Mind and Withdraw from the Project?**

You may withdraw from participation in the project at any time and without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

**What Data or Information will be Collected and What Use will be Made of it?**

The data from the survey forms will be analysed and compared to see if children’s spiritual, emotional, social and academic development are progressing at similar rates. The group interviews will be audio-taped and transcribed following the interviews.

The interviews involve an open-questioning technique. The general line of questioning for the teacher interview includes: “What do you think the word ‘spirituality’ means?” “What observations of children’s expressions of spirituality have you noticed, and how did you respond?” “Which aspects of your school culture, policy and procedures impact on the spiritual development of the pupils?” The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops. In the event that the line of questioning develops in such a way that you feel hesitant or uncomfortable you may decline to answer any particular question(s) and/or may withdraw from the project without any disadvantage of any kind.

The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve your anonymity, along with that of each child participating.

You are most welcome to request a copy of the results of the project should you wish.

The data collected will be securely stored in such a way that only those mentioned below will be able to gain access to it. At the end of the project any personal information will be destroyed immediately except that, as required by the University's research policy, any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed.

**What if Participants have any Questions?**

If you have any questions about the project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

Owen Arnst
[contact details]

Dr Hugh Morrison
This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix D: Consent Form for Teacher Participants

Educating the whole child: Is there space in the New Zealand primary school classroom to nourish mind, body and soul?
CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:
1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary;
2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;
3. Personal identifying information [interview audio-tapes] will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which they will be destroyed;
4. This project involves an open-questioning technique. The general line of questioning includes: “What do you think the word ‘spirituality’ means?” “What observations of children’s expressions of spirituality have you noticed, and how did you respond?” “Which aspects of your school culture, policy and procedures impact on the spiritual development of the pupils?” The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops and that in the event that the line of questioning develops in such a way that I feel hesitant or uncomfortable I may decline to answer any particular question(s) and/or may withdraw from the project without any disadvantage of any kind.
5. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve my anonymity and that of my school.

I agree to take part in this project.

..................................................................................... ........................................
(Signature of teacher) (Date)
This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.

Appendix E: Letter to Parents

[Researcher’s address]
[date]

Dear Parent/Caregiver

Educating the whole child: Is there space in the New Zealand primary school classroom to nourish mind, body and soul?

My name is Owen Arnst, and I am a primary school principal undertaking research for the degree of Doctor of Education, under the supervision of Dr Hugh Morrison, at Otago University. I have been given permission by your school to contact you. I am writing to you about my research plans since I would very much like your child to participate in this project.

My interest is in childhood spirituality. I am particularly interested to explore the extent to which spiritual well-being is in-tune with a child’s social and emotional development, and with their academic attainment. Since spirituality is understood to be a basic quality of all people, spiritual well-being can be seen to be a fundamental dimension of people’s overall health and well-being.

More than ever today, in setting out the ‘big picture’ goals for a school, almost all would agree that was vitally important to go beyond traditional definitions of academic intelligence to include development of the child’s emotional, psychological, creative, physical, social and spiritual talents and potentials. By conducting this research, I aim to shed light on the extent to which we are developing the ‘whole child’ in the context of the New Zealand primary school classroom.

In order for you to consider my request for your child to be involved, I have enclosed an information sheet and a consent form for you. I would encourage you to talk to your child about this study, and you will see that I have included and a letter, information sheet and consent form for the children themselves to think about. If you would like to know more about this project, please do not hesitate to make contact with me directly, or through your child’s teacher or principal.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Otago University Human Ethics Committee, [Reference Number 10/115]. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256).

Yours sincerely

Owen Arnst
EdD student, Otago University
Appendix F: Information Sheet for Parents

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not you wish your child to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you or your child of any kind and we thank you for considering our request.

What is the Aim of the Project?

This project is being undertaken as part of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree. The aim of this project is to investigate the extent to which school attainment, social and emotional development, and the spiritual well-being of children might be related, in the context of the New Zealand primary school.

What Types of Participants are being sought?

The project seeks the participation of Year 6 children and their class teacher. Children with special needs will not be considered because, in the opinion of the researchers and the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee, it may involve an unacceptable risk to them.

What will Participants be Asked to Do?

Should you, and your child, agree to take part in this project, he/she will be asked to complete two survey forms (each on a different occasion), in class, under the supervision of their teacher.

The Spiritual Well-being survey asks children about the aspects of their lives which make them feel good. Spirituality, in its widest sense, is commonly viewed as encompassing self-awareness, in-depth interpersonal relations, connectedness with nature and belief in some ultimate concern. The survey samples these domains by asking children about the extent to which they experience and feel good about statements like, for example: Looking at the stars and the moon, knowing people like you, spending time with your family, knowing your God cares for you. This form will take approximately 15 minutes to complete.

The Emotional Development survey asks children about five major dimensions of emotional intelligence, namely intrapersonal, interpersonal, adaptability, stress-management and general mood. This form will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Your child’s teacher has agreed to complete a survey to give information about your child’s social development. The teacher will also provide the Progressive Achievement Test results for your child, from the tests that he/she completed at school in March.
For Stage Two of the project, two groups of three children who scored differently in spiritual perception will be invited to take part in two informal group interviews (each lasting a maximum of 30 minutes) with their two other selected classmates to discuss their understanding of spirituality.

**Can Participants Change their Mind and Withdraw from the Project?**

You may withdraw your child from participation in the project at any time and without any disadvantage to yourself or your child of any kind. Your child may decide to withdraw himself/herself at any time without disadvantage of any kind.

**What Data or Information will be Collected and What Use will be Made of it?**

The data from the survey forms will be analysed and compared to see if children’s spiritual, emotional, social and academic development are progressing at similar rates. The group interviews will be audi-taped and transcribed following the interviews.

The interviews involve an open-questioning technique. The general line of questioning includes: “What do you think the word ‘spirituality’ means?” “What things make you most happy about yourself?” “What can you tell me about how you are connected to other people?” “Let’s talk about how you are connected to the world, to the environment.” “Some people are connected to a God or something else bigger than things we can see or touch. What do you think about this?”

The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops. Consequently, although the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee is aware of the general areas to be explored in the interview, the Committee has not been able to review the precise questions to be used.

In the event that the line of questioning develops in such a way that your child feels hesitant or uncomfortable, he/she has the right to decline to answer any particular question(s) or withdraw from the interview at any stage without any disadvantage of any kind.

The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve yours and your child’s anonymity. You are most welcome to request a copy of the results of the project should you wish.

The data collected will be securely stored in such a way that only those mentioned below will be able to gain access to it. At the end of the project any personal information will be destroyed immediately except that, as required by the University’s research policy, any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed.

**What if Participants have any Questions?**

If you or your child have any questions about the project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:-

Owen Arnst
54 Park Terrace
Corsair Bay
Lyttelton 8082
Ph. 328 8498
Email karen_owen@xtra.co.nz
This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix G: Consent Form for Parents

Reference Number 10/115
[date]

Educating the whole child: Is there space in the New Zealand primary school classroom to nourish mind, body and soul?

CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS / GUARDIANS
I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that my child and I are free to request further information at any stage.
I know that:
1. My child’s participation in the project is entirely voluntary;
2. I am free to withdraw my child from the project at any time without any disadvantage;
3. Personal identifying information [interview audio-tapes] will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which they will be destroyed;
4. This project involves an open-questioning technique. The general line of questioning includes: “What do you think the word ‘spirituality’ means?” “What things make you most happy about yourself?” “What can you tell me about how you are connected to other people?” “Let’s talk about how you are connected to the world, to the environment.” “Some people are connected to a God or something else bigger than things we can see or touch. What do you think about this?” The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops and that in the event that the line of questioning develops in such a way that my child feels hesitant or uncomfortable he/she may decline to answer any particular question(s) and/or may withdraw from the project without any disadvantage of any kind.
5. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve my anonymity and that of my child.

I agree that my child may take part in this project.

............................................................................ ................................................
(Signature of parent/guardian) (Date)

............................................................................
(Name of child)

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix H: Letter for Children

Dear Year 6 class member

Educating the whole child: Is there space in the New Zealand primary school classroom to nourish mind, body and soul?

My name is Owen Arnst, and I am a primary school principal studying for the degree of Doctor of Education at Otago University. I have been given permission by your school to contact you. I am writing to you since I would very much like you to be involved in my study. I have attached an information sheet to this letter to explain all about what I would like to do.

Please read it carefully. Please talk to your caregivers or to your teacher if you have any questions. Someone can also contact me if there is anything more you would like to ask. I have a person at the University helping me. His name is Hugh Morrison, and he can help with questions too. Our telephone numbers and email addresses are on the information sheet.

Once you have thought about my study, if you would like to take part then there is a consent form attached. This is the letter that you fill in and send back to me so that I know if you do want to be in the study.

I do hope that you will want to join in the study, but it is OK if you don’t. If you do decide to take part, please send the consent form back to school along with the one I have sent to your caregivers.

Yours sincerely

Owen Arnst
EdD student
Otago University
Appendix I: Information Sheet for Children

Educating the whole child: Is there space in the New Zealand primary school classroom to nourish mind, body and soul?
INFORMATION SHEET FOR YEAR 6 CHILDREN

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to join in. I will be pleased if you decide to take part, but it doesn't matter if you don't want to. Nothing will happen to you if you decide not to take part.

What is the aim of the project?

This study is to see if children in New Zealand schools are learning not only subjects like mathematics and reading, but also are learning about themselves and how to get along with other people.

Who will take part?

The study will involve Year 6 children and their teachers, from three primary schools.

What will you be asked to do?

If you agree to take part, you will be asked to fill out two forms on different days, with your teacher. One form is called "Living Life, Feeling Good". It is about your 'Spiritual Development'. It asks you about the parts of your life which you think make you feel good. It will take you about 15 minutes to fill in this form. Another day, you will be asked to fill out the second form. This one asks about how you get on with other children and adults, and about how you deal with your feelings and emotions (like when you are happy, sad or angry). This is called your 'Emotional Development'. This one will take you about 20 minutes to finish.

Your teacher will fill in another form to give me information about how you react to situations at school, and about how you get on with your friends and the other children at school. This is called your 'Social Development'. Your teacher will also give me the results of the reading and maths PAT tests that you did in March. This is to see how you are learning at school.
I also want to choose two groups from your school to sit and talk to, so I can understand more about your answers on the forms. It would take too long for me to talk to everyone in your class, so I can only do this with two groups of three children.

This is the part where I especially want to find out more about children and spirituality. It’s a bit hard to explain the word ‘spirituality’ to you. Spirituality might be something you feel, it might be something you do or see. So if you are in this part of my study, you would be with two other children and I would ask the group questions like …

- “What do you think the word ‘spirituality’ means?”
- “What things make you most happy about yourself?”
- “What can you tell me about how you are connected to other people?”
- “Let’s talk about how you are connected to the world, to the environment.”
- “Some people are connected to a God or something else bigger than things we can see or touch. What do you think about this?”

There will be two times when the groups will meet like this, and talk for 30 minutes together. I will use a tape recorder so that I can remember what people say, but the tapes will be destroyed after the study is finished.

What if you change your mind and want to stop being in the study?

You can stop being in the study at any time if you feel uncomfortable. If you are in the group meetings, you don’t have to answer the questions if you are not sure, or if you don’t want to. You can stop at any time and go back to your class if you like. You don’t have to give a reason for stopping, and nothing will happen to you if you decide to stop being in the study.

What will happen to the forms you fill in and the answers you give?

When I have got all this information from you and the others, I will look at it carefully to see how Year 6 children are learning about all these things … not just their reading and mathematics, but also those other important things that we call emotional, social and spiritual development. I will look to see if there are any patterns that might help teachers and schools decide how to teach children about these things in the future.

Your name will not be on anything that I write or talk about when I share the results of my study. I will use code numbers or make up different names so that no-one will be able to work out which schools I did my study in, and no-one will know the names of which children took part. At the end of my project, I can send you a letter with the results of what I find out if you like. The University stores all the things I collect in my study very carefully, and destroys it all after five years.

What if you have any questions?

If you have any questions you could talk to your caregivers, or your teacher. And anyone can contact me or the person who is helping me, either now or in the future:-
This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix J: Consent Form for Children

Educating the whole child: Is there space in the New Zealand primary school classroom to nourish mind, body and soul?

CONSENT FORM FOR CHILD PARTICIPANTS

I have been told about this study and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered in a way that makes sense.

I know that:

1. Participation in this study is voluntary, which means that I do not have to take part if I don’t want to and nothing will happen to me. I can also stop taking part at any time and don’t have to give a reason.

2. Anytime I want to stop, that’s okay.

3. If I am selected for the group meetings, the researcher, Owen Arnst, will audio-tape me so that he can remember what I say, but the tape will be destroyed after the study has ended.

4. If I don’t want to answer some of the questions, that’s fine.

5. If I have any worries or if I have any other questions, then I can talk about these with Owen Arnst or with my teacher.

6. The paper and computer file with my answers will only be seen by Owen Arnst and the people he is working with. They will keep whatever I say private.

7. Owen Arnst will write up the results from this study for his University work. The results may also be written up in journals and talked about at conferences. My name will not be on anything that Owen Arnst writes up about this study.

I agree to take part in the study.

Signed............................................................................................................................................

Date..................................................................................................................................................
Appendix K: Spiritual Well-Being – The Feeling Good, Living Life Scales

FEELING GOOD
Please show how good each of the following makes you feel by drawing a circle around your best answer for each question.
There are five answers to choose from:
YES if it makes you feel REALLY GOOD
yes if it makes you feel good just a little bit
? if you are not sure how good it makes you feel
no if it does not make you feel good, just a little bit
NO if it REALLY does NOT make you feel GOOD

Does the following make you feel good?
1. Knowing your God is a friend YES yes ? no NO
2. Looking at the stars and moon YES yes ? no NO
3. Going for a walk in a park YES yes ? no NO
4. Knowing your family love you YES yes ? no NO
5. Feeling happy? YES yes ? no NO
6. When people say you are good YES yes ? no NO
7. Loving your family YES yes ? no NO
8. Knowing you belong to a family YES yes ? no NO
9. Thinking life is fun YES yes ? no NO
10. Spending time with your family YES yes ? no NO
11. Talking with your God YES yes ? no NO
12. Knowing your God cares for you YES yes ? no NO
13. Spending time in the garden YES yes ? no NO
14. Watching a sunset or sunrise YES yes ? no NO
15. Knowing people like you YES yes ? no NO
16. Thinking about your God YES yes ? no NO

LIVING LIFE
Please show how much you do each of the following by drawing a circle around your best answer for each question.
There are five answers to choose from:
YES if you do this ALL the TIME or very often
yes if you do this fairly often
S if you do this sometimes
no if you hardly ever do this
NO if you NEVER do this

Do you ...
1. know your God is a friend? YES yes $ no NO
2. look at the stars and moon? YES yes $ no NO
3. go for a walk in a park? YES yes $ no NO
4. know your family love you? YES yes $ no NO
5. feel happy? YES yes $ no NO
6. hear people say you are good? YES yes $ no NO
7. love your family? YES yes $ no NO
8. know you belong to a family? YES yes $ no NO
9. think life is fun? YES yes $ no NO
10. spend time with your family? YES yes $ no NO
11. talk with your God? YES yes $ no NO
12. know your God cares for you? YES yes $ no NO
13. spend time in the garden? YES yes $ no NO
14. watch a sunset or sunrise? YES yes $ no NO
15. know people like you? YES yes $ no NO
16. think about your God? YES yes $ no NO

What is your name ________________________________
Are you a girl [ ] or a boy [ ]?

How old are you? 5 [ ] 6 [ ] 7 [ ] 8 [ ] 9 [ ] 10 [ ] 11 [ ] 12 [ ] years old.
What year level are you in? Year 1 [ ] 2 [ ] 3 [ ] 4 [ ] 5 [ ] 6 [ ] 7 [ ]
Do you go to church? often [ ] sometimes [ ] never [ ]
Appendix L: School Social Behavior Scale 2nd Edition

To Be Completed by Teacher or Other School Personnel for Students in Grades K-12

Identifying Information

Name of student: ________________________________

School: _______________________________________

Grade: _______ Age: _______ years: _______ months: _______ Sex: male ☐ female ☐

Name of person completing form: ____________________________

Date form completed: _______________________________________

Relationship of rater to student: _______________________________

List the settings in which you observe or interact with this student: _______________________________________

Directions

After you have completed the Identifying Information section, please rate this student's behavior using all of the items on pages 2 and 3 of this rating form. Ratings should be based on your observations of this student's behavior during the past three months. The rating points after each item are based on the following format:

Never If the student does not exhibit a particular behavior, or if you have not had an opportunity to observe a particular behavior, circle 1, which indicates Never.

Frequently If the student often exhibits a particular behavior, circle 5, which indicates Frequently.

Sometimes Circle the numbers 2, 3, or 4, (which indicate Sometimes) if the student exhibits the behavior somewhere in between the two extreme rating points, based on your judgment of how frequently it occurs. The rating points after each item appear in the following format:

NEVER 1 2 SOMETIMES 3 4 FREQUENTLY 5

Please complete all items, and do not circle between numbers. If you have any additional comments about this student, write them in the space provided at the top of page 4.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale A</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Scoring Key</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Co-operates with other students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Makes appropriate transitions between different activities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Completes schoolwork without being reminded</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Offers help to other students when needed</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Participates effectively in group discussions and activities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Understands problems and needs of other students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Remains calm when problems arise</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Listens to and carries out directions from teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Invites other students to participate in activities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Asks appropriately for clarification of instructions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Has skills or abilities that are admired by peers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Is accepting of other students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Completes school assignments or other tasks independently</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Completes school assignments on time</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Will give in or compromise with peers when appropriate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Follows school and classroom rules</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Behaves appropriately at school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Asks for help in an appropriate manner</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Interacts with a wide variety of peers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Produces work of acceptable quality for his or her ability level</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Is good at initiating or joining conversations with peers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Is sensitive to feelings of other students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Responds appropriately when corrected by teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Controls temper when angry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Enters appropriately into ongoing activities with peers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Has good leadership skills</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Adjusts to different behavioral expectations across settings</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Notices and compliments accomplishments of others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Is assertive in an appropriate way when he or she needs to be</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Is invited by peers to join in activities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Shows self-control</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Is “looked up to” or respected by peers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Totals**

PR | SM | AB

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale B</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Scoring Key</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Blames others for his or her problems</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Takes things that are not his or hers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Is defiant to teachers or other school personnel</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Cheats on schoolwork or in games</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Gets into fights</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Is dishonest; tells lies</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Teases and makes fun of other students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Is disrespectful or “sassy”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Is easily provoked; has a “short fuse”</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Ignores teachers or other school personnel</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Acts as if he or she is better than others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Destroys or damages school property</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Will not share with other students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Has temper outbursts or tantrums</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Disregards feelings or needs of other students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Is overly demanding of attention from teachers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Threatens other students; is verbally aggressive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Swears or uses offensive language</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Is physically aggressive</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Insults peers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Whines and complains</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22. Argues or quarrels with peers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Is difficult to control</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Bothers and annoys other students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25. Gets into trouble at school</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. Disrupts ongoing activities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27. Boasts and brags</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Is not dependable</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. Is cruel to other students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30. Acts impulsively without thinking</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31. Is easily irritated</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32. Demands help from other students</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Totals

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**SSBS-2 Score Summary** *(for scorer use only—refer to Appendix A or B in User’s Guide)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SSBS-2 Scales</th>
<th>Raw Score</th>
<th>T-Score</th>
<th>Percentile Rank</th>
<th>Social Functioning Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scale A: Social Competence</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Relations (PR)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Management/Compliance (SM)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Behavior (AB)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Competence Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scale B: Antisocial Behavior</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hostile/Irritable (HI)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antisocial/Aggressive (AA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defiant/Disruptive (DD)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antisocial Behavior Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Higher Social Competence scores indicate greater levels of social adjustment. Higher Antisocial Behavior scores indicate greater levels of social behavior problems.
Appendix M: BarOn Emotional Quotient Inventory: Youth Version
### Instructions:
Read each sentence and choose the answer that best describes you. There are FOUR possible answers: 1 = Very Seldom True of Me; 2 = Seldom True of Me; 3 = Often True of Me; and 4 = Very Often True of Me. Tell us how you feel, think, or act MOST OF THE TIME IN MOST PLACES. Choose one, and only ONE answer for each sentence, and circle the number that matches your answer. For example, if your answer is “Seldom True of Me,” you would circle the number 2 on the same line as the sentence. This is not a test; there are no “good” or “bad” answers. Please circle an answer for each sentence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sentence</th>
<th>Very Seldom True of Me</th>
<th>Seldom True of Me</th>
<th>Often True of Me</th>
<th>Very Often True of Me</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can easily describe my feelings.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know how to have a good time.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I must tell the truth.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can come up with many ways of answering a hard question when I want to.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get angry easily.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like doing things for others.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am not very happy.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can easily use different ways of solving problems.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It takes a lot for me to get upset.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel good about myself.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I make friends easily.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think I am the best in everything I do.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is easy for me to tell people what I feel.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>When answering hard questions, I try to think of many solutions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel bad when other people have their feelings hurt.</td>
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<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>When I am mad at someone, I stay mad for a long time.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am happy with the kind of person I am.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am good at solving problems.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is hard for me to wait my turn.</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>I enjoy the things I do.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like my friends.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not have bad days.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have trouble telling others about my feelings.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get upset easily.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can tell when one of my close friends is unhappy.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like my body.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Even if things get hard, I do not give up.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I get angry, I act without thinking.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know when people are upset, even when they say nothing.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like the way I look.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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</table>

Thank you for completing the questionnaire.
Appendix N: Indicative Questions – interviews with children

Part One

- I am finding out about spirituality. I don’t know how to explain the word ‘spirituality’ to you. Spirituality might be something you feel, it might be something you do or see. What do you think the word ‘spirituality’ means?
  
  (Adapted from Bone, 2007)

Part Two

Spirituality is hard to describe. It can mean different things for different people. A lot of adults describe spirituality in the way that we each relate to ourselves, to other people and to other things.

- What things make you most happy about yourself?
- What can you tell me about how you are connected to other people?
- Let’s talk about how you are connected to the world, to the environment.
- Some people are connected to a God or something else bigger than things we can see or touch. What do you think about this?
  
  (Questions adapted from Fisher, 1998; Hay and Nye, 1998; Hyde, 2005)

Part Three

- Can you tell me about a time when you were so wrapped up in doing something, you forgot about everything else? Didn’t notice anything else?
- What things are most important in your life?
- I wonder what you think really, really matters?
- Imagine that you had three wishes. What might you wish for?
- I wonder what sorts of things you wonder about?
- I wonder if you’ve ever wondered about something you can’t explain?
- Have you ever seen the stars at night? What do they make you think about?
- Do you have a special place where you go to wonder about things? Can you tell me about that place?
  
  (Questions adapted from Hay and Nye, 1998; Hyde, 2005)
Appendix O: Indicative Questions – interviews with teachers

Each group of teachers was asked to brainstorm key words which they believe to describe spirituality. They were then encouraged to discuss their understanding of children’s spiritual development with the group.

- The teachers were asked to discuss their reaction to Fisher’s (1999) model of spiritual wellbeing.
- The teachers were asked to discuss their observations of children’s expressions of spirituality, and how they responded to those.
- The teachers were asked to discuss any aspects of their school culture, policy and/or procedures which impact on the spiritual development of children.
- The teachers were asked to discuss their perceptions of how a child’s understanding of spirituality might impact on the other aspects of a child’s development, namely their social and emotional development and their educational attainment.
### Appendix P: Spiritual Wellbeing Results by Question

Feeling Good Subscale – How does the following make you feel?

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<th>Question number</th>
<th>Question</th>
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<th>Minimum</th>
<th>Maximum</th>
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