

Navigating Tensions in the Secular Workplace by Christians in the Social Services: Findings from an Aotearoa New Zealand Study

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Abstract

The social services are a value-laden field of employment as work involves frequent ethical decision-making around issues that relate to values, such as end of life, sexuality and so forth. Tensions can exist between individual practitioners, their employment agency and society, concerning ethics and values. This paper presents partial findings from a qualitative study that explored the tensions or issues faced by 16 Christian social-service practitioners working in non-faith-based settings by asking the question, “What tensions do Christian practitioners face in secular organisations?” In particular, we present themes from the findings that show utilisation of Indigenous cultural and/or spiritual practices to strengthen faith and work. The context is Aotearoa New Zealand, where there are unique relationships between religions (both from colonial settlers and Indigenous people), spirituality, secularism and the provision of social services. How these various aspects intersect and affect the Christian practitioner was of interest to this study. This paper may contribute to further research concerning the use of Indigenous practices in modern social services and healthcare.

Keywords: social-service practitioners, Christian social-service practitioners, social work, spirituality, secularism

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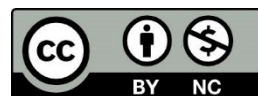
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