

Mai i te Pae o te Mātauranga ki te Poho o te Ture: From Classrooms to Courtrooms

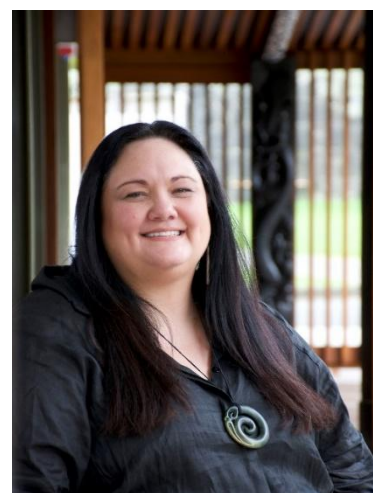
Dr Tania Cliffe-Tautari

Abstract

International research highlights clear links between school disengagement and youth involvement in the justice system. Yet in Aotearoa New Zealand, the voices and realities of rangatahi Māori (Māori youth) involved in serious youth offending remain significantly under-researched and unheard. It is vital to recognise the perspectives of rangatahi Māori and actively listen to their voices, especially given their disproportionate representation in youth court proceedings, alternative education settings, and NEET (not in education, employment, or training) statistics. This presentation shares insights from two broader kaupapa Māori qualitative research projects, each involving semi-structured, in-depth interviews with rangatahi Māori who had been excluded from mainstream education and had appeared in the Youth Court. Drawing on these findings, the presentation identifies the key barriers to their participation in education and explores factors that can foster more meaningful engagement. Through kaupapa Māori-informed qualitative analysis, the research highlights how rangatahi assert *tino rangatiratanga*—their sovereignty and agency—as they navigate the intersecting spaces of justice and education. Through centring their lived experiences, in this presentation, we interrogate the psycho-social dynamics that can either reinforce or disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline. Including kaupapa Māori concepts of resilience, in this presentation, we will consider how “challenging behaviours” which lead to alienation from the mainstream education system may be misunderstood or misinterpreted. Deepening our understanding of rangatahi Māori engaged with the justice system will enable us to better grasp the complex web of systemic, ecological, and relational influences that shape their (non) participation in education. This understanding is essential if we are to facilitate more empowering and positive trajectories for rangatahi Māori.

Biography

Dr Tania Cliffe-Tautari (Te Arawa, Te Ure o Uenukukōpako, Ngāti Whakaue, Ngāi Tahu) is a senior lecturer in the Faculty of Arts and Education at Waipapa Taumata Rau – the University of Auckland. She has significant experience in education and has worked in secondary schools, mainstream, Māori immersion, youth justice and care and protection secure facilities. She is focused on carrying out research which improves the lives of underserved Māori, particularly rangatahi. As a kaupapa Māori transdisciplinary researcher, Tania has carried out several qualitative research projects across education, social services, and youth justice. Some of these projects have explored the experiences of rangatahi Māori involved in the justice system, focusing on their educational experiences, the impact of trauma, and the role of Māori cultural identities in their lives.



Email: tania.cliffe@auckland.ac.nz

University of Auckland Profile: <https://profiles.auckland.ac.nz/tania-cliffe>