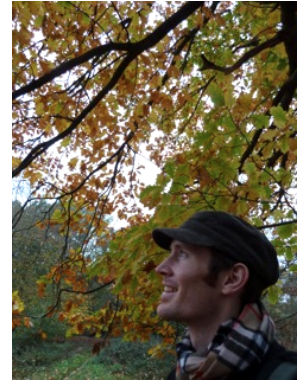


## David Pomeroy

I am a PhD student at the Cambridge University Faculty of Education. I have lived in New Zealand for most of my life, and before coming to Cambridge to study I was a secondary school mathematics teacher in the capital city Wellington. My research focuses the role of schools, and in particular secondary mathematics education, in reinforcing or challenging socio-economic, ethnic, and gender inequalities in New Zealand. I am an enthusiastic newcomer to the academic scene, with many questions and few answers, so I would like to use this space to reflect on some experiences from which my questions around ‘interculturality’, ‘indigeneity’, and education emerged.



Despite having three English-born grandparents, I had never been to England until two years ago. Visiting Berry Pomeroy Castle and ancient ruins in Devon made me re-think my own ‘indigeneity’ and where, if anywhere, I am indigenous. It seemed somehow strange to think of being indigenous and White, which made me wonder what connotations are discursively attached to indigeneity. I also wonder what unspoken or spoken norms underlie the fact that I feel like I don’t really have a ‘proper’ ethnicity.

Political and academic discourses about education in New Zealand are strongly orientated around Māori learners ‘achieving educational success as Māori’, and a range of government initiatives support ‘culturally responsive pedagogy’. As a secondary mathematics teacher I struggled to know what to do with this. The same tired statistics about Māori underachievement were recycled year on year, and indeed in my school Māori students seemed to be concentrated in the ‘bottom sets’. What were the drivers of this differential engagement with mathematics? Was I (White New Zealander, middle class) the problem, unable to connect with students with different backgrounds to my own? Was mathematics itself just a real turn-off (and if so, why for some and not others)? Was this a ‘societal’ problem too big for any individual teacher to do anything about? Were teachers of indigenous students in other post-colonial nations asking the same questions as I was? What was the connection between the ‘big data’ on ethnic inequality and individual students with various cultural and mathematical identifications? Did asking these questions make me racist, or a ‘deficit theorist’?

I am currently exploring some of these questions in a mixed-methods study of the role of social class, ethnicity, and gender in New Zealand Year 9 (age 13-14) students’ experiences of learning mathematics at school, under the supervision of Diane Reay and Kenneth Ruthven. I look forward to being part of a stimulating exchange and creation of ideas at the CIAN forums.

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