

Achieved

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A FATAL IMPACT? A LETTER TO HARRISON WRIGHT

Dear Harrison Wright,

I am writing to you today to express my disagreement with your fatal impact theory and would like to question the validity of that theory. The fatal impact theory refers to the lasting damage caused by Pākehā that hurt Māori, it sees Māori as victims, helpless bystanders who had their land and culture ripped away at the benefit of these settlers. To me, the early Māori and Pākehā relations do not show this and instead show examples of the acculturation theory. This theory states Pākehā benefited Māori and the technological advancements that they showed them only benefitted them and their society. I believe that your theory misrepresents and does not align itself with the relationship between Māori and Pākehā during these early times between 1769 and 1840.

Upon the arrival of whalers and sealers in New Zealand, Māori were quick to see the economic benefit they could gain by developing a relationship with them. The relationship between Māori and whalers, sealers and traders reflects the acculturation theory as both cultures learnt to adapt to each other beliefs, practises and values. The relationship between the two sides saw mutual benefit with whalers and sealers being provided with food, water and other resources and Māori received different resources such as tools, weaponry. This new technology for Māori allowed them to defend themselves better and expand their territory. Historian Grame Ball wrote in his book 'Expanding World, New Country' that Māori "selected only what they liked of European ways and then adapted to it, to a greater or lesser extent"- (Grame Ball, 2019). This suggests that Māori were not pushed around and forced into adapting to European technology as your theory suggests, but instead shows how they were able to beneficially adapt to the arrival of whalers, sealers and traders. Michael King, a New Zealand historian also noted in his book "the penguin history of New Zealand" about the role that sealers played in Māori life, "thus learning and carrying back to their own communicates first and second hand knowledge about a world beyond New Zealand " King, M. (2003). However the arrival of whalers, sealers and traders was not all a reflection of acculturation, as they brought diseases (STDS etc), culture change (heavy drinking) and disrupted Māori society through the introduction of new technology and resources. These actions are deemed to have damaged Māori culture and reflect the fatal impact theory. Although it was not all a reflection of acculturation, I believe that these pieces of secondary evidence reflect that the relationship between Māori and early whalers, sealers and traders was a reflection of acculturation and not fatal impact as your theory suggests.

The arrival of missionaries in the 19th century reflects an example of acculturation between Māori and missionaries during these early times. The arrival of missionaries in New Zealand meant Māori became exposed to new ideas and beliefs that differed from their past way of life. The arrival of the missionaries also brought new farming techniques, education and most importantly western medicine. The arrival of western medicine was a key example of acculturation as Māori did not have the same technology and healing practises that the missionaries brought. Upon Rev. Samuel Marsden's first arrival in New Zealand, he wrote a

letter detailing his observations that he noticed in New Zealand. In this letter he writes that in one of his experiences with Māori- “I fully explained to him the object of my coming to New Zealand and the nature of my intended plans for the future success of the design. He was very pleased at the Idea of Europeans residing on the Island”- (Samuel Marsden, 1815). This idea presented by Samuel Marsden, suggests again that your theory of a fatal impact relationship between early settlers and Māori is again incorrect. As seen in Marsdens letter, he indicates that Māori were happy to see the introduction of new technology, ideas and beliefs. Although new ideas and technology were now being exposed to Māori, it also meant that they began to lose touch with their spiritual beliefs and practises as christianity brought in a whole new way of life. This idea could be considered to be fatal impact as it resulted in the loss in Māori culture as a result of the early contact between Māori and Pākehā. However the primary source gives me an indication of how missionaries were a key example of how early relations between Māori and Pākehā were a reflection of the acculturation theory.

By 1840, New Zealand society had experienced both continuity and change. During this time, Māori still remained the language of New Zealand and Māori iwi still lived in villages protected by fences and built out of the natural resources that they had. Tools that captain cook had initially brought to them were still widely used. Māori still largely outnumbered Pākehā as there were only thought to be around 1000 Pākehā living in New Zealand at the time, many of whom worked at whaling stations. Tribal boundaries had largely changed as the introduction of muskets changed everything for Māori. Muskets meant food was more plentiful as they were able to hunt more efficiently, it also meant that attacks and wars were much more common as tribes tried to expand their territories. Cannibalism had ceased, Māori stopped appearing naked and burial practices had changed. These changes and continuations benefited Māori society and is a reflection of acculturation as Māori picked and chose which parts of Pākehā culture they thought would benefit them and adapted to it.

The early contact period was a significant point in New Zealand's history which took place through 1769 till the 1950s. Its impact had a significant impact on New Zealand's past history, as it showed examples of fatal impact and acculturation. One significant example of the fatal impact that the early contact period had on New Zealand was the musket wars. The Musket wars were a key example of the fatal impact that Pākehā had on Māori, as over 20,000 Māori were killed in these wars and tribal boundaries shifted like never before. The introduction of muskets by Pākehā meant that Māori were forced to trade for them in order to protect themselves, without muskets, tribes would simply be taken over in inter tribal warfare. The significance of this was massive as this warfare led to population displacements and social unrest within Māori society during these times.

However, many significant examples of the acculturation theory can be seen during the signing of the treaty of Waitangi. Although some would argue that the signing of the treaty is a reflection of fatal impact, historian Claudia Orange writes in her book “the treaty of Waitangi” on how this wasn't the case and instead that (Henry) “Williams was not only safeguarding Māori land and possession, but also reinforcing the authority of chiefs by building into the treaty the right to exercise some control”- (Orange. C- 2015) . This recognition of Māori sovereignty showed an attempt to accustomed themselves to Māori beliefs and culture. The treaty also sought to seek out the cultural differences between Māori and Pākehā, the treaty of Waitangi acknowledged how Māori had ownership over their land and had the right to live on that land. I believe that Māori reaction to the treaty can be seen as another reflection of acculturation during this time.

One key figure who protested for change was Hone Heke. Hone cut down a British flag pole in protest of unfulfilled promises of British colonisation. Hone's actions were a reflection of acculturation and Māori being agents of change for their culture.

When Pākehā first arrived in New Zealand and began to settle, not only did they bring new technology and resources, but they also brought diseases. Pākehā brought diseases such as influenza, measles and typhoid fever and the arrival of these led to a decline in Māori population. The impact of the arrival of these diseases can still be seen in this day and age as Māori have a significantly lower life expectancy than Pākehā. They also experience higher rates of preventable illnesses such as respiratory and heart disease. There is also injustice in our healthcare system and its accessibility for Māori which includes language barriers, access problems and funding. Researchers and psychologists from the University of Waikato found that "Māori patients felt that they needed to compromise their cultural and spiritual needs in order to receive hospital care" (Graham R & Masters-Awatere B- 2020). This inability to communicate properly can lead to a lack of trust between Māori and Pākehā and has led to a negative impact on Māori as they delay going to healthcare clinics as a result of this. Therefore the early contact period between Māori and Pākehā was a major example of how the early contact period was an example of fatal impact and can still be seen in society today.

The Māori land March of 1975 represented Māori driving for change as they sought to reclaim the land that was stolen from them by the crown. The Māori land March, led by Dame Whina Cooper, was a peaceful protest organised by Māori that started in Northland and went for around 640 km down to the parliament building in Wellington. Dame Whina Cooper stated in an interview that "We want all of the statutes, all of the laws that are pertaining to taking our land little by little at the time, to be wiped right off and let us retain the 2 million, only 2 million that is left out of 66 million" (Cooper. D.W, 1975). The land march was a reflection of the acculturation of theory as Māori throughout the march showed Māori practises and symbols (such as powhiri and haka) and demonstrated their cultural importance to them. The land march represented cultural exchange between Māori activists and protestors and Pākehā politicians. The Māori land march is one of the most significant examples of acculturation in today's world as it showed Māori being agents of their own change as this protest led to the establishment of the Waitangi Tribunal in 1975.

In conclusion, through the research I have done and the evidence I have collected, I believe that the acculturation theory is the most likely theory that reflects the relationship between Pākehā and Māori. The acculturation theory is one that recognizes the cultural differences between Māori and Pākehā that have led to adaptation and a better understanding of one another. My findings lead me to conclude that Māori are agents of their own change and still have core cultural and spiritual beliefs that have continued on through time. Although it has been a bumpy road, by understanding the examples of fatal impact and acculturation seen throughout New Zealand's history we can push towards a diverse, respectful and empowering future.