

**Māori (Indigenous) and Asian Immigration: The Potential for Intercultural Conflict in
Aotearoa/New Zealand?**

Steven Elers

School of Communication, Marketing and Journalism

Massey University

S.Elers@massey.ac.nz

Abstract

Māori are the indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand having arrived from east Polynesia between AD 1200 and AD 1400. Māori were isolated for a period of centuries during which time they refined their own language and cultural practices. After ‘discovering’ Aotearoa/New Zealand in 1769, the British progressively settled the country from the 1800s. In 1859 the Pākehā (British settlers) became the majority population and Māori were relegated to being the minority group in their own country. Due to the processes of colonisation, Māori have retained only 5.6% of land in Aotearoa/New Zealand. In addition, Māori score lowest across the health and social statistics such as life expectancy, employment, education and so forth. Recent estimates have concluded that one third of Māori children live in poverty. In other words, like many indigenous peoples around the world, Māori have suffered due to colonisation. However, the status of Māori is about to change. Recent immigration statistics have revealed that the sociocultural fabric of Aotearoa/New Zealand is rapidly changing due to the increasing Asian immigration which is predicted to overtake the Māori population within the next decade. By 2021, one third of Auckland residents will identify with an Asian ethnicity. Auckland is Aotearoa/New Zealand’s largest city. The growing Asian population may constitute a threat to the position of Māori in society, and impact on Māori rights and obligations which are enshrined in the Treaty of Waitangi. This paper analyses the latest immigration data and postulates how the changing demographics will influence intercultural relations between Māori and new immigrants to Aotearoa/New Zealand. Having already experienced displacement as the majority population, are Māori ready to be overtaken in population size by another immigrant group or will conflict arise?