ETHNIC REPRESENTATIONS AND SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF CONTEMPORARY FRENCH MIGRANTS IN TAHITI, FRENCH POLYNESIA

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This study analyzes the discourse on social integration and ethnic representations of French civil servants working short and long term in Tahiti, French Polynesia. Appointed to positions in education, public administration and law and order by the mainland authority, the attitudes and social interactions of this community compose a dynamic element of ethnic identity formation in Tahiti. Habitually the literary and academic voice on Tahitian culture and history, the discourse of this dominant socioeconomic category is herein redefined as the object of sociological study. Analysis reveals three principal *ideal type* attitudes toward ethnic representations and relations, each positioned differently around reactions to and interpretations of their social role as mainland civil servants in French Polynesia. Similarities of these migrants' identity strategies with those of migrants elsewhere suggest that these self-preservation identity strategies are inherent to negative stigma rather than dependent on socioeconomic status or duration of stay.

SOCIOLOGICAL AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL RESEARCH regarding French Polynesia has traditionally focused on the "exotic" Tahitian customs and traditions, omitting study on the cohabiting French[1] population. The Western perspective on indigenous and subordinated peoples—"isolated tribes in exotic lands, colonised peoples . . . dominated classes and groups"—remains the preferred object of fieldwork in these disciplines. According to one student fieldwork guide, for example, dominant groups are considered difficult subject matter, better equipped to dodge the ethnographer's scrutiny (Beaud and Weber 1998, 8, 10). Yet, such principles construct marginal groups as

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exotic and concurrently disqualify the social processes and discourse of "dominant" social categories, just as racial minorities in the United States were once constructed as exotic "ethnics" fit for academic analysis, as opposed to majority "nonethnic" whites. In rejection of this exoticism, which removes dominant discourse from sociological analysis, this study places the elite, dominant French civil servants at the center of analysis.

Although the European population has figured in a few studies regarding the colonial period,[2] such as *Farani Taioro* (Panoff 1981) or *Tahiti Colonial (1860–1914)* (Toullelan 1987), the contemporary mainland population is the topic of rare publications (Saura 1998; Brami-Celentano 2002), which nonetheless do not directly address this population's own discourse and representations. However, as "to speak of an ethnic group in total isolation is as absurd as to speak of the sound from one hand clapping," (Bateson 1979, 78), analysis of French Polynesia's mainland community, whose pens have traditionally recounted Tahitian society, is integral to the study of the latter. Furthermore, the mainland French presence has primarily been referred to within the mythical context of ideal racial mix and utopian society (Panoff 1989; Toullelan and Gille 1992; Doumenge 1999). Regardless of the visible biological amalgamation caused by the migratory waves primarily from Europe as well as China over the past two centuries, the construction and maintenance of ethnic categorization persist.

This article[3] considers French civil servants' discourse on their social integration within Tahitian society, as well as their portrayal of their own ethnicity and that of the host population. French civil servants (*fonctionnaires*) are the focal point of this study, because their presence and function in this French Overseas Country (*Pays d'Outre Mer*)[4] are an extension of the colonial mission to convey elements of French society within the domains of education, public administration, and law and order. Within the migratory structure of temporary elite migrations from the mainland power, this article considers the discourse of short- and long-term civil servant migrants in the urban regions of Tahiti, in and around the capital Papeete.[5] The political and social context influencing the attitudes of mainland civil servants within Tahitian society shall herein be outlined, followed by an analysis of the attitudes themselves and the unexpected similarities of communal emotions and identity strategies with those of other migratory populations.

Sociopolitical Factors

Elite Temporary Migrations: Exacerbating the Ethnic Divide

In addition to the centralized State mission bestowed upon them, two particular features characterize civil servants posted in French Polynesia:

elite status and temporary residence. The elite status is implicit to the State's colonial mission of exporting know-how through qualified posted workers, in that these individuals occupy influential administrative, educational, and law enforcement positions within a small-scale social and economic framework. Moreover, elevated socioeconomic status is assured by the substantial salary increase of 40% to 120% allotted to civil servants posted in French Polynesia (du Prel 2003, 5). Bernard Poirine noted in 1992 that, according to territorial surveys (ITSTAT 1988), economic differences in French Polynesia were largely ethnically divided, a situation which exacerbated latent ethnic tensions. He noted that although "European and assimilated" households made up only 20% of the total household number, their heads of household represented 72% of intellectuals and senior management. Conversely, the "Polynesian" households, 58% of the total, constituted only 10% of intellectuals and senior management, and 82% of all farmers and 76% of blue collar workers (Poirine 1992, 21). Subsequent surveys, although void of ethnic categorization,[6] seem to display similar statistics, showing, for example, that of the working population born outside of French Polynesia, more than three-quarters occupied positions in white collar sectors.[7] Such ethnically divided economic differences greatly determine the representations and integration of the mainland French and contribute to the ethnic labeling that is reflected in their discourse.

These migrations are also predominantly temporary. The status of posted civil servants currently allows a maximum stay of four years for the approximate 2,000 State positions in French Polynesia.[8] Rare exceptions include candidates who apply for and are granted the maintenance of their positions in French Polynesia, as well as judges and university professors, who are appointed to their positions indefinitely. This structure of temporary positions creates a "turntable" of civil servant arrivals, which, generating constant newcomers from the French mainland, contributes to the perception of the overall mainland population as "foreign" and "outsider."

Invasions

Along with cultural change and economic activity, migrations from mainland France multiplied exponentially following the 1963 installation of the Centre of Nuclear Experimentation (CEP). Therefore, these migrations are occasionally interpreted as invasions. As Bernard Gille notes in reference to the French presence in French Polynesia, "it is evident that since the beginning of time, the universal phenomenon of migration is presented in its most brutal form, that of invasion" (1999, 9). Ethnologist Bruno Saura, for example, speaks of an increased sentiment of invasion caused by the opening of

charter flights, which led to increased migration and contact from mainland France (1998, 83). Historian Jean-Marc Regnault also refers to the myth of an invasion in Tahiti by the mainland French who are viewed as foreigners. His work highlights the political discourse of Oscar Temaru, leader of the Independence Party *Tavini huiraatira*, who denounced the dangers of migration from Europe and referred to the French immigration policy as a "whitening policy" or a "slow genocide" (Temaru 1995). Whether a widespread vision or one launched by the political movement, the association between "migration" and invasion testify to the existence of this sentiment which, regardless of numeric or symbolic reality, also affect the social relations and attitudes of those having migrated themselves.

Integration, Assimilation, Domination

France has adopted an "assimilationist" model of integration for its immigrants and territories, as opposed to countries that advocate a "multiculturalist" model of society that celebrates diversity (cf. Bertheleu 1997). In this concept, in which "integration" entails "assimilation," prevails the definition of the latter: "the policy of incorporating migrants into society through a one-sided process of adaptation" (Castles 1995). Although boasting equality through equal education, the assimilationist model, however, paradoxically creates a new inequality between dominant and subordinate cultures. "If equality is translated by a negation of differences and thus of individual identities, it actually creates a new inequality, as it takes the values of a dominant group as a universal model" (De Carlo 1998, 39). Therefore, assimilation policies impose the reproduction of dominant social norms, notably through school and language.

The assimilation of French Polynesian residents into the French linguistic and cultural model has been promoted through the State school system and the recruitment of French civil servants into the socioprofessional roles of teachers and agents of administration, law, and order. Since the beginning of the French colonial enterprise in the Polynesian islands, the role of these agents has been to convey knowledge and sociocultural values and symbols, particularly through social reproduction in school. Pierre Bourdieu revealed the symbolic pedagogical violence exerted by the dominant class who maintains their dominant social position through the reproduction within the classroom of society's inequalities (Bourdieu and Passeron 1970, 21–22). This hypothesis is applicable to French Polynesia's pedagogical system whose 1883 transplantation, when the Jules Ferry laws made primary school obligatory for all French citizens including those in the colonies, was considered what Ferry termed the "educational and civilizing mission belonging to the superior race" (De Carlo 1998, 19). Thus, the school system was a means

of instilling the values and culture of a dominant French civilization to the "uncivilized" and "inferior" race. Polynesian languages, for example, were strictly banned from usage in schools until 1980, at which time the Tahitian language was officially recognied (Baré 2002, 26) and thereafter introduced in a very limited form in schools. Thus, despite an ensuing revival of the Tahitian language in the local media and political discourse, alongside a generalized movement of cultural revival during this era, the domination in the school and public structures of the French language, laden with all its inherent cultural symbols, has participated in maintaining the social dominance of the mainland French.

The Image of the Popa'a

Often referred to in racial terms as *Popa'a*, a Tahitian term equivalent to "white," the mainland French are said to be frequently viewed by the local population as individualistic and lacking generosity (Saura 1998, 83). This image is reinforced by actual economic advantages in favor of posted mainland civil servants, including salary increases, expatriation bonuses, housing subsidies, and travel compensations. For this reason, the anti-French "allergy" is, according to Bruno Saura, especially demonstrated against the "passing military and State agents who have come to Polynesia to save money thanks to the atomic bomb and who do not even spend their high salaries within the local economy" (in Regnault 1995, 145). This harsh perception represents the civil servants' primary interest as being the financial advantages. Thus, the expatriation system has fed these images through its creation of ethnically delineated economic divisions.

Recent sociopolitical movements defending "Polynesian" or *Ma'ohi* culture and identity also influence perceptions of the mainland French. In the decade following the cultural revival of the 1970s and 1980s, first sparked by anti-nuclear protests, Gaston Flosse, then President of French Polynesia, proposed to introduce a "Polynesian citizenship"[9] to promote positive discrimination in land ownership and employment. Although the proposal initially included citizenship through kinship with a resident or by birthplace, these aspects were considered unconstitutional by the French *Conseil Constitutionnel*, which reduced the criteria to a minimal length of residence. To further counter the ethnic and political nature of the proposal, the Overseas Minister set an example by replacing the term "Polynesian" with "French citizen residing in French Polynesia." In the media at the time of the interviews, this proposal provoked strong reactions in the mainland French population, many of whom found the proposal to be discriminatory, thus significantly influencing the interviews.

Colonial Shame

Another factor affecting and subsequently emerging from the civil servants' discourse is colonial shame, extending to guilt related to French nuclear testing in the islands (1966–1996). The ensuing imagery divides social actors into "the Parisian State agent" and the "Polynesian" victim "who suffered at the hand of the State and its agents" (Doumenge 2002, 29). Bruno Saura also refers to ongoing colonial representation, stating that the Frenchman is seen first and foremost as colonizer (1998, 86). This colonial guilt is also present in social discourse and imagery throughout mainland France, as attests a contentious 2005 law proposal, later repealed, calling for the recognition of the "positive role" of the French colonial mission, prompting renewed debate between those opposing colonial "repentance" (Lefeuvre 2006) and those requesting greater recognition of the French colonial past (Stora and Leclerc 2007). The colonial past, socially present, incites differing reactions from the interviewees who take the defence of the "Parisian State agent," sympathize with the "indigenous victim," or else feel caught between justifying and criticizing their own affiliation with colonial history.

The Ideal Types

Selected for their maximum diversity in age, family status, and personality, the mainland civil servants interviewed held occupations within three different public institutions: an elementary school, the State police and the university. Having worked for several years at the university alongside primarily mainland French colleagues and being considered Popa'a, although not French, I was often included in the interviewees' use of "we," which may have participated in their uninhibited willingness to speak openly during the interviews.[10] Of the selected interviewees, I compared those civil servants whose length of stay in French Polynesia was limited (four years maximum) with those migrants who were able and had chosen to stay longer (over six years). The comparison allowed observation of the impact of duration of stay upon the perceived integration, ethnic representations, and overall discourse within the French civil servant population.

The interviews are organized into *ideal types* as defined by Max Weber, in which exaggerated archetypal forms of classification are employed to categorize otherwise elusive concepts or phenomena into easily conceptualized forms for analysis (1996, 412). Although the qualitative interview method associated with ideal type analysis inhibits statistical representation, it does allow representation of attitudes that exist and function in society, albeit in unknown proportions. The ideal types observed from the interviews have

been broken into three principal attitude types concerning discourse on ethnic representations and varying sentiments of acceptance, belonging, and social integration within Tahitian society. The three major categories of interviewees embodying these attitudes are the embittered patriot, the proudly integrated, and the laissez-faire fatalist.

1. The Embittered Patriot

The first ideal type, the embittered patriot, is characterized by a general rejection of the Polynesian. The inability to feel integrated within Tahitian society creates social discomfort and frustration that is transformed into bitterness toward Polynesians who "are not welcoming" as had been imagined. Feeling unjustly rejected for one's ethnic belonging, whereas "Tahiti is part of France," the rejection of the "other" is all the more justified. In parallel, the embittered patriot displays increased patriotism toward mainland France and accuses Polynesians of profiteering from this privilege, claiming that the latter "do not recognize their privileges" and are "spoiled children." Thus, their discourse evokes a solid boundary between the mainland French "us" and the Polynesian "them."

Contested Rejection

The feeling of unfair rejection, injustice toward the mainland French, is one of the foremost themes of the embittered patriot. An interviewee from the university, whom we shall call Anne, laments:

> With the police, there is a dual system . . . A Polynesian pulled over doesn't get a ticket . . . People died [in France] for their ideas, that the laws should be the same for all. In the private sector we feel discriminated against . . . The [Tahitian] language is an excuse. It's not fair. A Polynesian in Nantes is not obliged to speak Breton . . . [The Polynesians] are living on my tax money . . . Coming here is a right. They have you come because they need you, but it's your right to come.

The right to equality is supported by citizenship in a country founded upon its fought-for Constitution and by rights as a taxpayer supporting the French Overseas Country. Thus, patriotic ties are strengthened in response to feeling treated as a foreigner in a place that expectation dictates should be "home." Adding that the French system prescribes migration from the mainland toward Polynesia, Anne accepts even less any complaints against the

mainland French from Polynesians who, on the contrary, she esteems should be appreciative.

Also in his third year of employment in Tahiti, an interviewee from the middle school reiterates the existence of such racial discrimination: "The Popa'a are not welcome here . . . It's evident even in politics . . . The racism is rather surprising . . . They don't accept you because they think that you shouldn't be here" (Bert). According to Albert Memmi (1999), racism is the generalized and definitive assessment of real or imaginary differences that, benefiting the accuser to the detriment of the victim, serve to legitimize an aggression or privileges. Because this entails domination of one group over another, racism generally refers to that exercised by the dominant group, particularly in a colonial context. Thus, the discourse here is striking in that, attempting to demonstrate the personal affliction of feeling discriminated against for belonging to the dominant ethnic group, the speaker uses the term "racism" to refer to a "reverse racism" in which the dominant group of Popa'a are placed in the role of victim. Bert places the fault on Polynesians who are guilty of rejecting the mainland French and therefore responsible for the ethnic divisions: "At first we socialised with Polynesians. But we stopped. We realized that it was useless. They really take advantage. We invited the same people several times and were never invited back." Bert therefore feels unfairly rejected and discriminated against.

An interviewee from the national police, in his fourth year in Tahiti, also feels targeted by racism and invokes in this case the accusation of colonialism:

> We're beginning to see racist remarks. For example here a mainlander is called a Popa'a, and when you see the definition of Popa'a, in the end it translates the colonizer aspect. In other words . . . that person is a colonizer, he steals my work, he helps himself, and then he leaves. Or else he stays, but he takes my spot. (Christophe)

Rejection of the mainlander is thus associated with a negative colonial image, which the interview associates directly with the racial designation Popa'a. A husband and wife, who have both taught at the middle school for two years, express similar feelings: "There's a boundary . . . We are perceived somewhat as invaders; but in fact you come to realize that the Polynesians are not from here either. It's a mix . . . no one is 'from here'" (Donald). The feeling of being perceived as invaders is again considered unfair, in this case because the ethnic categorizations construct the descendants of previous foreigners as Polynesian, or from here, whereas he and his wife are treated as outsiders.

His wife, Deborah, also attests to a boundary despite their efforts: "Regarding invitations, we are mostly invited by people like us . . . who are here for a defined time. We have not had an invitation from a resident for example. We have, however, made the effort to invite . . . But with no return." Like other embittered patriots, Deborah complains of lack of reciprocity, which strengthens her conviction that the rejection and social barriers come from the other.

For François, the rejection is again accompanied by the image of the Popa'a as invader, leading to the feeling of being unjustly discriminated against: "There is a certain rejection of the Popa'a . . . who takes our land . . . our work . . . No. If we have someone on a job it's because there is no one else, because you are more qualified than another . . . . So there is this sort of reverse racism." The image of Popa'a as invading profiteers is once again emphatically contested as a false and unfair reason for differential treatment. Nonetheless, the term reverse racism concedes that it is the reaction to an original racism by the dominant group.

Geraldine, who has worked at the university for many years, also attests to the presence of racism, particularly on the job:

> When someone wants to apply for a job, if he is not Polynesian, he has no chance . . . I know a few examples of young people who were born here because their grandparents moved here and who are unemployed because they are not . . . of Polynesian stock.

She also cites her own place of work, where she feels like a victim of discrimination: "At work, there is segregation between the Polynesians and the non-Polynesians, even if you may have good relations with certain colleagues . . . And at the smallest disagreement, the French are often accused of racism, but I think that the racism is especially in the other direction." Thus, Geraldine sees the accusation of racism as unprovoked and as participating in reverse racism, in which "the French" are constructed as the victims, rather than the opposite.

"Tahiti, c'est la France!"

The injustice of perceived rejection and racism is reinforced by the fact that equality for the mainland French should prevail, as *"Tahiti, c'est la France"* (Tahiti is France). To the question regarding the frequently used term "expatriate," the embittered patriot contests this expression with vigor. The following extract clearly expresses this sentiment regarding French proprietorship and belonging:

> It is part of France. It's French, *French* Polynesia. The term "expatriate" is surprising . . . Polynesia is French, so I thought I was at home. For me, I was headed to discover a part of my country that I didn't know . . . And when I feel, not a rejection, but a mistrust regarding the Popa'a . . . I wonder, what's going on, this is my home . . . I am in France . . . I am expatriated in the sense that I am thousands of kilometres from the mainland. (Deborah)

Despite the social interactions that bring her to understand the contrary, Deborah insists on considering herself at home in France, justifying this claim and contesting all unfair rejection.

Others echo this feeling, such as "Expatriate? No, I am not outside of my country here" (Bert), or more strongly:

> Expatriated? Here? No, I am French . . . This is a French university in the Pacific . . . There is no reason that I should be considered expatriated here . . . Is a Tahitian, when he goes to Paris, an expatriate? . . . I am from the south of France; I like the south of France . . . like the Polynesians in Polynesia. (François)

The overly defensive attitude is recurrent in the embittered patriot, who emphatically justifies the legitimacy of his/her presence and social role in Polynesia, strongly rejecting any questioning of this.

The Polynesian, Spoiled by the Mainland

Another recurring theme with the embittered patriot ideal type, which is also a long-present stereotype (Rigo 1997, 75), is the image of the Polynesian as a "spoiled child" with whom the mainland has been too generous. In his fourth and final year working at the university, Henri declares: "There is a total lack of understanding about what goes on in France . . . They don't know their privileges; they are spoiled children." The indifference toward France is reproached in light of the privileges provided by the mainland. Another interviewee sees exploitation of France's generosity, claiming that "they take from France only what they want" (Anne). Yet another attributes the cheerfulness of Polynesians to the economic and medical benefits provided by the mainland:

> There are *many* Polynesians who should take a trip to Fiji. They would see how good things are here . . . Because when you hear certain negative discourse, and when you see a country like

> Fiji—you see, they got their independence—but it's terrible . . . Here the people smile . . . I think to myself, maybe they should take a look over there so they realize that this is a rich island . . . . Look at all the medical coverage which is provided by the mainland. (Elise)

The leisure of Polynesians is coupled with their ingratitude, demonstrated by their desire for independence. Her colleague echoes this feeling: "Here, compared to Africa, there is everything. And the people, the Polynesians, are not aware in my opinion of the wealth and the happiness they have. They are assisted . . . social security for everyone" (François). Although mainlanders are assumed to be appreciative or legitimate beneficiaries of State programs, Polynesians are accused of not appreciating the "wealth and the happiness" assured by the mainland.

These reproaches accompany the defensive patriotism vis-à-vis an exemplary mainland. Defending the Mainland and rejecting colonial shame, one interviewee goes so far as to deny colonial history, declaring: "They were not colonized . . . They were evangelized. It's not their fault . . . Why did we come to disturb them? We brought sickness, even if we also brought civilization" (Hélène). This amalgam of contradictory ideas reveals guilt for having disturbed the Polynesians, who are innocent ("it's not their fault"), and for having brought sickness. Yet at the same time, she denies the colonization and boasts the well-doings of the Mainland, which "brought civilization." Employing "we," she also directly associates herself with the actors of French colonial history.

Developing his thoughts related to the term expatriate, François displays stronger emotion concerning colonial guilt:

> Do I feel guilty for having colonized Polynesia? Not at all . . . Do I feel guilty for having colonized Africa? Not at all. Such is history . . . Do the Italians feel guilty because the Romans colonized Europe? Not at all. Do the English feel guilty for having gone to America . . . ? . . . I have no guilt. None.

The term expatriate seems to evoke great insult as well as the idea of colonialism, responsibility for which he aggressively distances himself. Having lived in Algeria until its independence, this interviewee then links colonial history directly to independence struggles, which he belittles:

> If the Polynesians are intelligent enough to understand that, in the middle of the ocean all alone with 240,000 inhabitants . . . , they would be subjugated to other powers . . . It would no longer be the

> French who give the money. Because France gives a lot of money . . . They'll have to get to work straight away. The hotels have to be cleaned up . . . I don't see the point [of being independent].

Mainland France is once again praised, whereas the local intelligence and motivation to work are questioned.

Disappointment

A final theme of the embittered patriot involves the disappointment of Tahiti not being as French or as paradisiacal as expected. Some had imagined "the myth . . . images of warmth, the lagoon . . . the mythical idea" but were "quickly disappointed . . . Day-to-day life had nothing to do with that . . . The people are not welcoming" (Anne).

Another interviewee makes similar comments:

> I had the image of an easy life, the beach, coconut trees, the kindness of the people. It's not at all like that . . . In Tahiti it's the same life as anywhere . . . we are disappointed. I expected an easy life, but it's rather hard. There are traffic jams . . . it's like a Parisian lifestyle! (Bert)

For the latter, having imagined a mythical and paradisiacal place, the disappointment is tied to the banality or the demystification of the island.

The disappointment from unmet expectations contributes to the "effect of bitterness," in which the "European has lost his illusions; he was hoping to encounter the noble savage" (Rigo 1997, 161). The disillusionment from unmet expectations, resulting in the emotional reaction of bitterness, is reminiscent of Pierre Livet's claim that emotions are signals of alarm which let us know that our desires or expectations are maladjusted to the reality around us (Livet 2002). The disparity between expectations and reality is also pertinent to Emile Durkheim's notion of "anomie" in which a malaise is provoked when "society fails to provide a limiting framework of social norms" (Jary and Jary 1991, 21). The discrepancy between expectation and actual social experience can clearly lead to a communal emotional response, as demonstrated by the embittered patriot.

2. The Proudly Integrated

The opposite extreme of the above category is the proudly integrated migrant. Having accepted the criticism toward the mainland French and the colonial

shame, rather than denying it, the proudly integrated utilizes a different strategy of identity preservation by distancing him/herself from other mainland French. Claiming that the latter "are there to put money aside," have a "colonialist mentality," or "live in their little world," the proudly integrated claims to "not create relationships with Popa'a." Considering him/herself an exception to the majority of Popa'a, the individual adopting this strategy continually tries to distinguish him/herself from this ethnic belonging and its negative associations. Thus, this reaction involves pride regarding one's successful integration among the host population, as opposed to other mainland French who have, allegedly, failed because of a lack of will or of personal or cultural characteristics.

Adoption of the Negative Perception of Popa'a

First, the proud integrated accepts the negative perception of Popa'a. This national policeman, in his third year in Tahiti and married to a Polynesian woman met during a previous military stay at the site of the nuclear testing center, shares a negative image of Popa'a:

> They are here to put money aside . . . I don't like the mentality of taking all, then leaving. Especially the military try to save the maximum . . . There is still a problem of integration in the colonial style, like the teachers. The teachers have often lived in Africa. They are used to being served . . . to paying little for services . . . They have created segregation . . . The teachers don't mix with others . . . they feel superior to others. (Isaac)

His reproaches include the image of profiteers who have come with their superior and colonialist attitudes only to put money aside. He displays disdain for Popa'a, particularly military and teachers who are accused of intentionally separating themselves socially from the host population.

Another policeman, a few years into his stay in Tahiti and hoping to remain there with his Polynesian girlfriend, shares the same reproaches:

> And the Popa'a who have been in Polynesia for a number of years . . . think they are superior to Polynesians . . . For them, they are the Popa'a, the whites, and they are the ones who command . . . Generally, they are retired people who worked in the administration. They stay in Polynesia and because they have a higher salary, they have a nice house . . . They have a superior quality of life. They don't try to form relationships. They're in their little world. (Jacques)

The superiority and the disdainful regard, stemming from the socially and economically superior position, are once again among the negative images adopted. Retirees and long-term migrants are again criticized for lacking will to "form relationships" with Polynesians and for staying "in their little world."

The logic of this accusation is nonetheless contradicted in further commentary highlighting the interviewee's "luck" in meeting Polynesians, revealing a paradox in the representation of Popa'a. He states: "Myself, I was lucky—well, I'm very sociable as well—to form relationships, to be invited into families." He later repeats: "Myself, I was lucky to have a friend who was here, and through him I was able to meet other people, some Polynesians that he knew." (Jacques) Highlighting the fact that it is not easy to get to know Polynesians, he attributes his own achievement to both luck and his own sociability, both of which distinguish him from other mainland French.

Another proudly integrated, resident in Tahiti for twelve years and married to another civil servant, likewise criticizes his own ethnic group:

> Many, especially among the teachers . . . haven't got a single Polynesian friend; they practically kept on as if they were on the mainland. They only socialize with French, whites, mainlanders . . . It's up to us, when arriving from the mainland, to take the first step. You see right away if you are accepted or not. You don't say, I am a teacher, I know everything. No. You must remain humble . . . I don't socialize much with teachers; just a few. They are worthless . . . They want money . . . They save up. That way when they return to France they buy the nice home . . . Ourselves, all the money we earn, we spend it here, in the Territory . . . We have two colleagues, they've been here for two years and they are not going to renew their contract. They don't like it here . . . In France, people don't like to travel. (Kevin)

Kevin furthers the idea that other Popa'a are not socially integrated among the host population because they make no effort, criticizing them for this lack of will. He particularly targets teachers, who are seen once again as profiteers, and even criticized for their desire to return to mainland France. Naturally, having embraced this negative representation of Popa'a, he also invests much dialogue in distancing himself and his wife from the ethnic group he describes, employing "they" to criticize other Popa'a, and "we" to speak of himself and his family.

Two other colleagues from the elementary school, both in Tahiti since their teens, and whose parents were civil servants at the time, share these critiques of French teachers. One admits that her image of other teachers is

not very positive and declares that her "true friends are Polynesians" (Lorna). The other elaborates on this not very positive image:

> Some only come for the money . . . and say we are the best, what we think is good, what Tahitians think is not good . . . There are people who still function in a colonial system . . . They are never happy. They never give five extra minutes . . . They earn nearly twice as much as what they earn in France, they have holidays . . . But they criticize. The students here are adorable . . . When you see people who are well paid and who come with their theatrics . . . they might as well stay home . . . Their salaries are multiplied by 1.84 . . . And personally I know Tahitians who struggle, who have no money, who live poorly, simply . . . That is why myself I was anti-Popa'a before. (Marie)

The colonial attitude is once again evoked, as well as the superiority and discontent despite economic privileges, the latter of which are presumed to be the reason to stay in Tahiti. This outspoken image of teachers is common among the proudly integrated and, as is perceptible in the term "anti-Popa'a," is once again extended to generalize about the entire ethnic group.

Distancing from Popa'a, Identifying with Polynesians

The proudly integrated separates him/herself from the negative stigma notably by attaching his/her self-image to Tahitian people and culture. Isaac, married to a woman from Tahiti, distinguishes himself from other mainland French by his mixed marriage: "I am in favor of positive discrimination. Tahitians with equal qualifications should be favored . . . I would have no right to stay if it weren't for my wife." As opposed to the embittered patriot, he applauds differential rights for Tahitians and claims preferential rights associated with this group of belonging thanks to his wife. In addition, he claims, "We are at home" and identifies with Tahiti as a political entity, stating, "We are headed toward Independence," as opposed to the embittered patriot who employs "we" to refer to mainland France.

Jacques, who had attributed his integration in Polynesia to luck, distinguishes himself from other mainland French by his adventurous character, which he affirms throughout the interview:

> I live it as an *adventurer*. You know . . . [in Tahiti] there will not be all the same commodities as in the mainland . . . That is why I said you have to be somewhat *adventurous* to come . . . I am an *adventurer*, and material things don't attract me. So that is why,

> concerning integration, there is no problem. But I have colleagues who can't get adjusted.

He claims that whereas some colleagues are unable to adjust, his own adventurous character allows him to integrate, thus distinguishing himself from other mainland French. He continues: "Myself, I do not form relationships with *Popa'a*, with whites. Myself, I have greater ease in forming relationships with Polynesians." Not only is his personality different from other mainlanders, but he also does not associate with the latter, preferring to associate with the local population.

At the middle school, Kevin also wishes to identify with Polynesians and to distance himself from the mainland French: "Many Polynesians are convinced that I was born here because I have the accent of *pieds noirs*."[11] Later, he continues, "Many people, parents, think I was born here. Because I speak with an accent, I speak a lot, I speak with my hands." He underlines his natural similarities with Polynesians, demonstrating satisfaction to be often taken as a native of the local territory.

Yet when associated with mainlanders, Kevin exhibits rejection:

> A *Farani* is someone born in France. I was not born in France . . . Farani is a mainlander . . . There is a colleague who just renewed his contract to stay here. And he wants to make others think that he is from here . . . and when he sees a white, he says, "Hey, hello Farani." So the last time, I said, that's enough: I am not Farani because I wasn't born in France.

In this "competition" of integration, both Jacques and Kevin wishes to be associated with Tahiti and to be considered an exception from other Farani. Kevin continues his dissociation from the latter in favor of association with the Polynesian population, displaying pride in his integration:

> I have more Polynesian than Popa'a acquaintances and friends . . . I have friends from Bordeaux who are here, visiting me. They are surprised because, well, from my job and my profession, I know all the parents . . . When I go to the store to buy bread it takes me three hours . . . You know everyone.

His colleague, who arrived in Tahiti as an adolescent and is married to a local man, also feels different from other mainland French, choosing the "side" of Tahitians:

> Often people ask me if I was born here. I have a manner that makes people think I am from here. I feel more from here than from elsewhere . . . I don't feel Popa'a. I don't feel Tahitian, but I feel it by adoption. And if I had to choose a side, I choose the side of the Tahitians. I am at home here. (Marie)

Thus, Marie asserts allegiance to Tahiti and the Tahitian side, as opposed to identifying with Popa'a, toward whom she had earlier displayed hostility.

The proudly integrated display a contrasting identity strategy in response to the ethnically salient social context encountered in Tahiti, a strategy which involves distancing the self from one's socially assigned and negatively stigmatized ethnicity. Much energy, in action and discourse, is therefore allocated to displaying difference from other Popa'a and emphasizing similarities with Polynesians. In reference to Frederik Barth's fieldwork analysis, Jocelyne Streiff-Fenart notes that it can be advantageous to change one's ethnic label "to avoid paying the price of defeat" (2003, 192). In a similar identity strategy, the proudly integrated avoid paying the price of their assigned ethnic label by optimizing the options available to them and identifying with an alternative ethnic label.

3. The Laissez-Faire Fatalist

The reactions exhibited by the third ideal type, the laissez-faire fatalist, are a compromise between those of the proudly integrated and the embittered patriot. Like the latter, the laissez-faire fatalist recognizes ethnic divisions and the regretted impossibility of feeling socially integrated among the host population, finding him/herself in a rather isolated ethnic community. Yet in contrast, this attitude neither entails feeling bitter or resentful of this situation, nor conversely trying to adopt Polynesian ways or to dissociate oneself from other mainland French. Accepting his/her social position and largely ignoring the negative ethnic stereotyping, the laissez-faire fatalist declares to live quite happily in Tahiti, despite the regretted social barriers to interethnic mixing.

Recognition of Regrettable Ethnic Divisions

First, the laissez-faire fatalist recognizes ethnic divisions and resigns to accept them. A physical education teacher, who decided not to renew his contract after two initial years in Tahiti, attests to the presence of boundaries that maintain superficial relations with Polynesians:

> The Polynesians are very nice; but from there to having deeper relations . . . In the neighborhood where we live, all is going well. We always greet each other, but that's it . . . It's quite difficult to have real contact with the Tahitians. The reserve . . . It remains superficial. It's not easy. (Norbert)

The reasons given for these divisions and for the superficiality of relations, rather than targeting individuals' actions, are explained by socioeconomic differences:

> At kite-surfing . . . it's an activity that costs a lot. So once again we are among ourselves . . . It's related to money. If I can chat with the neighbours from one side it's because they work; they both leave in the morning like us. Whereas on the other side, they don't work; they fish, they sell fruit and fish by the side of the road . . . We don't have the same culture, we don't understand each other. It's a different lifestyle. (Norbert)

Norbert frequently justifies ethnic divisions by cultural differences, never praising or blaming one side or another.

A university teacher, who requested to keep her position in Tahiti, also attests to superficiality in interethnic relations:

> It's a different type of friendship . . . It's a different culture . . . Later, I distanced myself . . . it didn't correspond to what I wanted. With Tahitians [I only had] superficial contacts . . . We stay on the outside . . . [There are] socioeconomic differences, differences in interest . . . a huge gap between those who studied . . . Their culture is closed . . . it's difficult to integrate . . . you have to make the effort . . . I think that there are two choices: either you integrate completely and take up the daily life of Tahitians, or you remain on the sidelines. (Olive)

Once again the explications are neutral and accompanied by a resigned regret that relations with Tahitians are superficial and that such ethnic and cultural divisions exist. The acceptance of the role as foreigner permits acceptance of the divisions that the embittered patriot violently refuses:

> I don't want to impose . . . It's their country, the country of the Tahitians. But it's better that way . . . I try to do as they do, to respect

> the local codes; to not honk, . . . to yield to people even if it's up to them to stop. (Olive)

Thus, she attributes her adaptation efforts to an accepted role as foreigner.

A colleague, in Tahiti for ten years, has also accepted these divisions, living happily with wife and children in a convivial residential community:

> The true friends are mostly Popa'a who have been here for a long time . . . At the beginning, we had two couples of Polynesian friends [neighbors and their friends] . . . But since then, they moved to Moorea, and we have more or less lost contact . . . It's kind of a shame. (Paul)

He regrets the lack of deepened contact with the host population, despite his long-term residence. Another colleague in her fifth year in Tahiti echoes this regret of ethnic boundaries. After discussing difficulties to integrate among Tahitians, she continues:

> I tried to make contacts when I saw that the children had some Polynesian friends . . . They don't make an effort because they know that they [Popa'a] are here to put money aside . . . [There are] obstacles for integration. We have different pastimes . . . parties, humor, and language too. (Quinn)

Although also desiring deepened relationships, she notes that cultural differences produce natural obstacles to integration, in addition to the obstacle of the negative perception of Popa'a, reinforced by the system of economic privileges.

A middle school teacher who was recently authorized to keep his position in Tahiti confirms that the boundaries are difficult to penetrate and expresses a desire to adapt one day:

> You must take the first step. And even when you take the first step, sometimes he assumes in any case you are just passing through, you do not interest him . . . Sometimes there is this retreat from the foreigner . . . I can't say that I know the Polynesian culture as of now. I don't really have the time to get into it. But I would like to get into it, either regarding the language or the culture itself . . . But it is not easy . . . I don't feel rejected, but I don't have the impression that I'm 100% integrated either. I hope it'll come. (Ronald)

Thus, Ronald recognizes regrettable boundaries but preserves the hope that integration and improved contact will prevail with time.

For a policeman beginning his second year in French Polynesia, the urban context of Papeete is responsible for the lack of intergroup contact:

> We regret being in Papeete. I think that elsewhere it is easier to live well and amongst the Polynesians. In the islands there are less Popa'a; they are amongst them; they live together. In Papeete, we feel like we are living on the sidelines. (Stéphane)

This final statement is demonstrative of the laissez-faire fatalist's overall feeling of regret for living "on the sidelines" and not among the host population.

Satisfaction with Life in Tahiti

Despite regrets over ethnic boundaries, the laissez-faire fatalist makes the best of the situation to live well and take advantage of life in Tahiti. Some express this satisfaction by the desire to stay beyond expiration of the temporary contract. Others explicitly articulate this satisfaction and feel at home:

> I don't have the impression that we live much differently to on the mainland . . . I live with comfort, with a lot of happiness . . . There is a different culture, yes, but I don't feel like an expatriate. I feel like I am somewhere in France, as if I had gone from Brittany to the south of France. (Ronald)

Regardless of regretted ethnic divisions, the laissez-faire fatalist feels at home and lives in Tahiti "with a lot of happiness." However, the following interviewee demonstrates cynicism regarding his own integration in the system laid out for him:

> I feel well. I don't know . . . I have the impression that we are here to earn money and that money is distributed across the Territory. We are a mailbox to take money and distribute it. If I am integrated, it is because I play my role as a mailbox: I pay a very expensive rent, et cetera. My social role here is more that than anything else. I think it's the structure that is built that way. (Norbert)

Thus, he associates his social role and integration directly with his professional role. Representing the French State, his social position is determined

by the structure of relations between the State and the Overseas Country. Nonetheless, despite this predetermined social role, he asserts to live happily in Tahiti.

Similarities with Other Migrant Populations

The ideal types observed throughout this study have striking similarities with reactions and attitudes adopted by other migrant populations, in conditions of both socioeconomic domination and marginalization. Similarities have been found (1) with the Maghreb population in France, (2) with migrant elites in multinational companies, and (3) with the former French colonial population in Algeria. Each mainland French ideal type observed in this study resembles an identity strategy adopted by other populations. Although each sociohistorical context bears stark differences with the French Polynesian context, the interest of this comparison lies in the surprisingly similar emotional reactions and identity strategies of other individuals faced with structural sociopolitical patterns and ethnic representations that classify their self-identity within an unfavorable communal categorization.

Malewska-Peyre's study (1989) regarding the Maghreb population in France highlights the fact that the individuals react diversely to the negative image of their ethnic belonging. "Over-assertion" (*sur-affirmation*)[12] is one observed manner to combat the negative image, where the criticized characteristic is positively emphasized, as in the American "black is beautiful" movement. As Abdelmalek Sayad noted, the first reaction against stigma consists of asserting the stigma that is then constituted as an emblem of identity (Sayad 1994, 254). Although in this case adopted by a dominant group, this reaction clearly resembles the overemphasis on French nationality in the case of the embittered patriot, who defends and positively reinforces this contentious aspect of his/her ethnic identity. Similarly, in Philippe Pierre's study (2003) regarding elite corporate migrations and their identity strategies, migrants demonstrating this type of reaction are coined the "defensives" (*les defensives*) because of their strong defensiveness of the most criticized aspect of their group belonging. A similar ideal type exists in observations of colonial Algeria, in which Albert Memmi (1985) employs "the colonist who accepts his role" (*le colon qui s'accepte*) to identify the individual who feels the need to vigorously defend the legitimacy of his/her colonial presence.

Regarding the proudly integrated, Malewska-Peyre and Camilleri designate such a reaction as "displacement," where the migrant accepts the negative ethnic image yet distances his/her own image from the targeted group. Like the proudly integrated, the individual distinguishes him/herself

from the negative depiction by assimilating to the host population, displacing the depreciated image upon other members of the ethnic group from which he/she would like to be distinguished (Camilleri 1989, 383). For Pierre, migrants expressing the proudly integrated reaction are termed "the converted" (*les convertis*), having changed their lifestyle and behavior to assimilate to new norms. Memmi correlates this type of reaction in a colonial context to "the colonist who refuses his role" (*le colon qui se refuse*), refusing the concept of self as colonist or member of the dominant group. To contest this notion, the individual expressing this reaction type modulates his behavior to illustrate this refusal, both to self or others.

As for individuals who, aware of negative ethnic representations yet choose to ignore their existence, Malewska-Peyre recognizes this reaction as "repression" (1989). The migrant represses any pain provoked by prejudice to protect self-image and retain a decent quality of life. For those in a dominant social category who display the will to maintain a high quality of life within a foreign culture, Pierre coins the term "the opportunists" (*les opportunists*) for their predominant expression of pleasure in the discovery, change, and travel associated with their migration.

Overall, there are unmistakable similarities in identity strategy between the mainland French migrants in Tahiti and those of other individuals reacting to and recreating ethnic boundaries. All strive to optimize their self image in light of the social depreciation of an ascribed identity. All of these identity "defense mechanisms" are in fact manners of preserving self-esteem and value, strategies that are recognized by the psychoanalytical community. Anna Freud's *Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense* (1936) first elaborated some of these terms, such as "repression" or "displacement," to describe some of these self-preservation strategies that, utilized on an individual level to counter negative stigma, are observed here on a societal level.

Conclusion: Common Reactions to Structural Divisions

The interviews indicate structural ethnic divisions, of which the difficulty of permeability provokes diverse reactions. These divisions are continually recreated and reinforced by the polarization of ethnic perceptions, bringing social actors to choose sides and to continue to divide ethnicity into "us" and "them," a process that has carried on since the beginning of the colonial mission. Bruno Saura, confirming such social barriers to be continually and structurally formed, states that "the 'Popa'a' minority [. . .] can live in a closed circuit and in an almost completely autonomous manner in regards to the Polynesian population, as they occupy functions tied to French institutions and superstructures imported in Polynesia." In light of these observable

ethnic divisions, he adds, "Rather than trying to integrate or adapt to the territory and its inhabitants, the French minority takes advantage of the system" (Saura 1985, 9). Thus, the blame is placed on the will of the individual migrants. However, the persistence of this very stereotype participates in maintaining ethnic barriers and complicates the possibility of escape from socially assigned identities and roles, regardless of individual will.

The very definition of "ethnicity" is associated with the macrosocial construction of groups, which precede the individual and yet which are continually reproduced by each individual. Marco Martiniello states that "ethnicity concerns the structural constraints of a social, economic and political nature which shape ethnic identities" (1995, 24), indicating that the political and economic structure generates constraints upon the individual's ethnic identity and social interactions. As William Whyte stated regarding Italian integration into the American society of the 1930s, an Italian could not simply "become" American, because of the organization of his/her own and the host society's social groupings (1996, 190). Similarly, macrosocial structural constraints largely determine the social position of the mainland French in Tahiti, encouraging the adoption of identity strategies to enhance self-identity through various interpretations of one's relation to his/her inescapable ethnic identity.

This study was limited to a select sample of subjects and did not investigate the attitudes and social integration of the full array of the French presence, including those retired, in the private sector or of second generation residence. The civil servants involved in the temporary and elite migrations from mainland France take various stances in relation to their own ethnic group, the host population, colonial history, and their social role as posted agent of the State. The ideal type reactions have several factors in common: the demonstration of communal emotion, whether in the form of bitterness, pride, or else proclaimed satisfaction; mechanisms of identity defence to surmount ethnic depreciation; and similarities in identity strategy and emotional reactions with those of other communities faced with justifying and acting within ethnic divisions.

Contrary to expectation, the attitude types displayed were independent of length of stay. The accounts of ethnic boundaries across the range of ideal types and stay-lengths suggest that the continual arrival and presence of temporary migrants assist in reinforcing the divided social structure and the continually reconstructed ethnic boundaries, especially because assimilation or integration are long-term, multigenerational processes (Alba 2003, 34). Rather than forming a "neo-Polynesian" society, whose political proponents strive to find a "permanent and daily mix of cultures [. . .] and not just a juxtaposition of cultures within the same territory" (Saura 1986, 236),

polarization of ethnic identity and negative ethnic representations appear exacerbated within the current political structure. In consequence, omnipresent in the discourse of present-day posted civil servants in Tahiti are "colonial guilt" and negative stigma, which are asserted, assumed, transposed, or ignored in each migrant's quest to construct a favorable individual identity within a socially and individually credible ethnic belonging.

NOTES

1. Although all of the Tahitian population is French by nationality, typically only those from mainland France are termed French, otherwise referred to as "mainlanders" or Farani in Tahitian language. "Tahitian," like "Polynesian" or Ma'ohi, is generally used to designate individuals who are considered to be of a local, indigenous descent or "race." Race, like "ethnicity," shall be referred to as "the belief that there is a relationship between the membership of a socially created category and the possession of specific characteristics. The underlying explanation of these differences may be, for example, cultural, religious, or historical and need not be biological or pseudobiological" (Jary and Jary 1991, 21). Although other ethnic categorizations exist and much discussion could be dedicated to their social usages and evolutions, for the purposes of this paper, ethnic designations shall generally be employed as used by the interviewed social actors themselves.

2. Although since 1948 France no longer applies the terms "colonial" or "colony," the current sociopolitical system is still based on colonial relations. Victoria S. Lockwood (1993) applies Bertram and Watters's (1985) term "welfare state colonialism" to specify the current economic setup, in which colonial relations of dependency are created through comprehensive financial support. Moreover, political leaders such as Oscar Temaru of the proindependence party *Tavini huiraatira* still speak of decolonizing this region.

3. This article is primarily derived from my graduate thesis, "Attitudes and Integration of Mainland French State Employees in Urban Tahiti," defended at l'Université de la Polynésie Française, 2004. Quotations have been translated into English for the purposes of this article.

4. At the time of the interviews (2003–2004), French Polynesia was termed a French Overseas Territory. In 2004, it became a French Overseas Country but by name only, because legally it remains a Collectivity.

5. With its population of 169,674, the island of Tahiti, also the administrative center, is home to nearly 70% of the total 245,516 French Polynesian population (ITSTAT 2002).

6. After the 1988 poll, ethnic categories no longer appeared in national polls with the application of the 1978 law *Informatique et liberté* prohibiting the request of personal information such as racial and ethnic origin.

7. ITSTAT 1996, Table M11.13. It can be assumed that the majority of those 12,300 born outside of French Polynesia were born in mainland France, although the figure does include Polynesians born abroad and French citizens of various origins.

8. Numbers provided directly by the *Vice-Rectorat* and the *Haut-Commissariat*, 2002.

9. Proposal available at the university website : 'La Citoyenneté de pays: l'Exemple de la Polynésie française' presented by Gaston Flosse at the conference "Identité, nationalité et citoyenneté dans les Territoires d'Outre-mer," Papeete, 9 et 10 Novembre 1998.

10. The twenty-one recorded and transcribed interviews entailed a series of open-ended, semidirected questions that followed the natural course of conversation as much as possible. The interviews generally extended over an hour and were held at the individual's place of work in a private space.

11. "*Pieds noirs*" refers to the French from Algeria who were repatriated to the mainland in 1962 upon Algeria's independence.

12. Carmel Camilleri, "La communication dans la perspective interculturelle," concluding upon the findings in Hanna Malewska-Peyre, "Problèmes d'identité des adolescents enfants de migrants et travail social."

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