Ethnic representations and social integration of post-colonial French migrants in Tahiti, French Polynesia

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Abstract

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 Polynesian culture and history, the discourse of this dominant socio-economic category is herein redefined as the object of sociological study. Analysis reveals three principle *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 socio-economic status or duration of stay.

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Sociological and anthropological research regarding French Polynesia has traditionally constructed its object around the "exotic" Polynesian customs and traditions, omitting study on the cohabiting French population. The Occidental perspective on indigenous and subordinated peoples - "isolated tribes in exotic lands, colonised peoples… dominated classes and groups" - remains the encouraged 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 & Weber 1998: 8, 10). Yet such principles construct marginal groups as "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 "non-ethnic" Whites[1]. In rejection of this exoticism which removes "dominant" discourse from sociological analysis, this study places the elite migrants of Tahiti, the "dominant" French civil servants, at the centre of analysis[2].

Although the European population has figured in a few studies regarding the colonial period, 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. Yet as "to speak of an ethnic group in total isolation is as absurd as to speak of the sound from one hand clapping"[3], analysis of French Polynesia's mainland community, whose pens have traditionally recounted "Polynesian" society, is integral to the study of the latter. Furthermore, the French presence has primarily been referred to within the mythical context of ideal racial mélange and utopian society (Panoff 1989; Toullelan & Gille 1992; Doumenge 1999). Nonetheless, regardless of the ample racial amalgamation over the past two centuries between European, Polynesian and Chinese peoples in particular, the construction and maintenance of ethnic categorization persist.

This article considers relations between "Polynesian" and "French"[4] individuals through French civil servants' discourse on their social integration[5] 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, as their presence and function in this French overseas Territory 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 "former"[6] colonial power, this article considers the discourse of short and long-term civil servant migrants in the urban metropolis of Tahiti[7]. The political and social context faceting the attitudes of mainland civil servants within Tahitian society shall herein be outlined, followed by an analysis of the attitudes themselves and the unexpected emotional and psychological similarities of these attitudes with those of other migratory populations.

Socio-political factors

Elite temporary migrations: exacerbating the ethnic divide

In addition to the centralised State mission bestowed upon expatriated civil servants, two particular characteristics qualify these migrants in French Polynesia: elite status and temporary residence. The elite status is implicit to the State's colonial mission of exporting know-how through trained expatriates, in that these individuals occupy influential administrative, educational and law enforcement positions within a small-scale social and economic framework. Moreover, elevated socio-economic status is assured by the substantial salary increase of 40 to 120% allotted to civil servants expatriated in French Polynesia (Prel 2003: 5). Bernard Poirine noted in 1992 that, according to national surveys (ITSTAT 1988),

economic differences in French Polynesia were largely ethnically divided, 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 upper intellectual and management professions. On the contrary, the "Polynesian" households, 58% of the total, constituted only 10% of the upper intellectual and management professions, and 82% of all farmers and 76% of blue collar workers (Poirine 1992: 21). Posterior surveys, though void of ethnic categorization[8], 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 superior sectors[9]. Such ethnically divided economic differences greatly determine the representations and integration of the mainland migrants and contribute to the ethnic categorization that is reflected in the Mainlanders' discourse.

These migrations are also predominantly temporary. The expatriate status currently allows a maximum stay of four years for the approximate 2000 State positions in French Polynesia[10]. 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 Mainlanders 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*). These migrations therefore are occasionally interpreted as invasions.

As note Toullelan and Gille 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" (Toullelan & Gille 1999: 9). Bruno Saura, for example, speaks of an increased sentiment of "invasion" due to the opening of charter flights, which translated increased migration and contact from mainland France (Saura 1998: 83). Jean-Marc Regnault also refers to the "myth" of an invasion in Polynesia by the mainland French whom are viewed as "foreigners". Regnault highlighs the political discourse of Oscar Temaru, leader of the Independence Party *Tavini huiraatira*, who denounced the dangers of immigration from Europe and referred to the French immigration policy as a "whitening policy" or a "slow genocide"[11]. 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 the migrants themselves.

Integration, assimilation, domination

France has adopted an "assimilationist" model of integration for its immigrants and Overseas Territories, as opposed to countries which advocate a "multiculturalist" model of society which celebrates diversity (*cf*. Bertheleu 1997). In this concept, in which "Integration" and "assimilation" are synonymous, prevails the definition of the latter: "the policy of incorporating migrants into society through a one-sided process of adaptation" (Castles 1997: 7). 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). Assimilation politics therefore assume social domination of a socially reproduced national norm, conveyed most 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 socio-professional roles of teachers and agents of administration, law and order. Since the beginning of the French colonial emprise in the Polynesian islands, the role of these agents has been to convey knowledge and socio-cultural values and symbols, particularly through social reproduction in the 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 & 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). The school system, or "*l'école du citoyen*"[12], was thus a means of instilling the values and culture of a dominant French civilization to the "uncivilised" and "inferior" race. Polynesian languages, for example, were strictly banned from usage in schools until 1980, at which time the Tahitian language was officially recognised (Baré 2002: 26). By imposing the dominant language with all its imbedded cultural symbols, the school system thus 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*, White in Tahitian language, Mainlanders are said to be frequently viewed by Tahitians as individualistic and lacking generosity (Saura

1998: 83). This image is reinforced by actual economic advantages in favour of expatriated mainland civil servants, including salary increases, expatriation bonuses, housing subventions and travel compensations. For this reason, the anti-French "allergy" is, according to ethnologist 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 civil servants' primary interest as the financial advantages. The expatriation system has thus fed these images through its creation of what results in ethnically delineated economic divisions.

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 (1966-1995). The ensuing imagery divides social actors into "the Parisian State agent" and the local Polynesian victim "who suffered at the hand of the State and its agents" (Doumenge 2002: 29). Saura also refers to ongoing colonial representation, stating that the Frenchman is seen first and foremost as coloniser (Saura 1998: 86). The colonial view of Mainlanders incite differing reactions from the interviewees who either take the defence of "the Parisian State agent" or the "indigenous victim", or 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. Of the selected interviewees, were 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 organised into *ideal types* as defined by Max Weber, in which exaggerated archetypal forms of classification are employed to categorise otherwise elusive concepts or phenomena into easily conceptualised forms for analysis (Weber 1996: 412). The *ideal types* demonstrated by the actors of migration have been broken into three principle attitude types concerning discourse on ethnic representations and varying sentiments of acceptance, belonging and social integration within Tahitian society. The three major categories of informants 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 characterised by a general rejection of the Polynesian. The inability to feel integrated within Tahitian society creates social discomfort and frustration which 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 recognise their privileges" and are "spoiled children". Their discourse thus evokes a solid boundary between the mainland French "us" and the Polynesian "them".

Contested rejection

The feeling of unfair rejection, injustice and racism toward the French mainlanders is 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… The [Tahitian] language is an excuse. It's not fair. A Polynesian in Nantes is not obliged to speak Breton… [The Polynesians] are living with my tax money…Coming here is a right. They have you come because they need you, but it's your right to come" (Anne)

National values and patriotic conviction are evoked to defend the unfair rejection. The right to equality is supported by citizenship in a country founded upon its fought-for Constitution and by rights as a tax-payer supporting the French-funded Territory. Patriotic ties are thus strengthened in response to feeling treated as a foreigner in a place where expectation dictates should be "home." Adding that the French system prescribes migration of Mainlanders toward Polynesia, Anne accepts even less any complaints against Mainlanders from Polynesians who, on the contrary, she esteems should be appreciative.

Also in her third year of employment in Tahiti, an interviewee from the Middle School confirms the existence of racism against Mainlanders:

"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)

He places the fault on Polynesians, guilty of the rejection:

"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)

Bert thus feels unfairly rejected and discriminated against. An interviewee from the national police, in his fourth year in Tahiti, also feels targeted by racism and evokes 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 coloniser aspect. In other words… that person is a coloniser, 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 both teach at the Middle School as of two years, evoke 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 coupled with unfairness, in this case because the ethnic categorisations 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" (Deborah)

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:

"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 competitive than another…. So there is this sort of reverse racism" (François)

The image of Mainlanders as invading profiteers is once again emphatically contested as a false and unfair reason of differential treatment. Also at the university as of many years, Geraldine 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 grand-parents moved here and who are unemployed because they are not… of Polynesian stock" (Geraldine)

She also sites her own place of work, where she herself feels victim of discriminations:

"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" (Geraldine)

Geraldine thus sees the accusation of racism as unprovoked and as participating in reverse racism, in which Mainlanders are the victims.

"Tahiti, c'est la France!"

The injustice of perceived rejection and racism is reinforced by the fact that equality for Mainlanders should prevail, as "Tahiti is France" ("*Tahiti, c'est la France*"). To the question regarding the term "expatriate", the embittered patriot contests this expression with vigour. 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 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 his presence and social role in Polynesia and strongly rejects any questioning of the legitimacy of his presence as a Mainlander in Tahiti.

The Polynesian, spoiled by the Mainland

Another recurring theme with the embittered patriot *ideal type*, and which is 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 at the university, Henry declares:

"There is a total lack of understanding about what goes on in France… They don't know their privileges; they are spoiled children" (Henri)

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 <u>many</u> 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 richness and the happiness they have. They are assisted… social security for everyone" (François)

Whereas a Mainlander is assumed an appreciative or rightful benefactor, the Polynesian is accused of not appreciating the happiness assured by the Mainland.

These reproaches accompany the defensive patriotism vis-à-vis an exemplary Mainland. The defensive assertions rejecting colonial shame, one interviewee goes as 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 civilisation" (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 colonisation and boasts the well-doings of the Mainland, which "brought civilisation". Employing "we", she also directly associates herself with the actors of French colonial history.

In response to a question strictly regarding the term "expatriate", François displays stronger emotion concerning colonial guilt:

"Do I feel guilty for having colonised Polynesia? Not at all… Do I feel guilty for having colonised Africa? Not at all. Such is history… Do the Italians feel guilty because the Romans colonised Europe? Not at all. Do the English feel guilty for having gone to America…? … I have no guilt. None" (François)

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 informant 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]" (François)

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 informant 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 1991: 21).   The discrepancy between expectation and actual social experience can clearly lead to a communal emotional response, as demonstrate 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 utilises a different strategy of identity preservation by distancing himself from other Mainlanders. Claiming that other Mainlanders "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 himself an exception to the majority of Mainlanders, he continually tries to distinguish himself from this ethnic belonging and its negative associations. This reaction thus involves pride as to one's successful integration amongst Polynesians, as opposed to other Mainlanders who have, allegedly, failed due to a lack of will or to personal or cultural characteristics.

Adoption of the negative perception of Popa'a

Firstly, 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 in 1989 during a previous military stay at the site of the nuclear testing centre, 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 Polynesians.

Another policeman, a few years into his stay in Tahiti and hoping to remain there with his Polynesian girlfriend, shares the same reproaches concerning *Popa'a*.

"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 administrations. 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 criticised 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 thus attributes his own achievement to both "luck" and his own sociability, both of which distinguish him from other Mainlanders.

Another proudly integrated, in Tahiti as of twelve years and whose wife is also in the civil service, likewise criticises his own ethnic group:

"Many especially among the teachers… haven't got a single Polynesian friend; they practically kept on as if they were in 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 amongst the Polynesians 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 criticised 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 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 of stay in Polynesia. This out-spoken image of teachers is common among the proudly integrated and, as is perceptible in the term "anti- *popa'a*", is once again extended to generalise the entire ethnic group.

Distancing from Popa'a, identifying with Polynesians

The proudly integrated separates himself from the negative stigma notably by attaching his self-image to the Polynesian people and culture. Isaac, married to a Polynesian woman, distinguishes himself from other Mainlanders by his mixed marriage:

"I am in favour of positive discrimination. Tahitians with equal qualifications should

be favoured… I would have no right to stay if it weren't for my wife" (Isaac)

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 Mainlanders by his adventurous character, which he affirms throughout the interview:

"I live it as an <u>adventurer</u>. 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 <u>adventurous</u> to come… I am an <u>adventurer</u>, 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" (Jacques)

He claims that whereas some colleagues are unable to adjust, his own adventurous character allows him to integrate, thus distinguishing himself from other Mainlanders. He continues:

"Myself, I do not form relationships with *Popa'a*, with Whites. Myself, I have greater ease in forming relationships with Polynesians" (Jacques)

Not only is his personality different from other Mainlanders, but he also does not associate with the latter, preferring to associate with Polynesians. At the Middle School, Kevin also wishes to identify with Polynesians and to distance himself from Mainlanders:

"Many Polynesians are convinced that I was born here; because I have the accent of *pieds noirs*[13]". He later continues, "Many people, parents, think I was born here. Because I speak with an accent, I speak a lot, I speak with my hands" (Kevin)

He underlines his natural similarities with Polynesians, demonstrating satisfaction to be often taken as a native of the Territory. Yet when associated with Mainlanders, he exhibits rejection:

"A *Farani* is someone born in France. I was not born in France… *Farani* is 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" (Kevin)

In this "competition" of integration, each wishes to be associated with the Territory and to be considered an exception from other *Farani*. He continues his dissociation from the latter in favour of association with Polynesians, 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" (Kevin)

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

"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)

Marie thus 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 thus display a contrasting identity strategy in response to the ethnically salient social context encountered in Tahiti, strategy which involves distancing Self from one's socially assigned and negatively stigmatised ethnicity. Much energy, in action and discourse, is thus allocated to displaying one's difference from other Mainlanders and 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"[14]. In similar identity strategy, the proudly integrated avoid paying the

price of their assigned ethnic label by optimising the options available to them and identifying with an alternate 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 recognises ethnic divisions and the regretted impossibility to feel socially integrated among Polynesians, finding himself in a rather isolated ethnic community. Yet in contrast he does not feel bitter or resentful of this, nor does he conversely try to adopt Polynesian ways or dissociate himself from Mainlanders. Accepting his social position and largely ignoring the negative ethnic stereotyping, he declares to live quite happily in Tahiti, despite the regretted barriers to inter-ethnic mélange.

Recognition of regrettable ethnic divisions

Firstly, the laissez-faire fatalist recognises ethnic divisions which he resigns to accept. A physical education teacher, who decided not to renew his contract after two initial years in Tahiti, attests to the presence of boundaries which maintain relations with Polynesians superficial.

"The Polynesians are very nice; but from there to having deeper relations… In the neighbourhood 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 socio-economic differences:

"At kite-surfing… it's an activity that costs a lot. So once again we are amongst 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 keeping her position in Polynesia, also attests to superficiality in inter-ethnic 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] socio-economic differences, differences in interest…. [and] 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)

She thus attributes her adaptation efforts to her 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 [neighbours 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, humour, 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* which is reinforced by the system of economic privileges.

A middle school teacher who was recently authorised 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 to the language or the culture itself… But it is not

easy… I don't feel rejected, but I don't have the impression to be 100% integrated

either. I hope it'll come" (Ronald)

Ronald thus recognises 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 inter-group 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 have the impression to live 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 amongst the Polynesians.

Satisfaction with life in Tahiti

Despite regrets toward ethnic boundaries, the laissez-faire fatalist makes the best of his

situation in order to live well and take advantage of life in Polynesia. Some express this

satisfaction by the desire to remain in the Territory beyond expiration of the temporary

contract. Others articulate explicitly this satisfaction and feeling at home:

"I don't have the impression to live much differently than in the Mainland… I live

with comfort, with a lot of happiness… There is a different culture, yes, but I don't

have the impression to be expatriated. I have the impression of being 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 Polynesia "with a lot of happiness". The following informant however 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, etcetera. My social role here is more that than anything else. I think it's the structure that is built that way" (Norbert)

He associates his social role and integration directly with his professional role. Representing the French State, his social position is thus determined by the structure of relations between the State and the Territory. Yet, despite this predetermined social role, he nonetheless 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 socio-economic domination and marginalisation. Similarities have been found with the Maghreb population in France, with migrant elites in multinational companies and with the former French colonial population in Algeria. Each mainland French *ideal type* observed in this study resembles an *ideal type* of the comparative populations.

Malewska-Peyre's study 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*") [15] is one observed manner to combat the negative image, where the criticised characteristic is positively emphasised, as in the American "black is beautiful"

movement. This reaction clearly resembles the over-emphasis on French nationality in the case of the embittered patriot, who defends and positively reinforces this threatened aspect of his ethnic image. Similarly, in Philippe Pierre's study (2003) regarding elite migrations and their identity strategies, migrants demonstrating this type of reaction are coined the "defensives" ("*les defensives"*) due to their strong defensiveness of the most criticised aspect of their group belonging. A similar *ideal type* exists in observations of colonial Algeria, in which Albert Memmi (1957) employs "the colonist who accepts his role" ("*le colon qui s'accepte*") to term the individual who vigorously defends the legitimacy of his 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 own image from the targeted group. Like the proudly integrated, the subject evacuates the devaluating injunction by assimilating to the dominant model, displacing the depreciated image upon other members of the ethnic group from which he 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 behaviour to assimilate to the dominant norms. Memmi correlates this type of reaction to "the colonist who refuses his role" ("*le colon qui se refuse*"), as he refuses colonial history and the concept of self as colonist or member of the dominant group. To contest this notion, the individual expressing this reaction type modulates his behaviour to illustrate this refusal, both to self or others.

In Memmi's binary *ideal types*, the laissez-faire fatalist is not represented. However Malewska-Peyre recognises this latter reaction as "repression", the individual being aware of negative representations associated with his ethnic identity, yet choosing to ignore their existence. The migrant represses any pain provoked by prejudice in order to protect self-

image and retain a decent quality of life. For their will to maintain a high quality of life within a foreign culture, Pierre terms those expressing this attitude "the opportunists" ("*les opportunistes*") for their principal expression of pleasure in the discovery, change and travel associated with their migration.

Overall, there are unmistakable similarities in identity strategy between the French expatriate experiences in Tahiti and those of other migrant or minority populations, all of whom strive to optimise their self image in light of the social depreciation of an ascribed identity. All of these identity "defence mechanisms" are in fact manners of preserving self esteem and value which 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 we observe here on a widespread societal level in the face of negative identity representations.

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 created and reinforced by the polarisation of ethnic perceptions, bringing social actors to choose "sides" and to divide ethnicity into "us" and "them". Bruno Saura confirms such social barriers, stating "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 that "Rather than trying to integrate or adapt to the territory and its inhabitants, the French minority takes advantage of the system" (Saura 1985: 9). The blame is thus placed on the will of the individual migrants. The persistence of this very stereotype,

however, complicates integration and adaptation of the migrant, regardless of individual will or professional role.

The very definition of "ethnicity" is associated with the macro-social 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 facet ethnic identities" (Martiniello 1995: 24), indicating that the polarisation of perceptions and groups generates constraints upon the individual's ethnic identity and social interactions. As stated William Whyte regarding Italian integration within 1930's American society, an Italian could not simply "become" American, due to the organisation of his own and the host society's social groupings[16]. Similarly, macro-social structural constraints facet the social position of Mainlanders in Tahiti, encouraging the adoption of identity strategies that place value on self identity within one's difficultly escapable ethnic belonging.

This study was limited to a sample of and did not investigate the attitudes and social integration of the full array of French migrants, including those retired, in the private sector or of second or third generation of residence. Within this specific context of temporary and elite arrivals of civil servants from mainland France, the latter position themselves differently around representations of their own ethnic group, the host population, colonial history and their social role as expatriated agent of the State. Striking points concerning the three communal reactions are: the demonstration of socially shared emotion, whether in the form of bitterness, pride or else proclaimed satisfaction; the widespread mechanisms of identity defence to conquer ethnic depreciation;) and the strong similarities between this community's emotional reactions and identity strategies with those of other communities subject to negative ethnic association.

Contrary to expectation, the overall attitudes 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 continually reconstructed ethnic "boundaries", especially as assimilation and integration seem to occur in the long term, over generations (Alba 2003: 34). Rather than forming a "neo-Polynesian" society whose political proponents strive to find a "permanent and daily mélange of cultures […] and not just a juxtaposition of cultures within the same territory" (Saura 1986: 236), polarisation of ethnic identity and negative ethnic representations appear exacerbated within the current organisation. In consequence, omnipresent in the discourse of current-day expatriated civil servants in Tahiti are "colonial guilt" and negative stigma, which are either asserted, assumed, transposed or ignored in each migrant's quest to construct a favourable individual identity within a socially and individually credible ethnic belonging.

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[1] W.L. Warner and L. Stokle, *The Social Systems of American Ethnic Groups*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1945, in P. Simon, *La Bretonnité…,* 1999, p. 8.

[2] This article is primarily derived from my graduate thesis: Laura Schuft, 'Attitudes and Integration of Mainland French State Employees in Urban Tahiti', defended at l'Université de Polynésie Française, 2004. Citations have been translated into English for the purposes of this article.

[3] Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*, Bantam Books, New York, 1979, p.78, in T.H. Erikson, *Ethnicity and Nationalism,* 2002, p.10.

[4] All "Polynesians" are of French nationality, but typically only Mainlanders are designated as French or *Farani* in Tahitian language. Regardless of biological background, "Polynesian" generally designates those who consider themselves and who are considered to be of Polynesian ascendancy or "race". "Race" 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 1991: 405).

[5] Although social integration may be qualified as a population no longer creating problems for itself or its social environment (Pierre Milza, 'Mécanismes de l'intégration', in Ruano-Borbalan 1998: 273), or otherwise as having participation and interaction in a social system (Saura 2002: 375), within this study the interviewees construct their own idea of social integration rather than being imposed a pre-defined definition.

[6] Although French Polynesia is since 1948 no longer termed a "colony", the current socio-political system is still based on colonial relations. Victoria S. Lockwood (1993) applies Bertram and Watters' (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 independence party *Tavini huiraatira* still speak of de-colonising this region.

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

[8] 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.

[9] ITSTAT 1996, Table MI1.13. 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.

[10] Numbers provided directly by the *Vice-Rectorat* and the *Haut-Commissariat*, 2002.

[11] Discourse of Oscar Temaru to the UN, 8 October 1990, *Tavini* document, in J.-M. Regnault, *Des Partis et des Hommes en Polynésie française,* 1995, p.145.

[12] Schnapper, Dominique, 'Existe-t-il une identité française?', in J.-C. Ruano-Borbalan (ed.), *L'Identité…,* 1998, pp. 302-3. This expression emphasises the citizen-forming role of the school.

[13] "*Pieds noirs*" refers to the French from Algeria who were repatriated to the Mainland in 1962 upon Algeria's independence.

[14] Jocelyne Streiff-Fenart, 'Frontières et catégorisations ethniques. Frederik Barth et le LP' in F. Lorcerie (ed.), *L'Ecole et le défi ethnique…,* 2003, p.192.

[15] 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", in C. Camilleri & M. Cohen-Emirique (eds.), *Chocs de Cultures…*, 1989.

[16] William F. Whyte, *Street Corner Society*, La Découverte, Paris, 1996, in J. Streiff-Fenart, 'Frontières et catégorisations ethniques. Frederik Barth et le LP' in F. Lorcerie (ed.), *L'Ecole et le défi ethnique…,* 2003, p.190.