CHAPTER SEVEN - I DEFINE MY OWN IDENTITY

Introduction

The concept of race itself [is] inextricably woven out of the history of the conjunction of knowledge and power in European and Euro-American expansion and economic and sexual exploitation of "marked" or "coloured" peoples. Race as a natural-technical object of knowledge is fundamentally a category marking political power through location in 'nature'”. (Haraway 1992:153)

This chapter deals with a set of threads that are preoccupied with self/group identity formation and the physical and symbolic implications these processes have for lived lives 2. They also comprise the bulk of message themes posted on these forums. As Taholo Kami, the founder of the online Pacific Forum Kava Bowl, himself says; these online spaces and places are creating a different sort of conversation about 'identity' especially for younger Tongans living in the USA, Australia, New Zealand who are "caught between identities but feel Tongan" (Kami 2001: interview) 3. A similar process is evident in the Kamehameha Roundtable discussions as well as new and established relationships crystallise over time (Aiono 1999: interview). But these discussions are not just about 'Identity' as an abstract totality based on the geostrategic territory and political economic institutions of the Westphalian nation-state 4. As Chapter Six shows, this sort of one-to-one correspondence between geographical location, political economic system and the various practices and 'exchanges of meaning' that constitute any 'Culture' or society (see Helu 1999a) is a contestable, historically constructed one. It can also be highly problematic for generations growing up elsewhere. What is particularly at stake in the discussions examined in this chapter (and already apparent in the preceding ones) is where and how, in the case of Tonga and Samoa, national / cultural 'identity' is spliced with 'race' / 'ethnicity', and gender which is ever-present albeit in varying degrees. These aspects to 'being Tongan/Samoan/Polynesian today' impinge upon everyday life in Australia, New Zealand and the USA with their respective socio-economic divisions around race/ethnicity and cultural difference. The converse is also in operation. What is being held up to the magnifying glass in these discussions, and made openly available for others on the internet/www, is the intersection of Western/European colonial practices or meaning-making and knowledge production around the axes of 'race' - ethnicity - gender with Pacific Island cultural practices and beliefs (to wit, cultural identity) as perceived both in the islands and overseas.

What emerges is 'identity' as a composite and complex (re)negotiation of cultural, racial/ethnic and gendered practices and *embodiments* that have emerged from the aforementioned gender-power relations of colonialism (Seth 1999, Ling 2001a, Mohanty 1997, Harding 1998b). When living and interacting in the west - in Salt Lake City Mormon communities, suburban ghettos, Brisbane or Wellington nightclubs, (Kami 2001: interview), or chatting/posting from Nukula'ofa, Apia, or all over Los Angeles County - everyday life for postcolonial diasporas is permeated with the historical legacy of the *racialised* sociocultural categorisations of colonialism and their institutions of meaning-production (Haraway 1992, Ashcroft et al 1998: 45-51, 198-206, Hall 1996b) 5.

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2 My thanks to Alpona Dey, James Coleman, Twanna Hines, Taka Hosada, 'Alopi Latukefu, and Taholo Kami for sharing with me some of their own personal experiences and perceptions of the issues raised in these threads and so contributing to this chapter.

3 This does not discount a similar process for older, ex-pats. As one regular - an older woman resident in New York - told Taholo Kami herself in person; "you've given me a life online" (Kami, 2001, quoting Toutai, a KB participant). On a more personal note, Kami found out only later that this KB 'old-timer' (over 50 and a regular participant) who had looked up Taholo and become close to him and his family whilst they were all living in the USA, had died of cancer in 2000.

4 This is not to say that the internet/www is not used in the cases of nationalist movements to construct, encourage or reproduce just this sort of monistic 'imagined community' of the nation-state (see Bakker 2001, Rupert 2000). Nor to deny where ICTs are challenging the nation-state's role as signifier of identity *par excellence* (Eveillard 2000).

5 Without pre-empting the discussions that follow, a substantial thread in the KR in 2001 encapsulates how this more abstract statement operates in quite 'banal' - everyday - ways. In this case, it is in terms of
What this all amounts to is 'identity' tout court as a highly charged signifier for community, reproducing or challenging the contemporary (neo)liberal world order (Ignatieff 1999). Neither essentialist nor ingenious constructivist accounts of the race/ethnicity-gender-class dimensions to how (post)colonial inter/subjectivity emerges over time ('everyday') will suffice. As Ling points out, this involves a complex process of

....learning [that] ensues in the aftermath of conquest and desire... Unfolding postcolonially, learning stems from the interstices of power, where Self and Other collide, overlap, and contradict. Only the powerless encounter these interstices most painfully. The powerful could afford to remain oblivious, at least temporarily....(Ling 2001a: 17, emphasis in original).

It is this sort of 'learning' that is evident, its interpersonal and structural parameters articulated in these threads most explicitly. At the heart of these debates are the outer - and inner - limits of 'race', 'ethnicity', and 'culture' for postcolonial self/group identity formation. As such, these online conversations are particularly personal, intracultural as much as they are intercultural; as politically charged as they are emotionally laden. The broader meanings that are at stake is self/group identity in terms of 'race' and 'Polynesian'; in terms of how these relate to a respective cultural identification. The specific cultural practices (forming substantial threads in their own right) that pertain to this problematique for postcolonial diasporic everyday life are Fa'a Samoa (the 'Samoan Way') and anga fakatonga (the 'Tongan Way'). What these are, whether they are being threatened, and if so how to 'preserve' them (Morton 1996: 257-265) are interwoven with an exchange of multifarious meanings online. Their specificities are also compared to their similarities as different participants consider the meaning of identifying and uniting as 'Polynesians' when living in a diasporic and disadvantaged context.

This chapter is divided into three parts. Parts One and Two comprise another pit-stop at the hermeneutic schema in order to flesh out its pertinent aspects for these threads. These sections show the difference between the ways these online debates frame the issues - and composition - of 'identity' and those of western (academic) discourses. In this vein, Part One will present one such example of how 'identity' vis-à-vis ICTs is being framed at present in European critical political commentary. My argument is that this is a representation of a certain 'identity' and a certain 'crisis', of the western (generically male) middle-class subject/citizen. Allowing for variations between these discourses in the USA and Western Europe, this is the predominant representation under which these online articulations could easily be subsumed. To illustrate this standpoint and its lack of self-reflexivity, I shall be referring to a recent article by Dany-Robert Dufour (2001). This article encapsulates an oft-published blind spot that critical western thought continues to cosset. Not because this way of formulating the issues is unsympathetic to critiques of colonialism per se but rather because of the 'fear and loathing' it conjures up. Basically it conflates grassroots, non-elite uses of the internet/www with the ideological and political economic apparatus of neoliberalism's 'pensee unique'. This part ends

uneven educational resources for low-income 'ethnic minorities' in LA, high-school drop-out rates and identifying as either/or an American citizen and a Samoan. The thread, constituting 67 follow-ups, is entitled Any Future US Political Clout for PI's?? (eb, 12/03/01) at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/3190.html. The main sub-thread begins when Bevo posts this follow-up to eb's plea for getting more Pacific Islanders into Congress:

I think that this is unhealthy for our country [the USA], this polarization. This viewpoint breaks everyone up according to their ethnicity, and categorizes us not as an individual, part as part of a group. That means that all of my needs are the same as all Samoans and that all of my problems are the same as all Samoans. This means that we should get a certain number of Congressman and Senators according to our numbers. That we should get funding according to our numbers.

This is not right. It's not democratic and its unAmerican. (Bevo, 13/03/01, I disagree , in reply to initial post).

In the debate that ensues, Bevo is taken to task for his standpoint; beginning with eb, the instigator of this thread, who asks pointedly; And I'm puzzled why Mr. Unique Individual frequents a poly forum....(eb, 17/03/01, in reply to Bevo). The tensions are encapsulated in this one message title-line. In any case the general theme is picked up again a month later in a shorter thread entitled PI Summit (Dr Victor C. Thompson, 29/04/01) at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/3804.html).

6 This term - Totalitarian Thought (so to speak) - is used by Le Monde Diplomatique to denote neoliberal
with a brief reprisal of de Certeau's critique of eurocentric objectivism and universalism.

Part Two deals with the recurring problem of Western Social Science categories, which cannot adequately capture the inter/subjective and practical intricacies of 'identity', 'ethnicity', 'gender', and 'culture'. These notions are couched in quite distinctive ways in these online debates. Arguably, such terms defy tidy definition anyway let alone in terms of how they are being reconfigured in these scenarios. Nonetheless I shall present some working definitions - 'offline delineations' - in order to demarcate the philosophical and political terrain of these meaning-makings and their everyday referent points. This is not to presume a conceptual hierarchy between these broad categories and the way they get articulated and deconstructed in these forums, but rather to bring the tensions "to a head in a fruitful manner" (Adorno 1976:70).

Part Three unpacks some substantial discussion threads according to how they (re)articulate identity formation in term of 'race'-ethnicity-culture-gender in different ways. What is particularly striking about these conversations (already evident in Chapter Five) is that these online (re)articulations and their concomitant lived lives and relationships belong to people of 'mixed descent'. The threads portray and compare physical characteristics quite explicitly. Inner thoughts and outer pressures are juxtaposed with personal experiences and expectations as well as with those of families and friends. The ante is upped even further when there is a direct dialogue with participants professing 'pure' descent or unique cultural attributes. The territory covered in terms of specific cultural practices is wide indeed so the latter part of the reconstruction will be episodic and fleeting; it will illustrate the ways these broad concerns are related to specific Pacific Island cultural practices, as seen when 'overseas' or in the islands. The chapter concludes with the discernable outlines of a postcolonial politics of representation being articulated by a Polynesian diaspora, many of whom have never been to the islands in question and yet whose national / cultural identifications are neither unitary nor self-explanatory (Ward 1999, Kami 2001; interview). These outlines emerge in threads where the once hotly contested term 'Polynesian' gets put forward as an empowering postcolonial set of meanings, as a (new) metaphor for solidarity and conscious (diasporic) (re)identification. As such its colonial pedigree gets appropriated by younger generations as they move way beyond the respective biological and cultural determinism of these colonial categorisations for Pacific Island societies.

Part One: Recitations of Identities

In my whole entire experience as a Tongan citizen, the thought that i am a so-called Tongan-American, never crossed my mind. Simply, i identify myself as Tongan with no American hyphenated from the back. This is something natural to me, and to have that American attached to being a Tongan, have somekind of negative connotation. I don't know about the others but that how I feel.. However, there is nothing personal against this country, 'coz I benefit a whole lot from here *America*, the land of milk and honey, compared to a life back in the isle had I grown up in there. But as long as I know in my heart, soul and mind that I am a Tongan- *American*, or what not, life is just the same.....(Hakautapu, 9/03/98)

In this section a particular, western European representation of 'identity' - or 'selfhood' - will be juxtaposed to online articulations like the one above. The former depicts identity or subjectivity in disarray, its nation-state foundations threatened in the neoliberal world order. This view comes from both Left critics of neoliberal restructuring and traditional conservaties...
(see Rupert 2000), from both Marxist and non-Marxist circles and from both the continent, Great Britain and the USA. With shifts in the *a priori* status of the nation-state, the 'rise of the information society' and power of market forces come struggles over how 'identity' is perceived and theorised. This in itself is not a bad thing to do, reassess the ontological and philosophical assumptions of any given sociocultural context and history (Featherstone 1996). My point here is that all these shifts are seen as negative, and moreover put down to technological changes for the most part (Chapter Two). Forces of 'globalisation', power shifts in the international-state system, time-space compressions through ICTs, 'ethnic' conflicts and state 'disintegrations' are all reduced to the effects of neoliberal economic dogma and political programmes. Whilst the latter is certainly a good part of the equation, the former dynamics and processes cannot all be reduced to it. Least of all in terms of the 'postcolonial turn' or from a grassroots, non-elite conceptualisation of political agency, and mobilisation. The upshot of all this sort of fatalistic reductionism is a nostalgia for the Bretton-Woods, Fordist world order of yesteryear and a paralysis of political organisation in the face of Big Business and neoliberal ideologues. The communicative spaces and practices of non-commercial ICTs, along with postcolonial sensibilities put this conflation of all sociocultural and/or technological change with neoliberalism and the rather parochial political and sociocultural stance that accompanies it to task.

**Whose Identity Crisis?**

I'm not really sure what if I need any help, I think I would just like to know other people's perspective. Okay, I'm a New Zealand born full samoa. Yet throughout my life I have continuously felt out of place amongst my culture. I was too bright or too fia palagi [like westerners]. A lot of the time I would purposely dissociate myself from my culture. I refused to speak the language and so I can't speak it at all, I don't believe in most traditional customs regarding the female role in Samoan society and I find it really hard relating to people of my own race anyway unless they've had the same childhood or interests as me. I mean, I am quick to defend my people if they are being unfairly discriminated and yet in the same breath I would put them down and point out a lot of negative aspects of the culture. I am 21 now and trying to assimilate myself into the culture but I find it really difficult and frustrating. (tekken, 1/03/2001)  

This is not to say that there are not problems, or crises as the above sample shows. Rather the question is whose identity is at stake, what are the issues, and for whom?

Dany-Robert Dufour in an article in *Le Monde Diplomatique* (February 2001:16-17) entitled 'The Individual-Subject in Disarray' (*Les désarrois de l'individu-sujet*) laments the various symptoms of what he presents as the crisis being endured by the modern subject. According to this thesis, such disarray is being wrought as modernism mutates into the 'post-modern' condition (see Harvey 1990) under the auspices of neoliberalism (Dufour 2001:2/7). Whilst the critical stance vis-à-vis the social and economic effects of neoliberal strategies for a market-based 'new world order' are well taken (see Chapters One and Two), Dufour's conceptualisation of where this interacts with 'subjectivity', the human being in itself and in relationship (2001: 3/7), is highly problematic; steeped as it is in eurocentric notions of the nuclear patriarchal family and rationality. It is a good rendition, nevertheless, of a prevalent attitude in intellectual critiques of individualism and consumerist societies, in Western Europe at least. According to Dufour, the elimination of a *certain sort of subjectivity* ("*destitution subjective"*) is directly related to subsequent forms of alienation and inequality (2001: 1/7) that

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11 This article is also available online. Page numbers are taken from that version.
12 'sujet', 'individu' is related to being a 'subject' and 'citizen' in a geostrategic sense of the term...
13 To be fair, many continental critiques of neoliberalism see it as synonymous with the USA. There, individualism and the achievement ethic is part and parcel of American 'culture' and its own post-colonial heritage let alone of American-style capitalism and nationalism. American-style individualism is arguably a large part of neoliberal privileging of market/consumer 'choice' for European eyes. However, this not only overlooks critical quarters from within the USA (Chomsky being a high-profile exponent) but also champions of neoliberalism in the EU - most of whom are holding political office in the core states.
arise from this descent into post-modernity. The latter is synonymous with neoliberalism.

But what exactly is being lost as modernity is shattered (the less than positive effects of its first cousin industrialisation and colonialism notwithstanding)? It is an Individual - Subject ("individu-sujet") that is disappearing. It is disappearing because it has lost its once sovereign 'Other'. And what exactly is this missing Other? It is several things; the (by now threatened) modernist nation-state, the father figure, religious belief/morals, state education. 'Civilisation', and its 'reality principle' in short is in disarray (with little awareness of how Freud was critiquing western civilisation when developing his psychoanalytical theory of subjectivity). This 'other' that the modern subject - 'self' - cannot do without is not understood, or lamented in a critical or self-reflexive sense by Dufour. It is certainly not the 'absent other' that concerned de Certeau (see Ahearne 1995), made absent in the aforementioned rationalist paradigms and institutions of virtue of being actively excluded by the powers that be. Nor is it the female/feminised subaltern 'other' observed by Simone de Beauvoir (1972) when critiquing a dominating androcentrism that can only exist by virtue of denying women their own multifarious histories, subjectivities and agency. And it is certainly not the 'exotic', non-western 'other' whose particular inter/subjectivity, language, cosmologies and knowledge is subsumed under western scientific rationalities (Fabian 1983) in order to be researched, reconquered, and thereby 'known'.

No, it is the demise of a European, masculine and elite subject-individual and his (sic) agency that is yearned for by Dufour; who is the victim par excellence of sociocultural and political economic change. This Self and his relationship - need and desire - for the Other (Ling 2001a) is the patriarchal, bourgeois, middle European he-subject who wrote the history books and continues to call the shots in intellectual circles (see Ling 2001b, Godzich 1996, Haraway 1997, Peterson & Runyan 1999). It is his crisis that is being presented in what would otherwise be an interesting reflection on the psychopathology of everyday neoliberalism and its ethical implications (Benhabib 1987). For Dufour, however, the critical, albeit neurotic subject(ivity) of modernity (Dufour 2001:4/7) is being replaced by a schizophrenic (psychotic) non-differentiated (thereby non-critical) subjectivity of 'postmodernity' (2001: 5-6/7). Whence the malaise of contemporary society and geopolitics that is listed separately with the title 'Signs of Crisis'. Everything novel is in there and we are all doomed (see Harvey 1990).

And what characterises this change, this schism in the familiar landscape of modernity (2001:5/7)? For Dufour, it is the 'postmodern condition'. This conclusion, or rather starting point for examining contemporary inter/subjectivity involves a massive reduction of complex cultural and political economic events, to put it lightly (see Huyssen 1990, Nicholson 1990). Apart from the hasty conflation of all things neoliberal to all changes in 'subjectivity' and from there all that is not good to how 'modernism' is suffering (as a metaphor, and as a political and economic organisational rationale or condition) Dufour then lumps all technological and social change into this identity crisis of a (heterocentric) western masculinity; another abstraction in itself (Davies 2001).

The gist of Dufour's argument is that 'market forces are a poor second to the (necessary) 'Other' of the representative institutions, religious morality, centralised education systems of the Westphalian nation-state. This may well be, but the subject(ivity) that is under siege here is a romanticised one at best and an ethno/androcentric, culturally elitist at worst (Chapter Three). It knows no historical or social permutations. Unlike the various renditions of its 'other' that Dufour shows emerging throughout history (2001:3/7), this subject(ivity) remains fixed in time and space. It is both sign and referent (Hawkes 1997: 130-133, Williamson 1978). From this transcendental standpoint (how could it be any other?) Dufour then goes on to defend 'modernity', instrumental reason (the only form of critical thought imaginable) and the neurosis of its 'everyday unhappiness' in the face of all manner of change. The argument then goes on to disassociate this subject(ivity) from its historical and political (colonialist) context (2001:2/7) and project its ethno/androcentric sense of crisis onto all peoples, all societies.

This is an all too familiar tendency for eurocentric modes of thought and analysis, as
postcolonial critiques have argued (Moore-Gilbert et al 1997, Ling 2001a, Hall 1996b, Seth 1999, Mohanty 1997). Without getting too bogged down in feminist and postcolonial critiques of many precepts of western political philosophy, this grieving over the loss of a monistic, geographically fixed and dis-engendered 'individual' has already been extensively problematized and even from within Freudian and Lacanian Psychoanalysis (Mitchell 1975, Butler 1990) Dufour draws upon. Critical and Feminist theories (Leonard 1990, Nicholson 1992, Benhabib & Cornell 1987) have more to say about this than his inferences would imply. Moreover, the lumping of all 'postmodernist' critiques of western ethnocentrism (Nicholson et al 1990, Huyssen 1990, Carver 1998, Der Derian et al 1995) into the same 'sin-bin' of (neo)liberal economic restructuring and technoscience (Haraway 1997) ignores many other sorts of political thought and sociocultural expression - and the tensions therein. Such laments and accompanying beatification of the already troubling subjectivity of modernity, belies the colonialist, eurocentric, and gendered undertones of this individual and 'his' (sic) expansionist colonialist project in the first place (Moore-Gilbert, Stanton & Maley 1997, Ashcroft, Griffiths & Tiffin 1998, Bal 1999, Ortner 1996) 14.

Granted, there are things going on in terms of how self-to-others relationships are construed and lived these days and many are related to new(er) ICTs (Kami 2001: interview). Choices being made or forces resisted, either by default (as in the quote at the beginning of this section) or through power being exerted by the dominant culture or political economic ideology, changes being brought about by strategic applications and uses of new(er) ICTs in particular, and challenges from within to the existential priority of the nation-state as the 'imagined community' par excellence. But what these entail in terms of a postcolonial era are a lot more complex than the loss of geocentric or symbolic anchoring for the bourgeois neurotic 'self' so well analysed by Freud (see Mitchell 1975). As I have noted, this subject and his relationship with others has a lot to answer for. Be that as it may, this article, written as it is in 2001 and with full use of the word-processing and type-setting capabilities of new(er) ICTs, I am sure, highlights the chasm between western (European/American) sensibilities and 'non-western' ones vis-à-vis the stresses and strains of contemporary times. It also reproduces the eurocentric technological determinism critiqued in earlier chapters and articulates an appalling lack of (self)reflexivity and awareness of the complexity of contemporary sociocultural and historical issues and their contexts.

The upshot for diasporic generations growing up in and between this sort of terminal 'objectivitis', is that this very crisis - so construed - becomes theirs. They have to wear it in a very real sense of the term. Moreover there is a generation gap opening up in how 'identity' issues are being conceptualised, ones that are spliced with gender-race-class dimensions that hark back and project forwards as policy-makers and institutions dig their heels in against 'ethnic' threats or 'postmodernism'. As the discussions so far show, I contend, and the ones to follow will further substantiate, a 'critical space' is not the sole property - or prerogative for that matter - of the western, liberal, male 'subject' (Benhabib & Cornell 1987). Neither is an awareness that the world is not a particularly safe or easy place to live these days, that the neoliberal ethos of consumerism creates 'new inequalities' and can be as expansionist as its enlightenmen/t industrialised forbears. As for what the problems are and ways to deal with these, there are many other responses than the few hasty ones laid out by Dufour in his conclusion (2001: 7/7).

This discursive and philosophical detour was taken to show how even critical views on the impacts of neoliberal global restructuring still engage in cognitive and conceptual 'othering' that arises from its position of relative privilege (Peterson & Runyan 1999: 46-47). Self-reflexivity needs to cut both ways if it has to have any political import (see Leonard 1990) even though it is not always intellectually comfortable (Coleman 2000, Hall 1996a). The various stages in consciousness and then active resistance to the intellectual and material appropriations of how identity formation operates is at the heart of these online (re)articulations. They link how diasporas really see themselves vis-à-vis their place in the fixed categories - im/migrants,

14 For instance, "in order that I be here, the other must in fact be there" (Dufour 2001:3/7), Conversely, by the loss of the 'other', Dufour is positing a loss of (him)self.
15 Whilst, Pacific Island diasporas are concentrated around the Pacific Seaboard, this eurocentrism also pertains to multicultural issues in the countries of the EU (Raes 1999, Pellérisin 1996).
asylum seekers, welfare beneficiaries, rappers - to which they are usually consigned by dominant practices of inter/subjectivity that effectively deny the 'not-quite-like-us' their own voice. A regular on the KR puts the gender-power relations embedded in these asymmetrical interactions into perspective quite well;

Have we all become minions of the mainstream, shackled and riddled by shame of where we come from? We proclaim empathy for [those suffering] the racism of the mainlands, but can't understand why there are racial conflicts among our own? We probably know more American / European histories than we can of our own... histories smattered with intolerance from riots to lynching to governmental politics, racial and societal, and we accept that as a natural due course of 'progress'. Yet, we can't even spare a moment's reprieve to see our native cultures and look at it from INSIDE out...

(«, 30/05/99)

Identities as Living (Cyber)Spaces

Bringing all this back into the internet/www frame, and allowing it to be an unproblematic space/place for a moment, how does its spatial practices let (us into how) different people read and experience, react to and articulate the complexities of living in the world - or several worlds for that matter whether as an 'individual' and/or member of a community? It does so by virtue of still being available, accessible and used by many different groups, by active production, writing/reading of the content and the traces these activities leave behind. This is almost a truism but one that is also under pressure from processes of commodification pinpointed by Dufour.

Reading, observing or dealing with experiences and references that are not immediately identifiable with one's own means recognising how they are grounded in differently lived lives, different permutations of class-race-gender (see Haraway 1992, Collins 1997). For example, in a follow-up to the call-for-help cited above, one interlocutor has this to say;

I totally feel you. I agree. I am going through the same phase you are but the only difference is I was raised an American (born and raised). I as well, get picked on around by other samoans because I don't know the language, and because I don't act "samoan." Whatever that means, I think you should be comfortable with who you are, and you don't need to please anybody else, and you're better off that way. Yeah, there will always be those samoans insulting you, but hey...I look at it, because they see something their not use to, they decide to get really negative, and not accept people for who they are instead. The way I deal with it, is that I just practically ignore them, because if they can't accept me for who I am, or what I believe in, than they'll just have to live with it (feel the same way, 11/03/01, emphasis added)

In an online scenario such as this, material situations are articulated and enacted. So are thoughts and emotions, on a level of intimacy and openness all too unfamiliar to many conceptual and methodological paradigms. How 'identity' is unpacked and aired in these interactions cannot be abstracted from the larger gender-power relations impinging upon them, relations that are spliced with gender-ethnicity/race-culture as both signifiers and conceptualisation of difference and separation, similarity and recognition (Wendt 1999). They encapsulate spaces for both 'new ethnicities' (Hall 1996a) and new(er) essentialisms (Hau'ofa 1987), both online and offline. From an academic point of view, mindful of the penchant there to categorise and tie up loose ends in the quest for ultimate clarity, Bronwen Douglas notes how she is

unhappy with representations of indigenous personhood as categorically non-'Western'

16 Those Pre-Colonial Villages, in reply to Samoan Snobbery or Just the Way it is?? (Jade 27/05/99), initial post, KR, no longer on server). See Chapter Five for more on these 'inside-out' dynamics.
17 As the earlier chapters indicate, this study is not an arguing from a naive optimist's view of ICTs.
or non-modern. Conflation of modernity with 'westernisation' and individualism denies contemporaneity to present people... literally configured as archaic or backward... I prefer messy dialectics to tidy dichotomy, the particular and the ordinary to the encompassing... Yet I do not deny the need to explore differences and contrasts within as well as between cultures...analogies implies difference as well as similarity; contrast does not require dichotomy" (Douglas, forthcoming; 3)

These discussions bear this point out. For it is not an either/or but a dynamic in-between-both that is constituted by an everyday, grassroots braconnage (de Certeau 1980) that arises from all too material, political and social implications for the 'one' vis-à-vis the 'other' however these may be construed in academic discourses.

These threads - indeed all, but these ones in particular - are literal traces of everyday identities-identifications in that they are material textual practices online and offline that traverse the inter/subjective terrain of self/group identity formation lying between any either/or or for diasporic communities and people of mixed heritage, whether in an urban/diasporic setting, in the islands, or on the internet/www. In contrast to Dufour's rendition of the self-to-non-self (other) tension, de Certeau would note that this 'problem' or 'crisis' (1986f: 225 passim) arises when two things are not permitted to exist in the same place, at the same time. In western Cartesian understandings of inter/subjectivity, there is a flight from fluidity and mobility, fear of ambiguity in the (stag)hunt for stability and universality. For de Certeau and, I would argue, many postcolonial frameworks, the politics of subjectivity and also how it is represented can be understood as follows:

Au départ, entre espace et lieu, je pose une distinction qui délimitera un champ. Est un lieu l'ordre (quel que soit) selon lequel des éléments sont distribués dans les rapports de coexistence. S'y trouve donc exclue la possibilité, pour deux choses, d'être à la même place...... Il implique une indication de stabilité. Il y a espace dès qu'on prend en considération des vecteurs de direction, des quantités de vitesse et la variable du temps. L'espace est un croisement de mobiles.....L'espace serait au lieu ce que devient le mot quand il est parlé, c'est-à-dire quand il est saisi dans l'ambiguïté d'une effectuation, mué en un terme relevant de multiples conventions, posé comme l'acte d'un présent (ou d'un temps), et modifié par les transformations dues à des voisinages successifs... En somme, l'espace est un lieu pratiqué. (de Certeau 1980:208, emphasis in the original) 20

What de Certeau is basically getting at is the difference between the fixity of 'a' place (to wit, 'a culture, 'an' identity) and the fluidity of the physical and communicative spaces delimited by the multifarious practices of everyday life. These are created and negotiated - traversed - by people who live with and talk to each other, for better or worse. In short, whether an urban cityscape or an internet (cyber)space, these spaces and their constituent practices do not come to life, have no materiality until they are inhabited, by people, pedestrians and interlocutors, readers and writers. They are, thereby, not a priori fixed in a physical sense as is the case with the notion of the nation-state and the security dilemma of its national or political-economic integrity (see Dufour 2001, Everard 1999).

Having said that, I would not want to push de Certeau's distinction between place and space too far (see Harvey 1993). He is, after all, positing this distinction within a broader

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19 Ling (2001a) theorises this more complex notion of west/non-west interactions vis-à-vis IR/PE theory - method by the term 'interstitial'. I would stress the practices that constitute such postcolonial interstitial spaces, many of which are currently in-the-making through these uses of ICTs.

20 "At the outset I shall make a distinction between space (espace) and place (lieu) that delimits a field. A place (lieu) is the order (of whatever kind) in accordance with which the elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence. It thus excludes the possibility of two things being in the same location (place) .... It implies an indication of stability. A space exists when one takes into consideration vectors of direction, velocities, and time variables. Thus space is composed of intersections of mobile elements...... space is like the word when it is spoken, that is, when it is caught in the ambiguity of the actualisation, transformed into a term dependent upon many different conventions, situated as the act of a present (or of a time), and modified by the transformations caused by successive contexts.... In short, space is a practised place. " (1984:117)
political and epistemological critique. Even as an online community is formed - fixed - by virtue of its website becoming a frequented and recognisable place to go on the www, and the very physical and digital architectures of the internet/www that underpin this, it becomes so only by virtue of the textual/spatial/interpersonal practices, the respective hardware and software that inhabit, circumscribe and constitute it (Chapter Nine). Like cityscapes, a website, forum, live chat line has to be inhabited for it to be alive, and there are plenty of 'dead' places on the internet/www (Becker 2001). In the case of these online discussions and the spaces created by them, fluidity, mobility of thought and expression are not shunned in order to pin down fixed categories. Quite the opposite. Access to these 'public' forums have largely remained open, despite technical, organisational and political pressures. Staying there and participating, being seen as a 'member' does involve certain stipulations and obligations, relates to specific online 'moral economies' that develop over time (see Chapter Eight). Interactions that deal explicitly with 'identity formation' as a 'racialised'-ethnic-cultural issue for postcolonial diasporas and those living 'back in the islands' show this 'fluid tension' between fixed places (and assumptions) and 'mobile intersections' very much in operation.

Part Two: Delineations for the Onlooker

..the socially constructed nature of race doesn't mean that our understanding of race and racial categories isn't somehow real or that it doesn't have real effects: quite the contrary, those categories do exist and that have tangible (and all too often deadly) effects on the ways that people are able to live their lives. What it does mean, however, is that the systems of racial categorisation that permeate our world are derived from culture, not nature. (Kolko, Nakamura & Rodman 2000:2, emphasis in the original)

This quote sums up quite well the conceptual terrain, from an academic point of view, for the discussion threads reconstructed in Part Three; the meaning of 'race' and/or 'ethnicity' vis-à-vis any particular 'culture'; how these pertain to biological attributes - 'nature' - or environmental factors - 'nurture'. Riding on these online/offline peregrinations are all the ideological twists and turns taken in the academy, politics, science and technology in the 19th - 20th centuries (see Haraway 1992). It is arguably the main preoccupations of all the discussions throughout the lifespan of the Polynesian Cafe and Kava Bowl Discussion Forums. Coming to the fore in these particular debates are those of Pacific Island and other descent who are married into the various communities, and the children of such 'mixed marriages' - the second and third generations. Regulars who we have already met using familiar 'nicknames' or new ones and some newcomers 21 debate past and current meanings of being 'Polynesian' (as a distinct Pacific Island grouping), Tongan or Samoan (in and of themselves and as derivatives of 'Polynesia') in a postcolonial and diasporic setting. What are the implications for future generations. More importantly perhaps for these groups, what does any of this mean if one comes from a mix of heritages, cultures, 'races'? Having said that, however, the next quote is one of many, more light-hearted responses to what is a highly politicised and mediatised issue (Hall 1996a, 1996b, Kolko et al 2000: 1-3).

.....although I prefer banana or strawberry Polys myself. I once had a watermelon Poly but she had too many seeds. ha ha ha... Meilakepa. Coconut Poly (Hard on the outside, soft on the inside- and sometimes flaky).... (Meilakepa, 29/09/00) 22

The flip-side (to which Meilakepa is responding) of these celebrations of 'racial' difference and particularity for these groups is a conscious politics - and fear of - 'new essentialisms'. These distinctions and their different political standpoints (Hall 19996a) gets

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21 Regular posters already encountered are Meilakepa (who also posts as Phil Tuki - see Chapter Six), Sandy, Sweet Siren, New Kid, Dot, Aphrodite, Gina. Ally. Taken as whole, one poster has many views, and so contributes in different ways to different threads Others have changed nicknames along the way whilst others have brought newcomers online.

22 I agree too . . in reply to Well said and i agree with you... posted by Aphrodite, in I wish there were highschools, middle and elementary schools strictly for Polynesians thread (27/09/00) at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/849.html
elided in this day and age where all civil wars and sub-national armed struggles and violence are presented as 'ethnic' conflicts pure and simple and post-Cold War regimes exercise their own cultural/religious/national 'muscle' to the (neo)liberal western powers. Meanwhile, institutionalised and incipient forms of discrimination and exclusion based on skin colour, economic deprivation/ghettoisation persist in the USA, Australia, New Zealand. Biological determinist assumptions about the 'racial' and/or genetic composition of both 'anti-social' and 'desirable' physical attributes become enmeshed in the power struggles over ownership and control of the human organism (Haraway 1997). In short, biological determinism is alive and well. In these forums, not only are the political and social sensibilities of 'racial' and/or cultural 'purity' vis-à-vis mixed blood/cultural heritage confronted and complained about explicitly in these discussions but so also are the very categories through which these are circulated and usually understood in everyday and/or academic parlance, in general and for the South Pacific Islands in particular. In addition, political movements for indigenous rights and local sovereignty politics in the South Pacific (Chapter Six) play their own politicising and essentialising role in these debates. Spinning off from these concerns are discussions about the visual cues, physical/cultural stereotypes and assumptions by which participants experience discrimination, isolation and alienation as everyday embodiments. This can come from beyond Samoan and/or Tongan communities but also from within, from their own "peeps" [people].

**Offline Renditions**

Before examining how these contentious terms (and the everyday gender-power relations they bespeak) are articulated by participants online and for their own particular postcolonial diasporic contexts, it would not hurt to delineate them as 'offline renditions' of the problematique. The main point here is that identity, race/ethnicity, culture are not monisms for people

> are all more complicated beings than these unitary labels would suggest and our experiences of being gendered .... vary along dimensions of race, class, nationality, ethnicity, sexuality and so on. All these identities which we are labelled ... are social constructs that are created, given meaning, and reproduced by the differing, yet interlocking, systems of power in which we are embedded. (Peterson & Runyan 1999:175).

That being so, "the social and psychological interpretations of physical differences among people - interpretations that are used to organize people hierarchically all over the world" (ibid) have quite tangible manifestations and effects for differently located women and men, as individuals and groups or communities (Collins 1992). In the case of the South Pacific groups online and the various communities whence they come, 'race' is just as problematic when posited simply as semantics (Kolko et al 2000:4) or biology (Hall 1996a:444). The arguments that ensue underline, ignore and challenge the recognition that the central issues of race always appear historically in articulation, in a formation, with other categories and divisions that are constantly crossed and recrossed by the categories of class, of gender and ethnicity. (Hall 1996a:444).

But what does the latter term - ethnicity - entail? As with the distinction between 'sex'

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23 In Samoan, the term is 'afakast' and the English translation used is 'half-caste'. *Fie palangi* and *faka palangi* are somewhat pejorative terms in Samoan and Tongan respectively for those who are seen to be taking up western/European ways and graces; identifying too strongly with the oppressor as some put it. This gives rise to initial posts such as **DOES THE FAKA-PALANGI ATTITUDE DESERVE TO BE CRITICISED?** (MVP, 13/11/99, initial post, KB, no longer on server). See Chapter Five for the gendered nuances to this.

24 See also a witty posting from 1999 on **How To Tell if You Are Samoan**, posted by Thoughts (22/05/99, KR, no longer on server) which confronts some well-known racial stereotypes of 'Islanders', in New Zealand and Australia at least, with a full-frontal smile - or 'cyberwink'. See also Hau'ofa's *Tales of the Tikongs* (1983).
and 'gender',

the term ethnicity acknowledges the place of history, language and culture in the construction of subjectivity and identity, as well as the fact that all discourse is placed, positioned, situated, and all knowledge is contextual. (Hall 1996a: 446)

Concomitant processes of 'racial' / ethnic, sexual, and by implication, cultural identification are 'deeply ambivalent' (Hall 1996a: 445). For this reason,

culture is pervasively politicised on every front and every ground.... culture is neither the 'authentic' practice of the 'people' not simply a means of 'manipulation' by capitalism, but the site of active local struggle, everyday and anywhere.

(Chen 1996:312)

The 'exchange of meanings' entailed - the way these get frozen in time and place to create inequality and exclusion at and through any combination of these axes for inter/subjunctivity - and how these are 'captured' in research and analysis needs to recognise these deep ambiguities in both the concepts themselves (Bal 1999) and practices of everyday life. Even moreso when coming from a relatively privileged position (Ling 2001a: 15). As I have argued in the previous section, denying this sort of ambiguity for one's own 'identity crisis' and then projecting it on an abstract 'other', reproduces the cultural parochialism being challenged by postcolonial theory (Ashcroft et al 1998, Moore-Gilbert et al 1997, Seth 1999, Ling 2001b).

The threads examined here, and those of previous chapters, confront these ambiguities, the essentialisms, and the parochialisms they throw up head-on as they contest them "on the ground" (Chen 1996:312) in cyberspace 25. Race / ethnicity / gender and where they pertain to 'culture' are highly 'mobile' sets of meanings and sociocultural, political economic (dis)location 26. Their definitional slipperiness is precisely what is in play in these debates and the lived lives they articulate. At the same time, the structural gender-power relations that constitute all manner of discrimination and exclusion are also evident in these traversals. What these discussions are wrestling with is how race/ethnicity get conflated with culture and the latter operates as a euphemism for racialised categories (Gilroy in Golyard i & Hilhorst 2001: 5R). Without wanting to pre-empt these online articulations of these issues, the 'identity politics' at stake for these communities is along the lines of what Paul Gilroy ironically calls

a solidarity not based on where you come from, on your roots, but on where you are heading, your routes. (de Volkskrant 7/04/04: 5R).

**Online Renditions**

In the debates reconstructed thus far, what constitutes cultural / racial / ethnic 'identity' as such are sub-texts rather than disaggregated in themselves 27. Moreover, they are spliced with discussions on politics, (homo)sexuality, religion, and so on 28. But the set of threads examined

25 Not only are diasporic generations partaking of western forms of questions of 'who am I' but these questions are laden with racial/ethnic overtones in situations of discrimination. Tongan onlookers consider this the impact of living in the West and being confronted for the first time with power differentials and exclusion based on how one is identified - stereotyped - by dominant society (Kami 2001: interview, Helu 1999: interview).

26 For example: a poster called Lillian talks about her "race/culture/ethnicity" (17/09/98) in *Weekly Discussion Topic #52: Poly Violence...Heritage or Hate?* posted by KB Admin (14/09/98, no longer on server)

27 By this, I mean to say that race-ethnicity-culture are not the initial poster's main concern although as the previous reconstructions show, they do operate, are referred to and argued about during the course of a discussion, for example, on sex-gender roles for Samoan/Tongan women or the rights and wrongs of royal privilege and executive power in Tonga.

28 As I have said, this is a whole category in itself not tackled in this. The same goes for the huge threads on (homo)sexuality where religious views play a large role in supporting the somewhat less than accommodating attitudes expressed there.
in this chapter literally begin with race-ethnicity-culture, both personal and communal, as the central problematic. They set out to discuss and re-read what these entail in postcolonial and diasporic settings. In the process, how they operate - as demographic categorisations, in arguments about biological destiny or historical and social processes, in cultural politics, group affiliation or ethics - are thoroughly deconstructed.

Using these online forums as empowering spaces in which to do this (Kami 2001: interview, Aiono 1999: interview), participants examine how 'race', 'ethnicity' and 'culture' are/are not biologically or historically determined. They argue about whether these categories are/are not fixed or negotiable for 'being' and living as a Polynesian / Tongan / Samoan / Mixture. Whether such categories are even useful is also a axis for much debate and a variety of political standpoints. People also share with each other some of the everyday tactics employed to deal with ingrained and institutionalised, hence 'strategic' (Chapter Three) intolerance and exclusion, indicate some of the stresses and strains, coping mechanisms and conscious celebrations used when encountering both intracultural and intercultural stigmatisation or confusion. In the process they identify themselves, their siblings and their children by skin, eye and hair colour, said culture and lineage/ancestry and dual or singular nationalities. For those who come online to posit purist / racialised hierarchies, their interlocutors show where and how such 'neo-traditionalist' attitudes (Hau'ofa 1987, Flanagan 1998) are to be put in their place, which value systems or ethics are at stake, indeed what any cultural-ethnic-racial categories or physical characteristics are supposed to represent in the first place 29. The upshot is that 'race' - however understood and (re)articulated here - is very visible and tangible in nominally non-corporeal online textual practices (see Kolko et al 2000, Turkle 1996). It is an explicit criteria for participating indeed as it is reconstructed in the process of discussion, engagement and (dis)agreement. As the threads went on and the arguments unfurl, the everyday politics of all this is articulated in terms of whether any of this actually matters for getting through life in various locations, and their respective 'oppression[s] du présent'. And if it does, where it counts, for whom and on whose terms.

As for the specific personal conundrums being presented online, these pivot around questions like What am I / Who are we? What is(are) my / our heritage(s)? What is (my/our) culture and where do I fit into it? How many cultures do I/we honour? Where do environment and upbringing diverge or converge with 'natural' traits like skin/eye/hair colour, physique, 'blood'? How dynamic are Tongan or Samoan cultural practices anyway let alone when living elsewhere, or being married to and having children with someone from the Pacific Islands? 30 What does, or should the generic term 'Polynesian' mean anyway and moreover in diaspora? (Flanagan 1998) 31. These sorts of questionings are particular to living in societies like the USA where cultural heterogeneity and conflicts crisscross (American) individualism's preoccupations with the question "what/who am I?". Many Tongans at least, who have spent parts of their lives in the Pacific Islands, attest to never having asked themselves this question until taking up residence in the west (Kami 2001; interview). When racism is added to the mix, these questions become more disturbing (Helu 1999; interview). Nonetheless, whatever answers or solutions are posted, being and living with more-than-one-culture is considered for its strengths rather than its

29 For example: Fake Polynesians posted by 100% (2/02/01) at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/2477.html and When applying for college, my buddy put that she was Samoan . . .whereas she's only 1/8 and 7/8s palangi . . .does anybody see anything wrong with that, posted by kavahine (30/09/00) at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/869.html. See also Any Future US Political Clout for PI's?? (eb, 12/03/01, initial post, KR, at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/3190.html).


31 See DO ALL MAORIS CONSIDER THEMSELVES POLYNESIAN? (haka, 28/09/00 at http://www.polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/822.html). Why is Pacific Islander and Asian always lumped together - hence Asian-Pacific Islander, shouldn't Pacific Islander be its own category??? (Don't you all agree, 30/06/00, KR, no longer on server).
weaknesses in the majority of these debates, especially for those of mixed parentage. The same
goes for those who profess to enjoying their lives in the USA, New Zealand or where-ever even as they acknowledge the material and emotional difficulties involved.

But what happens when one does not fit visual or physical stereotypes, behavioural or linguistic norms, or does not conform to the rigid either/or of cultural-ethnic-racial categories in the host society or sociocultural mores from within one's extended family or base community? Or when one is ignorant of these? 32 All these questions are dealt with and debated, painstakingly at times and less tolerantly at others 33. The upshot is that the issues being put into debate here are infused, as always, with both personal and 'international' politics (Chapters Five and Six). This is why they operate intimately with the other discussions on the meanings and practices of gendered and political inter/subjectivity. So as a prelude to unpacking these threads in turn, I would stress that they are a key element to the complex postcolonial group / self identifications that being worked at and written out in these forums.

For the onlooker into these conversations post facto (see Fabian 1983), the emergent postcolonial politics of representation at stake here are contemporary meanings of (self)conscious racial/ethnic/cultural identification from within, seen from the ground-up and as this is endured. These are three, not inconsequential, preoccupations for any of the critical Social Sciences at present, IR/IPE included. As I have already said, these traversals around race-ethnicity and respective cultural practices are spliced with gender - being a wo/man, politics - democratic representation for and by whom, and power relations - who calls the shots (whether these be online and offline).

As for the way participants choose to articulate them, these practices are constituted experientially - as life-paths and circumstances both positive and negative. They are also understood and challenged politically and economically under conditions of institutional inclusion/exclusion, solidarity, personal success or disassociation 34. These online communities (re)articulate these aspects all too well. In that sense their traversals are instructive for those of 'us' who would apply 'our' conceptual tools in the first and last instance to these recurring 'mobile' and fixed moments and the lives they constitute 35. For instance;

The point is we shouldn't demand representation based on skin color. That is racist because inherent in that thinking is that ALL people of a particular race have the same needs and the same way of thinking on issues. It is not true. You can't bundle us up according to skin color. We spent two hundred and some years getting away from that mindset. (Bevo, 14/03/01) 36

America is far from being color blind, and only those who live in [U]topia thinks that there's a level playing field, it is evident in the socio-economic difference in our society. I wish I did live in a color blind society, but I do not. People still hire people that look like them. (Sinafea, 14/03/01) 37

32 See identity-crisis at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/2932.html (parts of which are interspersed in this chapter) and WHY DO THEY DISCRIMINATE US? posted by blonde girl (25/01/00, KR, no longer on server).

33 See I dislike the term Polynesian. posted by Alojah (25/11/00) at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/1798.html and the mixture of responses to another thread initiated by the same poster; i am a fairly large tongan female and what's up with everybody thinkin' i'm samoan?, posted by Alojah (24/11/00) at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/ kamehameha2000-2/1783.html. For more on the particular online gender-power relations of these online interactions, see the next chapter.

34 See Chapter Five as regards the importance of education. Another example can be seen in a thread entitled Meilakepa, what's it like being a lawyer? (brown sugar, 22/01/01, KR, at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/2821.html) where a regular is quizzed on how his relative success interacts with "being a polynesian (Samoan?) in the legal profession?" (Ibid).

35 this is another angle on my inside-out arguments in Chapter Five.

36 There's a difference...in reply to Quite the contrary, posted by Sinafea (14/03/01) in Any Future US Political Clout for Pls?? thread, at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/3220.html

37 You Are Right in one sense, however....in reply to Bevo (see note above), at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/ kamehameha2000-2/3222.html
To break the multifarious themes down a bit more; amid the various attitudes and experiences laid out as substantiation of any particular political position, cultural ideals, or personal circumstances, two concerns work in tandem. One is how looks, and the gender-power relations (Chapter Five) of these in everyday life, matter. This is closely linked to how a respective 'culture' is practised - or not as the case may be. Looks and one's cultural affiliation matter both vis-à-vis one's peer group/s, immediate community and in terms of how one is treated, discriminated against (or not) by society at large. This is how everyday practices and politics of identity formation - of identification, as an individual and as a member of one, or several communities work here as verbs - doing words. As such, they are countering tendencies to use 'race', 'ethnicity' and 'culture' as nouns and (pejorative) adjectives.

Beyond the specific discussions on skin colour and 'blood', those dealing with 'culture' bespeak particular and ever-widening multiple circles of relationships (see Morton 1998), sociocultural conventions (Giard & Mayol 1980) in both their empowering and disempowering manifestations. These discussions (re)articulate how personal and group identifications operate, become fixed as well as stretched when living under the rules and assumptions of another, more dominant culture. The protagonists talk about 'making do', debate the (in)appropriateness of various behaviours, loyalties and cultural affiliations and the implications of all of these on what constitutes contemporary Polynesian - Tongan - Samoan inter/subjectivity. How, and what people identify as, with whom and to what degree any said 'identity' may, or should be a multiple of one are posited as both ideal types, and as 'tropes' for future generations of the Pacific Islands diasporas. I shall return to this in due course. They are also posted as antidotes to racial and cultural stereotyping from within and without the communities. Moreover, they challenge the efficacy of accepted physical and behavioural markers of belonging to an 'ethnic/racial/cultural' minority which also include stories of ancestral lineages and origins (both as histories and categories), respective language acuity and knowledge of everyday cultural practices. In short, the politics of representation being (re)articulated in these particular discussions are about the why and wherefore of multiple identifications, multiplex rather than singular understandings of being / belonging / doing that are framed and experienced quite viscerally as everyday corporeal, symbolic and cultural meanings; both in online (cyber)spatial practices and offline lived lives.

Another general characteristic, apart from the nuanced argumentations and wealth of social and personal detail, is the celebratory nature of these conversations. Indeed, this is arguably the main representative operation going on in these discussions. Being-one-of-many is seen as a strength, as fun, and if not, then it should be fought for, allowed to be so. Solidarity and support are key activities and motivations for many participants. Whether down to youthfulness, full idealism or not, these threads put to task the doomsday prophets that would see 'postmodern' or 'ethnic' identity politics as necessarily divisive even when disagreement and social exclusion is intense and all too evident. At the same time, 'traditional' stereotypes from within (diaporic) Polynesian communities are challenged as younger participants claim the right not to be automatically assigned any one ethnic/cultural group vis-à-vis their own sense of individuality for that matter.

These debates between people from 'ethnic minorities' on the internet/www delineate a question that often goes begging in much theorising - and media agonising - about 'identity politics' in the Western discourses, let alone how these are related to ICTs (Wilhelm 2000, Everard 1999). This is the issue of which - and whose - identities are at stake anyway. As opposed to one, historically and culturally 'locate-able' identity that is a template for all. In all

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38 For instance: "...you should know very well that there are a lot of haters out there. And they judge you by the way you look..." in C'mon, give me a break!!! (u must be one of the haters!!!, KR, 26/01/00) in reply to Cottonmouth in Why Do They Discriminate Us!!! thread (KR, no longer on server).

39 See Are light skinned polynesians considered better than dark skinned polynesians? posted by Mary (15/07/00), KR (no longer on server); I'm sick of palangis tryin to be Tongan, (any 1 feel me, 2/01/01, initial post, KR, at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/2174.html).

40 Taholo Kami is convinced that the next stage for these forums is to allow Ghetto kids - the "baggy pants brigade" their own website - space online - to "rap" with each other and work out their frustrations without upsetting the other 'regulars'. He is convinced - and attests to having this regularly confirmed - of the empowering value of such forums. I, for one, would say "all power" to such initiatives, especially in light of the strategic forces lining up to appropriate the internet/www (See Chapter Nine).
these conversations, 'identity' operates mainly in its plural and 'present continuous' voice rather then its singular, 'anthropological present' (Fabian 1983). The former has gendered -sexual, national-political, status-class and 'racial' timbres. When any of these terms are posited as a monism in these forums, the instigator is promptly challenged, as we shall see. The upshot is that 'identity' emerges as a socially and historically embedded matrix of everyday strategic and tactical operations, concomitant representations and conflicts; all of which amount to both involuntary and voluntary 'choices' - often difficult ones - for younger generations of the Polynesian diaspora in USA, Australia and New Zealand. These are spliced with 'race', 'ethnicity', 'gender' and 'culture', with the parentheses designating that their meanings are what is at stake. In this way the term, identity, operates as a verb (a doing word) rather than a noun (a designation, static category) in that what is being expressed are active practices of identification and future participation.

Part Three: Unpacking the Discussions

Being Tongan means a unique starting point on a long journey to be a better human being - having learnt that there are admirable qualities in other humans on this planet which can be embraced...... Being Tongan is to accept that life is chaos to be enjoyed. (Sefta Auckland New Zealand, 12/03/98) 41

As always, I shall use the initial posts as the main entry point, the way discussions unfold as a basic organising principle for the reconstruction/interpretation. The online 'textual surface' (Carver 1998) is both substantive and formal in that sense (Chapter Four). As I have argued, and following on from the previous chapters, the gender-power relations of postcolonial subjectivities have their own 'coutures' of race / ethnicity / culture. The various permutations of these in everyday life as bodily, cultural, and categorical practices permeate the discussions. What 'identity' tout court entails only really emerges as its everyday (spatial) practices are actually unpacked and (re)articulated during the course of these online and offline traversals. The attitude on the whole is one of exploration and inquisitiveness, as the quote above well illustrates (see Wendt 1999). The stresses and strains will be dealt with along the way.

This set of threads show discussants unpacking and stretching received and assumed meanings of culture/race/ethnicity. The everyday identity politics online and offline operate in multiple, interconnected spaces and interactions that operate in - and between - the various threads over time as well as between participants and their on/offline relationships. The contours and nuances of the actual online discussion content of threads as they unfurl are in turn constituted by the sociocultural, political economic and emotional spaces of everyday life vis-à-vis those of the Pacific Islands themselves. Up for discussion are home life, school, work, family politics, friendship and love relationships in and between communities, class, and other social hierarchies. Added to this are the effects and meaning of social exclusion and emotional isolation for those who feel they do not fit any one sociocultural code, and the ambiguous politics and opportunities of 'positive discrimination' and individuation (see Turkle 1996). What emerges through the discussions are (cyber)spatial practices that are, as I have argued, symbolic and material.

Online 1999 - 2001

A brief update on the online communities themselves needs to be made in order to understand a demographic and spatial shift that occurred in the year 2000. This merges some latent distinctions between the Kava Bowl and the Kamehameha Roundtable portals (the Pacific Forum and the Polynesian Cafe respectively), their constituencies, certain ebbs and flows in participation and style (see the next chapter). The distinctions are of less importance here and

41 in reply to Weekly Discussion Topic #31: For the Overseas Tongan, What does 'Being Tongan' Mean? posted by KB Admin (9/03/98, KB, no longer on server).
pertain to how the two online communities were originally set up, interacted and been hyperlinked over the years to one another. There is a concomitant distinction in what sort of topics have been posted for discussion as well over the years, which I shall mention when appropriate.\(^\text{42}\)

The Kava Bowl’s asynchronous discussion forums, normally accessed through http://pacificforum.com, have been offline since early 2000. A Live Chat site and Online Directory is still operating. The reasons for this are mainly due to the founder, Taholo Kami, then too busy working with the United Nations Development Program to be able to sustain the moderating and administration side of things. Finances, server capacity, equipment, and personal time for what is essentially a labour of love all contribute to the sustainability of such forums. That being so, many KB’ers have simply shifted to the Polycafe, merging what were always two closely linked albeit distinctive cyberspaces in the first place (Aiono 1999; interview). The Kava Bowl Forum was/is generically a Tongan meeting place - for both the diaspora and those in Tonga, albeit with regular visits from Samoan and other guests. It did deal a lot with Tongan preoccupations (Chapter Six) though not exclusively. The Polycafe was set up with a ‘Polynesian’ angle. Nevertheless it has been largely populated by American and Western Samoans based in LA (and other parts of the USA), Australia and New Zealand. Since 2000, these constituencies, regulars and newcomers, have been interacting in the one space. Prior to that and putting it in very broad terms, the Polycafe KR participants tended to articulate issues around ‘identity’ in terms of physical attributes, complexion and specific issues whilst the Kava Bowl was relatively more preoccupied with the relationship between (Tongan) identity and (Tongan) ‘culture’.

There is a reason for the latter as a recurring theme in the Kava Bowl, and that is the existence of ‘weekly discussion topics’ (WDTs); 71 in total posted by the ‘KB Administration’ from 1997 - 1999.\(^\text{43}\) These initial posts, initiated from the ‘top-down’ (see Chapter Eight) were predominantly about preserving and changing Tongan cultural, and political, issues vis-à-vis being-in-diaspora. Of course, these ran in conjunction with and emerged from initial posts from the online ‘grassroots’. Many of the WDTs were heavily patronised and they constitute some of the longest threads over the last five years or so. Furthermore, they are in themselves one of the most consistent online archives emerging from these forums.\(^\text{44}\)

One more point needs to be made before proceeding. The discussion topics were largely the brainchild of Sandy Macintosh, a non-Tongan regular who has been a mainstay of the KB Administration (KBAdinh) and who is still active on the KR. He constructed nearly all the initial posts, in consultation with the ‘KB regulars’ and the vivacity of the ensuing threads simply attest to Sandy’s status online as (elder) mentor and member of these communities. Like all non-Polynesian participants (myself included), Sandy is not excluded on the basis of his ethnic designation (see below). Sandy, however, is acknowledged for his local knowledge and fluency in Tongan (having worked there), his role in keeping the forums going and his persistence and engagement with many discussions (see his interventions in Chapter Six). In short, one is part of these communities by virtue of being welcomed in and participating according to the explicit and latent ground-rules. Despite what some of the threads may suggest, these are not ‘ethnically pure’ places in practice. They are designed as ‘open forums’ and all are welcome to stay, ‘disrespectful behaviour’ notwithstanding (see the next chapter).

\(^{42}\) For instance:

A couple of our fellow KBers have urged us to include topics that span a wider range of Pacific Island issues than those which are exclusively Tongan, so this week’s topic is intended to include input from the perspectives of ALL Pacific island cultures. (KB Admin, 4/01/98) in Weekly Discussion Topic #23: What Are Some Of The Most Common Cross-cultural Misconceptions Among Islanders? no longer on server).

\(^{43}\) In Weekly Discussion Topic #66 this was put as 65. I have counted earlier prototypes with that designation.

\(^{44}\) I have printed out 50 of the 70 or so WDT’s. The earlier ones went offline in an early server change in 1997-1998.

\(^{45}\) Helen Morton, Sebastian Leschshorn, Dot, George Candler, Teuila, Tim Sansom, Daniel Longstaff, myself, are just some of the ‘palangi’ regulars to be found in either or both forums over the years.
Race as Everyday Embodiments: Don't sweat the hype

Even as they are officially designated or geographically clustered as ethnic minorities or communities in adopted urban centres, confronted with discrimination and prejudice, seen as 'gangstas' and 'dole-bludgers' or 'overstayers' in places like the USA, New Zealand or Australia, the second and third generations interacting online are very concerned with resisting such criteria and stereotypes (Morton 1998). Arguments about 'origins' notwithstanding, they consider themselves to be as much Americans, New Zealanders, Australians as they are hyphenated versions of the same even as they identify closely with their Polynesian/Samoan cultures. What the latter actually entail and the respective politics of (de)categorisation are themes in themselves (see below). Participants are also directly concerned with the specific socio-economic conditions that give rise to negative stereotyping and lack of opportunities on the ground and in the media. In this respect, the countless threads over the years dealing specifically with race / ethnicity and/or culture are very informative. They give insight into not only the specific of the "socially constructed nature of race" (Kolk et al 2000:2) but also a myriad of details on the 'how' and locations of any respective 'culture', let alone multiple mixtures thereof. The upshot for analysis is that these second and third generations of the Pacific Island/Polynesian diasporas cannot be designated as either 'non'-western or 'westernised' per se. They are both, and neither, as the following example attests to in a debate about the rights and wrongs of separate schooling:

Life comes down to choices. Choosing to have an all-polynesian school would be ridiculous. Polynesia is not the world, and to experience the world is to experience choices, and in doing so, one experiences life. An all-polynesian school would be a definite morale booster, as well as a cultural re-awakening, however in terms of industrial America and globalization, an all-polynesian school would be unbenefficial. I agree that there are many stereotypes of our people. We are "only football" players. We are "those big people that watch wrestling." We can either choose to live up to those stereotypes, or choose not to. In the end, whatever choice one makes, he or she must be prepared to reap the consequences. I'm a samoa student in college. Granted, I guess some would say that I'm half the enemy (I'm also white). Nevertheless, I believe my personal opinion is worthy enough to be posted on what is usually considered a full polynesian message board. I choose to do this, not just to answer a question, but because I have the power to. Power and choice goes a long way....(Secret, 29/09/00)

But first, let us look more closely at how everyday embodiments relate to the more abstract preoccupations of the discussion so far, how they delimit these as well as everyday spaces and (self)perceptions. By 'embodiments', I am referring to how looks matter. Having mixed parentage - or not, being physically distinguishable - or not - as a person 'of colour', 'black' (see Hall 1996b), 'brown', 'Asian looking' - or not, brought up in a 'strictly' Samoan or Tongan environment create permutations of gender-power relations (see Chapter Five). These operate within and between Tongan and Samoan communities (in these cases) and also beyond them. They are spliced with how 'culture' is understood and practised - or not, and in turn how any of this is to be categorised - or not - for contemporary and future generations.

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48 Separate Schools, in reply to I wish there were highscols, middle and elementary schools strictly for Polynesians, initial post by kavahine (27/09/00). 'Secret' signs her message off as Savannah.
**Colour Codes: Is White a Colour Too?**

In a provocative, if not slightly irritable reply to an initial post entitled, "*I dislike the term Polynesian*", Sandy Macintosh heads his post with ".. and I dislike the term, 'white'". In this intervention, one that provided nearly half of the 40 total follow-ups, Sandy went on to say:

I'm not even close to white. Depending on the season, I can be anywhere from a light, reddish beige to a deep, golden brown...but never white. I've not even seen a person who is white...even an albino has pigment color. So, who was who started calling us "white"? Where'd that come from, anyway? I say we need something better! Any ideas?
(Sandy Mackintosh, 25/11/00)

To which Teuila, recently widowed with a young son who is half-Samoan (on his father's side) says:

....I can't change how society or the world as a whole will identify me or my son so I just let it roll off my back. In the big picture, whether we are White, Brown, Black or any shade in between and how we identify ourselves means so very little. I will insist that my son know and appreciate both sides of his family tree, .....But rather than have him concentrate on what man-given name has been assigned him based on his genealogical background, I would have him focus more on leaving his mark on this planet as a kind, compassionate, loving human being. (Teuila, 26/11/00)

Her message title, "*And I dislike classifying if any kind*", leads into a friendly bantering between face-to-face and online friends. For our purposes, two short responses to her story illustrate some of the multiple 'colour codes' at work;

We do not see the world as it is, we see the world as we are (Tongan man, 26/11/00)
I dunno about you Teuila, but I don't want a COLOR blind world......... This may come as a shock to many but if we all were color blind then we wouldn't see the beauty in all colors and races. (gp, 26/11/00)

And Teuila's counter, on behalf of her son and his father is:

Of course I don't want a color BLIND world, silly! You know me better than that! Pull up them antennae dude -I want Dumpling to grow up in a world of color - recognizing and appreciating the beauty of all. What I won't accept from him is making a judgement based on color. (Teuila, 26/11/00)

The above to and fro is embedded in how race/ethnicity as embodiment (looks as much as anything else) are used, (mis)understood, or challenged in these discussions and practised on/offline by the participants themselves. At first glance, discussions about internal(ised) and external(ised) sociocultural hierarchies based on heredity privilege (Chapter Six), pure/mixed blood, complexion, may appear as evidence of a social construction become 'second nature' (Kolko et al 2000), 'colorist' attitudes from within these communities (see Crawford, 2000), or politicisation as the result of covert and overt discrimination for Pacific Island diasporas living in largely western urban centres (Helu 1999; interview, Ward 1999). But whilst some of the
interventions do appear to be (re)articulations of biological essentialism (see below), I would argue for a more open-ended reading of how 'race' operates in these conversations and the lives from which, and to which they speak. In the discussions here, 'race' operates as a sort of shorthand, an inter/subjective code for common physical, attitudinal and cultural assumptions at the same time as it is one for pride, self-awareness, multiplicity and the right to be treated fairly. It is also the axis around which much intense disagreement turns.

So whilst 'race' does denote 'biological' destiny (see Haraway 1992) in these debates - up to a point, it is nevertheless used as an elastic term for a human condition that is to be examined rather than denied or reified. Never to be taken too literally, mind you, as the following reconstruction of a recent major thread shows. The upshot is that 'race' is re-constructed quite thoroughly during the course of the discussions. In these (online) environments its meanings and gender-power relations are re-read by those to whom it is supposed to be self-explanatory. When it is indeed used to support a biologically deterministic point of view, the poster is immediately confronted by her/his interlocutors refusal to take such determinist conclusions on board. These encounters are related, not always tidily, to those dealing with femininity / masculinity and (homo)sexuality in their (re)articulation of some complex 'inside-out' issues (Chapter Five).

As I have already argued, because these conversations are taking place on accessible internet site, the content and the interactions also move out from the privacy of face to face debates or the scripted dialogues of TV and cinema. Their fluidity also differs from the more structured lines of documentaries or novels. This fluidity and informality creates a number of cross-cutting lines of concern; the 'inside out' dynamic is at work again in fact. One of these relates to how skin colour and its historically constructed value hierarchies operates in intimate relationships and the broader politics of this for anti-racist activism. There is, in short, another sort of 'double-bind' at work (Benhabib & Cornell 1987). Larry D. Crawford calls his fellow (male) American 'Afrikans' to grapple with this head-on. For even though "one's complexion is intrinsically irrelevant" to judgements about "individual beauty, intelligence, aspirations and the like", there is a taboo nevertheless on discussing "the skin tone stratification that does in fact exist ..." (2000:1/7). Crawford's point is that there is a "deep" desire for "race to become irrelevant" by all parties, and in mainstream Western social science establishments especially. Crawford's point is that not only does this coyness about skin colour reinforce racist categories that still operate in society at large (pushes them under the carpet in fact) but it also avoids "prejudices that Afrikan hold about each other and seemingly use against or to the advantage of themselves and others of relatively similar complexion" (2000:1/7).

Such discussions can be politically and emotionally discomforting for those (of us) who do not (have to) 'wear' skin colour, simply by virtue of being/being seen as 'white' 55. As Crawford notes all too cogently;

By now, we should be sick and tired of people arguing that their color was a genetic accident, or that they just happen to be Black or that it makes no difference whether you are Black or white and, therefore, that race is a non-issue, that we should forget about it and go on about the business of success. People say they don't want to be called Black or Afrikan using the excuse that it is limiting. It's interesting that to say you're white is not. When your validation comes from Europeans rather than being who and what you naturally are, you can never measure up. Duh! You are not European! In a white supremacist culture you necessarily must deny yourself in order to succeed. (2000: 4/7, emphasis added)

This process can be seen cutting both ways on the KB and KR forums where being both 'too black' and 'too white' are dealt with. So despite the best intentions to defuse the negative connotations of discourses around 'race' and non-'white'-ness, skin colour is a material, not just symbolic, property of everyday life for these predominantly young people 56. As do the "all too

55 And here I would take issue with Sandy's tack, even though he got debate up and going.
56 As one initial poster put it in a post entitled TRUE POLYNESIANS:

Well this professor has his PHD in anthropology and has visited almost all of the countries in the world. He's really old. From 92-98 he did research in Polynesia and then came back to teach. He asked me if I was Polynesian and I said "yes" I'm Samoa. Then we had a talk about Polynesia.
often deadly" (Kolko et al 2000:2) effects of racism, needless to say. Perhaps this is why, on these mainly non-academic forums, 'ethnicity' does not have linguistic privilege (see Hall 1996a), relatively speaking, although it does appear from time to time.

How do all these permutations operate in these online forums at any one time then? The best way to illustrate the process is by way of what followed from an initial post in 2001 on the Kamehameha Roundtable, entitled Fake Polynesians that grew to nearly 60 follow-ups in the space of a few days. The initial poster, 100%, contends that looking 'white' is equivalent to being 'white':

I wonder why people who do NOT look Polynesian go around telling people they are? A white woman came up to me today and asked if I was Samoan. She than tells me she is 1/4 Samoan. Big deal. She looked white to me. I can tell she was bragging as to suggest that she is one of us but thankfully did not look like one of us. I guess my point is, if you don't look Polynesian than it doesn't matter. The truth is when you go out in the real world, I'm sure you will not bring that up with your white peers. (100%, 2/02/01) 57

Her / his argument is that looks do ultimately govern how one is treated in society at large and those who 'get away' with looking white, or rather, who do not look 'Polynesian', are at an advantage in that they can live more easily than their overtly discriminated-against peers 58. Amidst a lot of fiery disagreement in principle with this view 100 % still goes on to say:

How many times do I need to spell this out to you all? If you look white you will be treated in society as such. I will be treated like a Polynesian because I fit the bill. 1 plus 1 equals 2. Its that simple. I agree we shouldn't judge a book by its cover but the reality is we do. Wake up and join the real world. The color conscious society. (100%, 3/02/01) 59

Despite all protestations to the contrary (see below), 100% still insists towards the end of this long thread that in

the real world, society judges our heritage based on our physical appearance...... The white woman I spoke of [see above] can shout about her Polynesian heritage until she turns brown in the face. Yet, society will still see her as nothing more than a white woman claiming heritage to a race in which she was genetically deprived. So you see, there really is no point in identifying yourself with a race that you do not resemble. It serves no purpose. Finally, It has been my observation that many of the White afakasi Polynesians acknowledge our heritage with a sense of relief that they were not cursed with our dark Polynesian features. They want to have their cake and eat it too. Not in my world. Let's call a spade a spade. (100%, 3/02/01) 60

S/he is acknowledged nonetheless, albeit cautiously, as having a point in terms of everyday

He told me once about how he thought that Polynesians were very traditional. He said though that the most traditional were Niueans. I was like what are those. Well he explained and then he gave me a list of what he considered the most traditional Polynesians...... He said that Samoans [3rd 'most traditional' in this list] seem to assimilate more and more of the Western world. Do you think that is true? Do you think that is true that Samoans are losing their culture? He said the saddest thing is that the Polynesian culture is so strong when it comes to morality that its sad to see that they when they lose their culture they tend to lose their morals. Do you really think we're losing our culture or morals?." (Student, 9/02/01)

58 This stance is replayed in other threads.
59 Lots of them but they don't want to speak out for fear of reprisal from the white power structure, in reply to Are there really polynesians walking around that think like you? posted by Breezy (3/02/01) at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/2503.html
60 maybe inside he's half but on the outside he's not, in reply to A Question for you? (Teuila, 3/02/01) at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/2500.html

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discrimination. As a long-serving regular shares:

I can understand your bitterness because there is still racism in our society. But don't you see? You are perpetuating the ignorance....... I'll tell you that I have the "traditional" features of an island man. My skin is dark, my hair is black, my eyes are brown, and my nose is flat (as well as runny during sad movies....hehehe). Throughout my life, I have been subject to racism, implied and explicit. My response has been to ignore the ignorance and treat people like I would like to be treated...... Your reaction is to treat ignorance with ignorance. ....... I'm proud to be Tongan. We are a small island nation in this big world. So when I meet a fellow Tongan, whether as dark as me or lighter, I celebrate the occasion in meeting each other so far away from our home shores. I'm sorry you feel less of yourself because you are darker. But too much pigment never stopped me. I never let that stop me. And I certainly don't blame my fellow islanders for my skin color. Sorry you feel that way. (Meilakepa, 3/02/01)  

But for the majority of the other participants in this thread, 100%'s claims about certain looks and ipso facto 'racial purity' (if indeed such delineations exist) is a dubious indulgence and in turn discriminatory towards "half-caste Polys" 62. The range of opinions and statements on the inner and outer dimensions of skin colour, racial/ethnic/cultural emotional and linguistic affiliation, show all manner of internal (amongst themselves) readings and embodiments of 'race/ethnicity' and also all manner of everyday experiences and coping/response mechanisms to external pressures (from others) that go with them. The responses to 100% come from a range of participants- men and women, younger and older - and are couched in a variety of tones. The first could be characterised as degrees of disinterest and/or gentle approbation. For instance:

So what if the lady looked white with poly blood?. It's really sad because we suffer so much racism in this country already- due to the fact that we are minorities and yet, we as Polynesians tend to be discriminating against ourselves.. (SeiOrana, 3/02/01) 63

it's a free country, and let her do whatever she wants and if she never discloses that fact in front of her white peers. But I understand what you mean when people like that lady just say that when it's convenient like when it comes to scholarships, college admissions, Polynesian club memberships etc. but still it's not hurting you or me, so don't sweat the hype. (tOnGalmaldEn, 2/02/01) 64

To various degrees of outright disapproval and active identification with the 'white woman' in question.

Who said you had to look polynesian to have the blood run through your veins? I myself have been told by many polynesians heck even from the ones that are from my island tell me that I don't look polynesian. Even the polys that I kick it with always thought I was mix until they seen my sister and brothers. When they see them their shock at how light I am and how their skin is like perfect brown. If my brothers and sister did not resemble me they would swear I was lying. Point is what exactly is a polynesian person suppose to look like? I've seen light skin,dark skin,and brown skin polynesians. Some have brown eyes, some blue, and some hazel(Like my eyes)The point is as long as we know our culture and know where we come from and carry it with pride then what is wrong with that? People come of many colors, hair textures, thickness or thinness of bodies, etc. We can't let peoples stereotypes of certain cultures judge one another on appearance. My mother and I are light skin and have light hazel

61 You Perpetuate the Racism, in reply to maybe inside he's half but on the outside he's not, posted by 100% (3/02/01) at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/2508.html
62 the intolerance towards half-caste polys, (miss thang, 28/05/99, initial post, KR, no longer on server)

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eyes. My mother has red hair and I have jet black hair but with red highlights in them. My father, sister, and brothers are brown skin, have jet black hair, and dark brown eyes. Does that make them more of a Tonga than my mother and I? Hell NO...... (Tonga Lady, 3/02/01)

I CAN'T BELIEVE IN THIS TIME AND AGE THERE ARE STILL INDIVIDUALS LIKE YOURSELF RUNNING AROUND. YOU MAY HAVE ISSUES WITH SELF ESTEEM AND YOUR IDENTITY. I THINK ITS GREAT WHEN AFATASIS [mixed] CLAIM THEIR SAMOAN HERITAGE. I AM MIXED WITH CHINESE, GERMAN, AND SAMOAN. I KNOW THAT I AM MIXED, BUT WHEN SOMEONE ASKS ME WHAT I AM, I SAY "SAMOAN"! WHO ARE YOU TO JUDGE OTHERS AND SAY WHO SHOULD BE CONSIDERED SAMOAN. 100%, YOU ARE STRAIGHT TRIPPIN! (lalelei, 3/02/01)

To numerous sorts of owning up to mixed blood and/or the power of upbringing to counter 100%'s essential position.

I have so much Samoan family of all different shades under the sun. I have cousins running around Samoa with blue/green eyes and blondie locks with more than 50% Samoan blood pumping through their veins. I myself swear I look Samoan...hehe...but everyone else thinks not...hmmm...but I am more than half and I am soo proud of my Samoan heritage..........Please don't judge a book by its cover. ...I was still Samoan when being Samoan wasn't cool (Breezy, 3/02/01)

.... I know some samoans who are afa kasi and have straight up chinese or palagi names and claim their samoan side more than some %100 pure bleded ones. I see Samoans who are 1/4 born and raised in the islands knowing more about their culture than %100 pure blooded ones here in California! The thing you fail to realize is some of them were raised "FA'A SAMOA" by their grandparents, geez my husband is Hawaiian/Tahitian but claims his Hawaiian side, and he has a Tahitian last name. I am half Tongan and Samoan, but I claim my Samoan side. Is that wrong? You relate to the way you were raised! You're hating for all the wrong reasons! In all actuality we did not have a choice in being AFA KASI or 1/4 or whatever the blood amount. Guess what my children claim to be? HAWAIIAN! but they also don't deny the fact that they have other polynesian blood flowing through their veins. Remember we're all family, all Polynesian, regardless of blood amount. And I don't know about you, but I am PROUD to be SAMOAN, and I am happy that woman who is 1/4 went out of her way to let you know she was 1/4 SAMOAN! Talk bout pride! you need a trip back home! (Teine Afa Tasi, 5/02/01)

Whilst it can be seen that some discussants get very indignant, others temper their criticisms with humour, a fair sprinkling of 'emoticons' and careful acknowledgement of the

65 Hm........... in reply to initial post at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/2492.html. This poster, when pressed by 100%, goes on to say that When people ask what race am I? I say polynesian not well you see my great grandmother on my moms side was irish and my great great grandfather on grandpas side was british. Hell no I say I'm tongan!......There are lot of polys who don't fit your so called "profile of a polynesian person" (6/02/01)

Listen here you ignorant close minded fool! Where the hell did I say I was 100%?? in reply to Somebody's grandma/grandpa has been dipping in the white sauce in secret, posted by 100% (3/02/01) at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/2549.html

66 100%, you are TRIPPIN!!!!! in reply to initial post at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/2494.html

67 Are there really polynesians walking around that think like you? in reply to initial post at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/2491.html

68 someone needs to go and relearn "FA'A SAMOA" in reply to initial post, at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/ kamehameha2000-2/2538.html There are many other sorts of 'mixes' put forward in such debates.
tricky everyday situations being conjured up. Under the heading 'Stop Drinking that Hatorade!' the following encapsulates all these elements at work in such 'mobile spaces':

100%, you are just posting up here trying to piss everyone off. Your doing a good job at that! Well, I am glad that you are so proud to be Samoan! Good on you!!!! The only thing is you come off being very proud and also very bitter and ignorant. I don't care who you are. You could be Malietoa, and still you could never deny me my culture and heritage. I bet you that this Samoan girl could teach you quite a bit about Samoan culture and history! You are as bad as the KKK! You need to start up your own cult against all the afata looking Samoans! LMAO! 100%, get a fricken life! You are totally ridiculous!!!!! I know your mother taught you better than that! (at least I hope she did!) (talelei, 4/02/01) 69

The way the initial post refers to conflicting expectations in upbringing, whether in the islands or elsewhere, and how these merge with different experiences and positions of privilege (Chapter Five and Six) do not escape the notice of one of the few supporters of 100% responding in what becomes a distinct sub-thread:

I was raised outside of Samoa, but raised in the 'Samoan Way'. I have met quite a few people who are 1/4 Samoan and 1/4 chinese and whatever, my point is, many people talk the talk but don't walk the walk, if you can get the drift. I resent people like you [another poster] talking about us as 'stateside polys' raised away from the islands. I was not raised away from the island because of choice, it was because my parents wanted a better future for their children..... I really need to point out that those on the island appear to have it all. You try being raised in a country that has conflicting cultures with your own and then talk to me about 'hate on the rest of us on the islands'. Over here, it is a great feat for a Samoan child to speak their native tongue fluently, so I take it to great offence when people like to flaunt their ties with Samoa, however, have not struggled to find acceptance from both the Australian and Samoan communities, due to their skin colour and obvious palagi appearances. If they are proud to be 1/4 Samoan just for name's sake, then to me, they are not a 'true Samoan'. (L.T., 8/02/01) 70

This long thread encapsulates a number of ongoing conversations over the years about the everyday life of not only diasporic generations but also those who are not '100%' both in and out of the Pacific Islands. We need to unpack these articulations of embodiment a little more in order to understand how they interact with understandings of 'culture' and the very category, 'Polynesian'.

From 50% (me) to 100% (you) 71

My cousin, also a halfie, once said, "People don't understand how it is, to not be accepted in white circles because you're not fully white, and not be accepted as Samoan because you're not fully Samoan. Think about that. (Brown Sugar, 4/02/01) 72

What is at stake here, as these interactions already show is the unique position and difficulties of 'afa kasi' (half-castes) within as well as beyond their immediate communities. For these people (who arguably constitute the main online diasporic constituency of the KR), whilst looks can be dealt with, falling between the cracks in terms of cultural/lingual and emotional affiliation is

69 in reply to You are just in denial posted by 100% (3/02/01) at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/2520.html
70 must we go there? in reply to someone needs to go and relearn "FA'ASAMOA" posted by Teine Afa Tasi at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/2580.html. 'L.T.' could be the same person as '100%' using another nickname. Be that as it may, the point is seen as valid and is responded to accordingly.
71 Are you serious or what? posted by Brown Sugar (4/02/01) in reply to Fake Polynesians initial posted by 100%, at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/2526.html
72 see note above
tougher. Some speak for themselves and thereby from particular personal circumstances:

I myself is half samoan/tongan but nobody knows unless I say so. I get mistaken for Filipino/Asian all the time so does that make me Asian rather then polynesian because I don't fit YOUR description or SOCIETY'S picture of SAMOANZ? It's hard enuff for us Afa'tasi folks alwayz being denied or frowned upon by our mixed-breeds and then to have folks like you?...anyway bro. have a blessed day (sonique, 9/02/01)

...it appears that for many of us from interracial marriages, the intolerance and unacceptance of us derives [sic] not from the host society but, from those of which we are supposed to be a part of. (miss thang, 289/05/98) 

Peeps [other Polynesians] sometime judge a person by the colour of her skin and therefore do her a great injustice!!!! They never give you a fair go because they always bound to judge you by the colour of your skin. The colour of your skin reminds them that you're not really one of them!!!!! Some time I wish I can change my skin colour but its beyond my control...very sad!!!!! No matter how you try to convince them that you're a Poly inside, your skin colour is a BLACK MARK!!!!! Full-blooded Poly's ignorance can drive a half-caste person out of her culture and own people. I don't like to see that happens to other young afakas because I know how much it hurts!!! They don't understand the confusion of bring torn between two cultures..(Sweet Siren, 27/01/00) 

Others speak for their children:

I think all Polynesians are delightsom e people to behold. My children are Hawaiian, Samoan, Tongan with some Caucasian and a little Chinese. Two are very dark, two are medium brown and two are light brown. Each one is beautiful and unique. Beauty, self-esteem and self acceptance from the inside and outside will determine one's worth...Worth is not determined by degree of color.. (Blossom, 18/07/00) 

And others speak for their parents and so as children themselves. In one of more thorough responses to the whole problematique thrown up by 100%’s initial claim, one participant - 'P.' - draws a portrait of several generations that includes a nuanced analysis of the (post)colonial Pacific Islands in terms of both geographical and more intimate traversals made between Pacific Islands groups and visitors - sailors, missionaries, administrators - from Europe. This post, to my mind, is one of the most eloquent articulations of the complexity of these inside-out/inside-in political economic and sociocultural processes. All this is presented even as she (and this is a woman) strongly disagrees with 100% for expressing

sentiments .... that tend to perpetuate arrogant bigotry... and you don't have to be lily-white to be a bigot. It is really unfortunate that you feel this way.... (P. 4/02/01) 

The latter part of this long (two and a half pages), eloquent intervention sums up these criss-crossing paths between online/offline everyday life, imaginary and 'real' life(worlds). It also loops back into the parallel discussions about sex-gender role across generations:

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73 the intolerance towards half-caste polyies, initial post, KR (no longer on server)
74 Re: Skin colours don't count .. but I know how hurt you're... in reply to WHY DO THEY DISCRIMINATE US!!! posted by blonde girl (25/01/00, KR, no longer on server). Sweet Siren, a longstanding regular on the KR (see Chapter Five) identifies herself in a later thread as "half palangi, half Tongan but look more like a palangi than a Tongan..." (30/09/00), I say Good on her. You go half caste girl!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! in reply to When applying for college, my buddy put that she was Samoa... . whereas she's only 1/8 and 7/8s palangi....does anybody see anything wrong with that, posted by Kavahine (30/09/00) at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/577.html
75 in reply to Re: Are light skinned polynesians considered better then dark skinned polynesians? posted by ebonyivy (15/07/00) in thread initiated by Mary (15/07/00, KR, no longer on server).
76 Oh hello.... just in case you can see plainly... the REAL world is about diversities, in reply to Fake Polynesians, posted by 100%, at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/2521.html
...If I took your opinion to heart, I'd have a complex about my daughters who at first blush, pool more from their fathers than me. But then again, I guessed I should be blamed for merging Italy and Ireland to some village deep in Manchuria and moving them to Hickville, Samoa. If Hickville will wonder how the palagi one can have little ones with remarkable Asian features for sisters.

My wonderful, beautiful mother just turned 69 and she is more forward thinking than you. She has children who range from the Anglo-looking, to the Mediterranean to the unplaceable all with one Samoan man. Explains it away by saying it was their UN genes that BLESSED us. Now with grandchildren even more ethnically mixed, she loves them to pieces and couldn't care less about the opinions of the "real world".... Her real world is well-adjusted considering the hardships she fared pre-Carson-Civil Rights' America when a bare minimum non-Samoans knew what a Samoan was other than by chance encounters with a sparse number in Hilo Hattie-Honolulu. Even then, my poor Mom was pegged as a Portagee. I stand next to her and she is asked whether I am her child because I am several shades darker. As a child it bothered me because it was if someone was trying to denounce the fact that she was my mother. But she'd scoffed and ask of me, "Eh! E maau ai sou maila?" {Buckleup, honeychile! Are ya gittin a boil jes' because Cousin Bubba dunno his kin from his *mule*? Gum up and settle yerself down fer some kopai!"... er that's "dumpling" to you, Teuila! lolol} These days, she is still asked whether I am her child... still the prickly reply is, "Se ioe! She is MY baby!" ...

Thank heavens for my parents who have known the REAL world and refused to let us believe that we're just typical Samoans... and forbade us to be so close-minded so as to judge others on the accounts of the breadth of their noses or pigmentation of their skins. (P, 4/02/01, ibid)

So whilst looks - complexion - should not matter to who one is 'at heart', and many of these threads are attestations to this principle, neither do the discussants deny their veracity for lived lives under current gender-power relations of 'being overseas'. In turn, the physical particularities and gender-power relations of difference-similarity-belonging are part and parcel of identity formation, as are different stages of personal life histories of diasporic generations. I would argue that reflections such as these are permitted by being online, in spaces whose gender-power relations work somewhat differently from those on the ground; Pacific Island churches, Kava Clubs, in/formal rituals and occasions that constitute the broader sociocultural and political economic context of the Pacific Islands at home and abroad. Being online allows another level and scale of debate between Polynesian men and women of all ages and social circumstance (see Morton 1998a). The role of the moderators and self-regulation of the constituency are important, albeit not immediately apparent elements to keeping the more intense disagreements manageable. Nonetheless, these interactions are occurring in an open and accessible (cyber)space and this is taken as read, even conveniently overlooked, as the discussions unfurl and discussants communicate across various degrees of intimacy and mutual knowledge.

It is important to recall the subtleties and nuance when reconstructing such debates; debates that deal head-on with the very issues Crawford (2000) would see debated within his own activist community. It would be all too easy to stop at the 'reverse discrimination' or negative aspects of diasporic life being referred to above and not see the way in which the participants are looking to (re)empower each other. Not seeing how the more intense disagreements are dealt with ignores the way 'race' - as unmitigated biological destiny - is disaggregated in the process and then placed into perspective. The postcolonial politics of representation at work here includes positive reinforcements and future ideals of embodiment which are still tied in to how physical attributes are studied, constructed and disseminated in the
western world. As for the said traditions and cultural heritages themselves, these come through as living, 'mobile' spatial practices which carry with them their own generational and social histories, tensions and disillusionments. How these are transmitted depend also on the generations that follow and where they put down roots. These two follow-ups to an early discussion are quite clear about where the coutures lie, albeit in different ways:

Upon arrival here in the States, I immersed myself in the so-called “Poly-Community.” Seven years later, I was in the verge of essentially doing no better than where I started.

...Looking around the existing communities, I find nothing that I would teach my kids today. Almost every occasion I attend, I am reminded of the terrible circumstance of confusion most Polynesians go through......One of the many causes of such confusion is the lack of skills in managing these luxuries. Unable to manage our alcohol and ending up with fistfights much too often. The jealousy and snickering of our fellow poly’s success (educationally or professionally). The display of disrespect and lack of common human decency amongst ourselves. These communities in NO WAY represent what is Polynesian. It sort of a “watered-down” version of the values that I grew up with in the islands...watered down for convenience sake and sometimes-selfish reasons. (Lu Sipi, 17/11/98)  

As a second generation Polynesian in New Zealand, it was my parents who took the road less travelled (although it was road that became busy very quickly) arriving here in the mid 50s, fresh off the boat and straight into a factory. Would they argue that the isolation, humiliation and degradation of those early pioneering days were worthwhile? That they could justify making the journey? I trust the answer would be yes. What else could they say? That they had spent most of their lives in complete unhappiness, yearning for the safety of their homeland, bitterly regretting that they had taken a journey from which they could not return (with pride intact). They would be the first to use their children, and the families they built, as the excuse for having stayed on. It's for their education! It's for their health! It's for their welfare! But in actual fact, in their heart or hearts, deep within them, they would acknowledge that part of themselves never accepted their adopted homeland. And certainly their adopted homeland never truly adopted them. (Samson Samasoni, Wellington, 28/11/98)  

**Support and Respect: I hope we've helped**

What is striking about the False Polynesians thread and others like it, is the practical advice and support being offered. There are any number of suggestions, advice, sympathetic accounts offered in the course of such disagreements. These all encapsulate a solid repertoire of everyday tactics, of 'making do' in a strong sense of the term in the face of incipient exclusion and confusion about 'identity'. Some responses are quite confessional as in the case of Sweet Siren's reply to an initial post by Kavahine. This poster complains about a friend's sudden 'rediscovery' of her Samoan ancestry that apparently "was one of the factors that got her into the school" even though "as kids, she hung out with the palangi girls who gave me hell, b/c I wasn't like the rest, b/c I wasn't palangi." In the course of an unfurling discussion on the rights and wrongs of diversity programs/positive discrimination, Sweet Siren has this to say:

I support K's friend because I believe that it’s her own life and she makes her own decision. It's not our place to judge her. What she did was wrong but what goes around will surely comes around and bite her in the nose...lol.[laugh out loud].

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77 Let's Grow Up and be POLYNESIAN! in reply to Weekly Discussion Topic #59: Living Overseas...In A Poly Community, Or Not? (KB Admin, 16/11/98, initial post, KB, no longer on server).
78 in reply to Weekly Discussion Topic #59: Living Overseas...In A Poly Community, Or Not? thread.
79 just passing through (7/02/00) in reply to WHY DO THEY DISCRIMINATE US!!! (a blonde girl who's samoan, 25/01/00), initial post , KR, no longer on server).
80 When applying for college, my buddy put that she was Samoan...whereas she's only 1/8 and 7/8s palangi... does anybody see anything wrong with that, initial post by kavahine (30/09/00) at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/869.html
I, on the other hand, make use my palangi heritage for my own advantage. When I'm being forced to collide with a harsh world that is spurned with sexists and racists, I instinctively dig into my comfort zones and solemnly declare that I'm white. That's typical human too!!!!!! Due to the existence of prejudice, people of colour often find that the environment is unsupportive and the air is polluted with racial prejudice/discrimination through benign neglect or overt hostility. It is possible that no amount of individual effort can overcome the barriers. Therefore, the more perfect reason for Siren to "switch on" to her palangi heritage... makes things easy for me, you know. But when I return home, I instinctively "switch off" from my "palanginess" and "switch on" to my "Tonganess". See what I mean, kepa? It's like that I'm an octopus living in the ocean or a light bulb that keeps switching on and off in two different environments. It's something beyond my control. I think I somehow portray the experience of many half caste peeps in my situation.

I don't want my professors or managers treating me differently from my white counterparts because I'm part Tongan. I want to be treated equally not differently. The challenge can be overwhelming but if I can't bite the bullet now, when am I going to bite it then? When all my teeth are gone????? Oh nooooo nooo.... (Sweet Siren, 2/10/00)

Whilst the friend in question is not condemned for making "use of her Samoan heritage to gain her own benefit" (ibid), neither are her actions fully condoned:

Anyway, I still have to disagree with you my dear [Sweet Siren] .....I don't have to respect Kavahine's friend for that, especially if she/he had a CHOICE not to do it. Your own personal examples show how you protect yourself through your dual identities as a Palangi and Tongan. So tell me, would you ever use your Palangi background at the expense of a fellow Tongan? That is what Kavahine's friend did. The friend was not being persecuted or undergoing hardship. The friend simply took advantage of an opportunity that was meant for people who really needed it. So in that sense I RESPECTFULLY take offense with your open support for this "friend." (Meilakepa, 2/10/00)

The problematic historiography of scientific research into 'race/culture/ethnicity notwithstanding (Haraway 1992, Kolko et al 2000, Ortner 1996, di Leonardo et al 1991), the way these very categories and the scientific canon underpinning them change, or recur over time simply complicate the ethical and political choices for contemporary generations, given the asymmetrical gender-power relations between such communities and the (host) society at large (a recurring theme in the US-based KR). And all along the way, personal circumstances and family histories weave their own strands into the discussion threads:

Back in the slave days, if you were 1/32 black you were slave material. I look at my niece and nephew who are (at the most) 1/8 African (considering the "mixing" with American Indians by the ancestors of their one Black great-grandparent) and they, for all practical purposes look White. But back in the days of slavery they would have been considered Black, and by the whiteness of their skins would have probably had housejobs, rather than field jobs....... My niece and nephew "own" their African heritage and I wouldn't have a problem with them using it as a means to a better opportunity. Kavahine's little friend, though, seems to be exploiting her heritage rather than supporting it ...(Teuila, 1/10/00)

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81 I support and respect choices make by individuals... for example..., in reply to initial post (see above), at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/918.html
82 Choices that are a detriment to one's own people , in reply to I support and respect choices make by individuals... for example, posted by Sweet Siren (2/10/00) at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/923.html
83 a lil aside in reply to Perhaps DNA testing is in order! posted by dot (1/10/00) in My Buddy thread at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/900.html
Recourse to racialised categories, to reducing ethnicity/culture to these as in 100%’s position, can be a counter-strategy, a form of everyday ‘perruquer’ (de Certeau 1980), or "strategic essentialism" in the face of ingrained and institutionalised discrimination and prejudice (see Crawford 2000). There are also more virulent forms of ‘dogmatic essentialism’ in operation in the world today. But whilst most participants, and commentators, would agree that any respective cultural heritage cannot be reduced to skin colour and/or genetic profiles or genealogies, neither is it totally inseparable (see below). For the onlooker, non-Polynesian participants like myself, the complex micro and macro political and moral economies (Chapter Eight) of these intimate connections and affiliations only make sense, however, when broader gender-power relations and histories are kept in view (Peterson 1996). How these become interwoven into everyday lives, re-read for the purposes of such discussions or simply taken as read, are expressed in different ways during the debates. As I have shown in Chapter Five, these relations are both internal (personal) and external (sociocultural and political) affairs that have to be lived with, contested and dealt with regularly - everyday. First because

...through colonisation, westernisation, modernisation and growth we take on the socialization and values of the dominant culture that has the grasp of our economy and our future. We then associate the incoming culture as better and some of us want to be like them because we perceive them as better or want to be accepted by them, or achieve the things they achieve. Yes, many of us will talk their talk and walk their walk. However, if we are proud of our roots and heritage, our color matters not. Aloha.

(Blaseml Iwalani Fonoimoana, 18/07/00) 84

And second because the roads to (re)empowerment are two-way. As another participant notes;

.... at first, we minorities were frustrated that white people didn't give us any advances in anything including education... then we hated our half-poly for being part white because some of us felt that they didn't recognize their culture... now, that when a sister... whom is mainly palangi still holds to the little part of her polynesian culture... you're still not satisfied... there ain't nothing wrong with what she is doing... i say rock on withca bad self girl and claim your culture...(ana, 18/10/00) 85

To sum up briefly. Everyday embodiments are physical, emotional and symbolic markers of both commonality and difference, depending on the specific social, political and economic context. Yes, one's looks and skin colour still matter to how one is seen by others and, in turn, one's sense of self-hood/belonging to a group for those who do not conform to the respective norms. But so do other things. For instance, what constitutes one's 'cultural' identity/identification, whether in the singular or plural as practices, language, or cultural reproduction. In diasporic societies marked everyday by socio-economic divisions that belie their respective discourses of national and/or multicultural national inclusion, no 'cultural code' is self-explanatory. The adjustments and adaptations are part of the 'oppression of the present'. But they also part of conscious counter-representations of cultural stereotypes, from within these online/offline communities and beyond.

Multiple Cultural Codes: When Living Overseas 86

.I have always been very strong with my people. I am a strong supporter of Maori culture, but I have also questioned certain aspects of my culture. A healthy culture should subject itself to questions. (Alan Duff in Hereniko 1999:121)

84 in reply to Are light skinned Polynesians considered better than dark skinned Polynesians? initial post by Mary (15/07/00) at http://63.249.183.108/kamehameha/kameha2000-1/12239.htm
85 puh-shaw! in reply (the last one in fact) to the initial post in My Buddy thread, at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/1282.html
86 see, I think it's our obligation when living overseas posted by Meilakepaa (17/11/00), in reply to Is it wrong for me to want to preserve my culture? posted by gp (16/11/00), at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/1681.html

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Closely allied with debates over the embodiments and concomitant struggles over meanings of race / ethnicity are the copious threads on an even more elastic term; 'culture'; or more precisely Samoan or Tongan cultural heritages vis-à-vis 'western culture'. One thematic refrain is what cultural practices should be preserved amidst other more dominant cultural contexts and changing ones 'back home' (Morton 1996), let alone what these actually constitute, what gives them their singularity. Everyday life in suburban America does not always jell with everyday practices (brought over) from the islands. In this respect, what elements of said culture need to be taught to second/third generations growing up overseas, what aspects are the pivotal for instilling knowledge, and ease, with one parent's culture, how to deal with cross-cutting social mores and forms of marginalisation, are all brought to the 'kava circle', the 'cafe' or the 'round table'. These threads are conversations about the specific elements - informal and formal rituals, practices and events - that go to make up a respective 'cultural identity'.

The range of topics are broad in that almost any concern tends to be posed in the form of 'is this part of our culture?' question. For this reason, I shall be only alluding to these multiple and variegated threads (rather than reconstructing them in turn) in terms of how they speak explicitly to those already studied - self/group identity formation in its more abstract, symbolic significations. For the Kava Bowl, many of the threads dealing with cultural preservation per se, vagaries in how specific practices pertaining to Tonga are handed down when overseas, economic relationships and obligations between diasporic populations and the Kingdom, and social issues like criminality, domestic violence, can be found in the Weekly Discussion Topics. The push and pull of everyday life in the islands vis-à-vis living overseas is the leitmotiv of all these discussions. These overlap, by implication and through the posters' double online-presence, in the Polycafe's Kamehameha Roundtable. But there are some distinctions. In the latter, one can detect more emphasis in the 'abstract' identity issues vis-à-vis racism and social discrimination (especially in the USA). Hence the many discussions on contradictory pressures for those 'half-caste' children as they live and identify as both American/Australian/New Zealanders and Samoan/Tongans. This sort of multiplex identification also emerges as a certain mobility, switch-backs and inconsistencies in attitude and degrees of flexibility as posters identify on different occasions as Republicans, Christians, Samoans and so on 

If any 'culture' is constituted by an ongoing exchange of meanings, and also a site for power struggles at the everyday grassroots level (Chen 1996), then it is inherently malleable, flexible and so contestable, rather than ahistorical and static. This may seem a truism but 'traditional' Pacific Island cultures have often been represented as fixed, static, and inherently conservative. The tensions, rather than negotiations, have been mainly couched in terms of 'modern' versus 'traditional'. As I have already argued, this division, yet another form of exoticisation (Ling 2001b, Wendt 1999), occludes far more complex nuances, far more intricate attitudes to what constitutes cultural change, sex-gender roles in the Pacific Islands. Moreover, younger generations of the diaspora take a very different view to their parents, community elders, on these matters; at least in these forums where offline forms of social deference (Morton 1996) free participants up to work out their thoughts and concerns. Articulation becomes a means for empowerment in this respect (Freire 1972, Gal 1991) and the way in which the everyday vitality of Pacific Island cultures can converse with more trenchant political and social cultural representations. These, too, are being challenged in postcolonial cultural expression and production.

*Cultural (Re)Production*

The latter is entailed in all manner of cultural reproduction and cultural identity politics around indigenous ethnicities (Hall 1996a, Wilson 1999, Wendt 1999) that form a backdrop to these threads. A conscious countering of negative stereotypes in the media, film, historical accounts, national heritages, has been a preoccupation in Australia and New Zealand for at least

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87 Threads that talk about recent Chinese immigrants in Tonga and (homo)sexuality are the biggest line of division, especially for the more fundamentalist Christian participants.
20 years. Rather than go into a blow by blow account of (indigenous) ethnic cultural politics in these countries, the Civil Rights movement in the USA being taken as read, this section should suffice in laying out the 'local-global' contours of cultural reproduction - in this case, cinema - which these threads also address (Hall 1996b, Hereniko 1999).

Those who have seen the New Zealand films Once Were Warriors and The Piano, both of which made a splash in cinemas all over the world, may have noted an enormous difference between the grim urban landscapes, economic deprivation and social exclusion depicted in the former and the lush lyrical landscapes of the latter 'period piece'. Furthermore, in each film the New Zealand Maori are depicted in very different ways, the exigencies of the different plots and time periods notwithstanding. In both, there are 'cultural clashes' in play. And so are their respective embodiments; that of the tattoo in particular. In The Piano, the traditional facial tattoo of the Maori - the moko (Figure Eight) - is worn by the Harvey Keitel character. In Once Were Warriors these are seen on the faces of urban youths, as an additional part of their gang 'colours'. The revival of the full moko for men and women alike in contemporary New Zealand has been regarded as the latest part of an ongoing Maori postcolonial 'cultural renaissance' (Hereniko/Duff 1999: 129) that has helped revive a practice dating from pre-colonial times that designated chiefs and warriors (Hereniko 1999) - a way of life frowned upon by missionaries (Wendt 1999:400-401, 408). A male moko was worn by Maori fighters - warriors (Hereniko/Duff 1999: 122-123) **. The New Zealand case notwithstanding, tattooing is still a widespread practice throughout the South Pacific Islands. Samoan 'tatauing' for instance "has endured and is very alive even in Los Angeles and Auckland where, since World War Two, Samoan communities have established themselves" (Wendt 1999:408, Ward 1999).

Maori/Pacific Island motifs have also become quite fashionable in contemporary revivals of western body-art. In an urban and socially marginalised setting, however, such visible physical markers carry a whole new layer of significance and, as in the case of Once Were Warriors, of masculinised open defiance.

But those who look more closely would also note the important sub-plot that is the yearning for another way of life, set of values held by Beth, through whose eyes the story in Once Were Warriors is framed. This becomes stronger as she watches her family, her daughter Grace in particular, and her own relationship with Jake torn apart by the effects of unemployment, alcohol, violence - both physical and sexual. That she came from 'royal' stock and her partner not, is another dimension to the personal and social tensions in this film and its (controversial) depiction of the contemporary Maori in urban New Zealand (Thompson 1999). The disaffection and social exclusion of 'ethnic minorities' and indigenous peoples such as Pacific Islanders and Maori in New Zealand **, Australia and its Aboriginal peoples, African/Black-American and more recent Latin-American populations in the USA, have many contesting analyses and political responses. Criminality, gangs, high unemployment rates, educational deficit as a result of high school drop-out levels, concerns over relatively poor reading and writing levels for some groups, and ghetto-like living conditions amongst these communities have not helped lessen some intransigent racial and cultural stereotypes let alone the demographics that appear to confirm these. These include instances of domestic violence, aggressive expressions of (young) male-gender identities that include clashes between rival (Tongan, Samoan, Maori) gangs, drive-by shootings, large Pacific Island and Maori prison populations and so on **. Whether it be Salt Lake City, Sydney, or Auckland, Pacific Island

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** Another trademark, the traditional war-dance, the haka, continues in Tourist shows and as part of the New Zealand national rugby team's pre-match ritual.

** For the record, I have worked in several of these areas and can attest to the complex factors that create these effects. I can also attest to some of the solutions put forward to deal with these, from within the respective communities. During the heyday of neo-liberalism in 1980's New Zealand, these initiatives were subsumed by the effect of neoliberal macro-economic policies ('Rogernomics') that contributed to exacerbating such divisions (Jessel 1999).

** Alan Duff, the author of the novel Once Were Warriors, does not mingle words on this: And as for racism, we're all racists. Maoris are racist against Samoans; Samoans hate Tongans; Tongans hate Samoans. Blacks hate blacks in Africa. They're slaughtering each other. It's tribe against tribe, black on black. Same in New Zealand. We're all racist, every human being on earth. Maori against Maori. No one says anything about that because you can't label it conveniently (Duff in Hereniko 1999:124).
communities - ethnic minorities in these contexts - are depicted all too often as criminal, poorly educated and marginalised ones. Although this has been changing, through church and community initiatives and the symbolic power of sporting achievements for instance, ingrained stereotypes still stick. Meanwhile, older hierarchies are compounded or substituted for class-based and economic ones, as many of these interventions have shown (Chapter Six). These are further complicated by the economic relationship - remittances - and differences in standards of living (supposedly) between diasporas and their extended families in the islands.

It is a truism to say that if pressed, people anywhere would be hard put to pin down what constitutes a particular culture or way of life, let alone what its essence "really is" (lillian 17/08/98) 91. Given the history of European expansion and colonialism that frames the online and offline traversals of the South Pacific let alone arguments about 'pre-contact' ones (Morton (1996: 21-22), there are strong emotional and political economic overtones to these particular discussions. Tongan/Samoan - and Polynesian culture/s are discussed both in the abstract and as specific and inter-related (sets of) practices. There is also a wide range in attitudes and identifications expressed. These cut through and inform those dealing with gender/ race/ ethnicity as discriminatory and/or empowering embodiments. Older and younger generations get involved and various degrees of direct knowledge and (lack of ) contact with the cultural practices discussed are put forward. Parents who grew up in the islands or abroad, children who are parents in turn, partners and children of mixed marriages talk (at times somewhat idealistically) about what cultural aspects are being lost or changed and the implications of this. They also allude to, if not directly talk about some of the aforementioned negative effects and impacts of living as an 'ethnic minority' overseas and whether these can be put down to the weakening of ties with 'Poly' culture, being isolated whilst at university, socio-economic or educational deprivation and so on. As Jazzy Belle says in an early discussion, echoing others from the same year (see above) and many that come afterwards:

I am one of those Polynesians who was born in America and has assimilated with many 'American' ways that are not 'Poly' ways...[M]y parents, especially my dad, has emphasized how important it is ... to be successful......It isn't a pleasant picture when the 'Whites' stereotype many polys as dumb and no-good gang-bangers ... [It's] hard enough being away from family, taking classes that seem like they'll never end, fighting our own battles without our own people degrading us by calling us 'oreos' or 'coconuts' (Jazzy Belle, 12/05/98) 92

These threads also think about the future and the implications of (re)claiming their 'Polynesian-ness' in order to 'stand up for each other' (lillian, 17/08/98 op cit) in the face of adversity abroad. These variegated discussions both countermand intercultural and intracultural processes of racial stereotyping as well as articulate proactive forms of identification and solidarity for the future. Whence the large degree of idealism amidst the angst and pressures of working to bring

Polynesian heritage to a status where it is acceptable and not overlooked in many countries...To bring recognition to the polys.. be in a better position to help [the] Polynesian community or better educate them on some decisions they may have to make. Many may say it's because we're too nice, but I believe it's because some of us just don't know how to handle some situations....(Jazzy Belle, 12/05/98) 93

This statement encapsulates some highly contentious issues within the respective communities and between them. Gangs have formed along Pacific Island ethnic lines in cities like Auckland, Salt Lake City and Los Angeles. It is this 'baggie pants brigade' (Kami 2001) of marginalised - male - youths that the KB and Polycafe founders are all too aware of and for whom they see the internet/www as a potential means for empowerment (Kami 2001; interview).

91 In reply to Weekly Discussion Topic # 52: Poly Violence...Heritage, Or Hate?
92 In reply to Weekly Discussion Topic #38: Second Generation Polys Overseas ... Sometimes 'Between a Rock and a Hard Place'" (KB Admin, 11/05/98, no longer on server)
93 See note above.
The point in this excursion into the many different ways 'culture' is (re)articulated to race/ethnicity here is to see how 'culture' is just as mobile a meaning as is race and/or ethnicity and/or gender, discomforting as this mobility may be for academic and policy-making lexicons (Hau'ofa 1987, Hereniko/Duff 1999). And, as I have argued in Chapter Two, image-making has concrete sociocultural and political economic underpinnings and consequences. Moreover, any politics of representation entails language in one form or another. This holds true for the still largely written textual scenarios of online communications.

Language is very powerful tool. When oral or written symbols are reinforced through entertainment, education and religion, it becomes even more potent. Words communicate meanings that are commonly understood by all participants or they cannot stand as a method for conveying meaning or order. The subconscious, symbolic reality which people speak into existence facilitates the exercise of power or reveals impotence. Words, also, are made into allies or enemies. (Crawford 2000:5/7)

The everyday practices of meaning-making for these groups entail writing/reading online, which (re)articulate not only how Tongan - Samoan - Polynesian cultural practices are being lived but also how they are being assumed, contested and moulded in all manner of everyday situations

**Whose Culture/s**

Back to the particular (cyber)spaces in which these dynamics can be seen at work. The practices and attitudes seen to comprise the postcolonial and/or diasporic Tongan - Samoan - Polynesian 'Way' permeate discussions about self/group identity formation for younger postcolonial diasporas. It would be too simplistic to say that debates around cultural preservation vis-à-vis adaptation or changes over time, where cultural identity or confusion relates to parental or peer pressure, are the number one preoccupation of these communities, but there is some truth to this (Kami 2001: interview). As I have already explained, a large part of these threads come from the Kava Bowl's Weekly Discussion Topics and so pertain largely to Tonga as such. But cultural themes are threaded through the Polynesian Cafe Kamehameha Roundtable discussions as well. Moreover, different people from different backgrounds are talking to each other as much as they are with their own 'peeps'. This is a key characteristic of these online communications and one that should not be underestimated in terms of opening up debates and broadening participation - and thereby content. Which specific set of practices, South Pacific Islands are being referred to should be apparent from the citations. My aim here is to show the main sub-themes that fall (loosely) under the rubric of cultural identity / identification, highlight recurring concerns for the diasporic communities and indicate where offline daily life push in on what are freely overlapping, recurring and open-ended discussions. Again, I would argue that what is in play here are exchanges in meanings and (re)articulations of culture as everyday practice. The latter operates in terms of the openings - and closures - in these participants' articulations of the 'Tongan Way', 'Fa'a Samoa, the 'Poly Way' of doing things. Where these begin and where they are heading.

This said, these ways of life are never really defined in toto. The latter of these - Polynesian - emerges as a sort of postcolonial Desiderata as this rubric gets (re)appropriated from its Europeans coinage and its subsequent colonialist overtones. The following examples from many interconnected sets of threads attest to this in/definiteness, which relates to how the respective cultural traditions and sets of expectations are (to be) defined, designated as unique and/or shared in the first place. In short, what exactly the culture-to-be-maintained or claimed entails is not self-evident, least of all for second and third generation "Polys Overseas [who are] sometimes 'between a rock and a hard place''' 94. But whatever 'it is, Samoan/Tongan/Polynesian cultures are taken to be changing, flexible. If not by choice then certainly by

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94 *Weekly Discussion Topic #38: Second Generation Polys Overseas ... Sometimes 'Between a Rock and a Hard Place"* posted by KB Admin (11/05/98, KB, no longer on server).

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circumstance. Living and growing up overseas entail both elements, and is empowering as well as fraught with new political and gender-power limitations (Chapters Five and Six). Despite a wide range of threads about particular Tongan practices, the insistence on singularity in terms of Tongan politics (Chapter Six) or vis-à-vis newcomers to the islands, posters remain adamant that in the final analysis:

Who can define 'Tongan'? You really can't because every Tongan's experience is different. (KB Regular, 9/11/98)  

Definitions of what a Tongan is will reflect whatever experience and knowledge each individual brings to the table. Every person’s definition will vary; no definition is either right or wrong. However, it seems like there is always someone who is trying to make his voice heard above everyone else’s, proclaiming that his definition is by far the most right, and from that definition should every Tongan standard be predicated. I have little experience with all the ballyhoo that goes on with the majority of the Tongan celebrations. I lived in Tonga for three years when I was a little kid. I can’t speak Tongan, I am a terrible tao’lunga dancer, in fact I probably spelled it wrong, I can hardly eat pork, in fact I don’t even really like meat that much. Reggae is not my favorite music, neither is rap... I’ve never too’aed for a fai kava and never will and to top it all off, I am light-skinned and have thin hair. So now that I have failed the ‘You are a Tongan if you are...’ test, can I still call myself a Tongan? (Tupou Fifita, 28/10/98)  

Every single Tongan I know classifies 'The Tongan Way' differently....what does this really mean? I know some Tongans who think the Tongan way is big parties big eating and loud talking others who think the Tongan Way is going to church, humility, quite opinions and obeying your husband...(no understanding?? 4/09/99)  

The best effort at summing up from a Tongan perspective on 'culture' per se are to be found in a quite short thread in the now offline Tongan History Forum. In reply to an initial post entitled 'What is the Tongan Way?' by a "second-year anthropology student [having] some difficulties understanding the Tongan way" the poster calling themselves 'Tongan Way?' takes four pages to respond. This writer does not see her/his representation of all the various "notions and practices" (ibid) that constitute the 'Tongan Way' as separate from her/his own situation and beliefs (as a practising Christian):

... I love my new life style as well, a western individual (trying hard hahaha), a different independence, a wider range of guarantees for the future, unrestricted by cultural expectation (albeit western culture, which is basically whatever I want to be my culture), career/educational opportunities (opportunities that are no doubt in Tonga as well but with strings attached here and there). Life is simpler overseas (others see it the other way around). For myself being overseas it doesn't matter so much who I am or who my parents are, or what station of life I am at etc. just that I am. And I want this for my children and theirs. And what of the gangs to which children devoid of cultural identity seem to flow to? ...I have no solutions..... I don't think one needs to affiliate with any group in order to find identity or fulfilment although this works perfectly for some (good on them). (Tongan Way?, 20/04/99)  

Moreover she begins with an important caveat:

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95 I define my own identity, in reply to Weekly Discussion Topic #58: What is "Tongan? is the Definition Changing? (KB Admin, 8/11/98, KB, no longer on server)
96 In Reply to Weekly Discussion Topic #56: Too Much Chlorine In The Gene Pool? (KB Admin, 18/10/98, KB, no longer on server).
97 in reply to Tongan Way, on its way out, (Christian, 4/09/99), initial post, at http://pacificforum.com/kavabowl/kc/messages/48340.html
98 posted by John Michel (20/04/99, KB, no longer on server)
99 Hello John Michel, in reply to initial post, no longer on server.

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Here are some thoughts on the Tongan way. I'm afraid I couldn't answer your question directly because I kept straying all over the place. I thought I'd post this anyway, hoping you would glean what you needed yourself." (Tongan Way? 1/05/99)

The following distillation of other conversations that further trace some of these on/offline 'strayings' from both the KB and the KR bear the above inter/subjective demarcations in mind. In contrast to the other three other chapters in this section, the rest of this chapter will treat these traversals as a series of movie 'stills', snapshots if you will, of the enormous variety of cultural 'recitations' that comprise the (cyber)spatial practices of identity formation for communities.

**Appeasing Two (or more) Cultures: We make do as we go** 100

Concerns with cultural preservation vis-à-vis processes of "assimilation and acculturation" (Mafua, 9/09/97) 101 punctuate the lifespan of these forums for parents and children alike, conscious attempts from the forum moderators to raise debate on such issues notwithstanding (Aiono 1999: interview). Even as ultimate definitions are resisted in most of these discussions and the permeability of biology admitted, diasporic generations from the South Pacific are constantly having to deal with the specificities of self/group identification as processes of loss and/or acquisition - "retained or discarded" (Mafua op cit) - vis-à-vis dominant 'Western' culture. These inner tensions, defiant stances and/or conscious celebrations are the result of personal choice (active cultivation or rejection of said traditions) as much as circumstances. These can entail being part of a clearly defined diasporic community, being isolated whilst studying, being brought up in a predominantly palangi setting or being relatively privileged in terms of education and/or employment. As Soakai, who made the above observation in one of the first Kava Bowl Weekly Discussion Topics back in 1997, no culture stands still, let alone when it is being practised elsewhere. Furthermore, when assumptions and predominant practices belong to others, there "is no text book solution to our journey" (Soakai, 9/09/98 op cit).

Everyday embodiments are never far away from 'culture' as the reconstructions covered so far show. In 2000, a (Tongan) regular asks on the Kamehameha Roundtable.

Is it wrong for me to want to preserve my culture?.. and in so doing so does that mean I will also want to preserve my race? Does that sound racist? (gp, 16/11/00) 102

In answering this, Meilakepā (another regular) prefaces his reply;

Good subject gp. But first of all, preserving one's culture does not necessarily mean having to marry within the race. But I think marrying within the race would be a natural result of trying to preserve culture. But let me lay some foundation and context first.  
And I specifically reserve this opinion to many of us who grew up overseas where the risk of losing one's culture is most pronounced..... (Meilakepā, 17/11/00) 103

The way Meilakepā continues encapsulates the ins and outs of a complex set of (diasporic) practices, 'making-do's' everyday choices, and positions for the longer term:

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100 *Here's my farthing's worth* (Soakai (9/09/97) in reply to *Weekly Discussion Topic #11: POLY CULTURE & TRADITION: When living overseas, what cultural elements should be/are retained and what should/are being discarded in favour of elements from the new environment?* (KB Admin, 8/09/97, KB, no longer on server).

101 *In Weekly Discussion Topic #11: POLY CULTURE & TRADITION: When living overseas, what cultural elements should be/are retained and what should be/are being discarded in favour of elements from the new environment?* (KBAdmin, 8/09/97, KB, no longer on server)


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By definition, growing up in a different society puts at risk the contrasts of our native culture with our adopted culture and society. I grew up in the United States. My parents grew up in Tonga. I grew up in a nuclear family, at least relative to my parents' youth where theirs was an extended family upbringing (I have an extended family here too, at least in comparison to my American friends, but the "extension" is not as extensive for me as it was for my parents in Tonga). The morals of the States are geared toward personal independence and freedom of expression. The Tongan society is more restricted in what one can and should say or do, and that the young are subservient to the old, men subject to the ceremonial fiat of the women, religion is all-encompassing, etc.

So as a Tongan male living in the United States, I will ALWAYS be American. It is where I grew up and absorbed during my formative years.

But there are MANY aspects of Tongan society and culture that I have missed while growing up in the States. Do I want to regain them while in the States? Can I do so despite my obviously Americanized bent? Yes, I think so.

I think it is important to retain our native culture so far away from our little islands. For if we do not, our children will be even less "islander" than us. Eventually, we will eventually melt into the culture and society of our adopted country. That may be fine to some, but I respectfully prefer otherwise... (Meilakepa, 17/11/00)

But exactly what everyday practices - the constituents of this journey - are at stake? The first is clear; language and awareness or relative identification with any cultural heritage are intertwined. Without one, the other is compromised or at least has to be tempered.

A noticeable admission is my inability to speak the Tongan language. Alas, the loss of language skills dilutes many of the other cultural elements I have been able to maintain. Anyhow, there are many elements of our culture that we maintain involuntarily and unknowingly. We take for granted our attending Tongan church services and harmonizing the hymns, but we do so without even realizing that we are perpetuating our culture overseas." (Mafua, 9/09/97)

In this respect, in an early Weekly Discussion Topic on the Kava Bowl, a parent, Soakai, talks about his seven year old son's confusion over how 'Poly culture and tradition' deals with money, financial and in-kind obligations between (extended) family members and other occasions. In Tongan diasporic terms, this is a real issue we are commonly facing each day. For example, my son asked me about why I fakapale [stick money on the dancer] at the tau'olunga [fundraising dance] but give him a hard time when he asks for a dollar.... I told my son, that's part of our culture. You mean, giving money away? More explaining to do..." (Soakai, 9/09/97)

For children of mixed descent, this at-home to overseas direction is reversed. In reply to Teuila on a thread entitled Raising Afastasi Children, poorer language skills can be tempered with a conscious fostering of knowledge and openness:

I just read your response to the post on raising children who are of mix ancestry. You are a very strong woman, and I can see why PJ's family loves you very much. Your son will thank you someday for all that you have done to ensure that he knows of his Samoan culture. I wish more families would chose to raise their children in such a manner. You are so right when you say that language and culture go hand in hand. As a person who is afakasi, I thank you for being a strong sister. PJ is truly blessed to have a

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104 See above
105 In Weekly Discussion Topic #11: POLY CULTURE & TRADITION: When living overseas, what cultural elements should be/are being retained and what should/are being discarded in favour of elements from the new environment?
mommy like you. (Sweet Lilly, 2/03/01) 107

Language and rituals also have economic underpinnings as extended families exchange money and goods between the islands and host countries. In this sense online traversals intersect with material interchange that in turn have cultural significance - both celebratory and oppressive. 'Kainga' (Tonga) and 'ainga' obligations (in the form of monetary and in-kind remittances) are as much a financial burden for those living overseas as they are a form of community building and sociocultural continuity 108.

Another recurring theme around which postcolonial cultural identity now pivots is education, as a form of social status and independence. This theme is also present in the threads examined in Chapter Five. The repercussions of going away from the islands to study (Taholo Kami being a prime example) or leaving consolidated 'Poly' communities to study elsewhere in the country are emotional, financial and political as social bonds are loosened by virtue of distance, and marrying palangis, if nothing else. The tensions and misunderstandings cut both ways. One angle on these processes is provided, in good humour by a parent who is not Polynesian:

It is like this I know because I married a Tongan. You give all the family your money, you name all your kids after the family members. You make sure you go to church even if you can't understand the language...always feed your in-laws or else. And deal with them speaking their language even if you can't understand what they are saying and yes they are probably talking about you. I could go on but I'm probably telling you something you already know. Don't get me wrong I love my Tongan man but is not easy sometimes. But its worth it!!!! (Lahuablossom, 23/05/99) 109

A Celebration [or] an Instrument of subtle coercion 110

We're not so much as losing our culture, we're adapting to todays world. Think about it, do you think our aiga [extended family networks] in The Samoa's could live life the way we did for thousands of years and thousands more with the way the world is advancing? No, Samoa as with the rest of Polynesia is slowly adapting to the modern day world out of necessity! (me, 10/02/01) 111

I have said that the general tone in all this online peregrinations is celebratory, consciously constructive even as sociocultural mores are put under the microscope and questioned at length. But, in reference to my initial comments on the marginalisation under which many Pacific Island communities live in diaspora, there are a number of threads that address socio-economic deprivation, issues like gang violence and high school drop-out rates 112. And as for whether there is 'a' culture to be preserved (Morton 1996: 257 passim), whether there is 'one' identification to be opted for.

I was at Samoa just this past month, and I saw how the Western world corrupted our islands, and the big effect they have in the islands. I also see the culture desperately trying to preserve around the island, but the more influence the western world has, the worst it becomes. I think the culture doesn't even apply to me the fact that I was not born and raised in an environment where the culture didn't exist. But as an outsider

108 Here, I am skipping over an enormous area of research. Suffice it to say that the extended family has a social and an economic function, for better or for worse.
110 'Alopi Latukefu in reply to What is the Tonga Way? thread (see above)
111 we are losing some of our "original ways" in reply to TRUE POLYNESIANS thread, at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/2625.html

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looking in, I see that samoans are losing quickly their culture and it does affect the way they live, and their lifestyle they uphold. (Lucy, 14/02/01)  

To which the following replies:

I agree with you about the western influences on our small island of Samoa, however, I disagree with you about Samoa losing it's culture and most of all it's lack of morality. I'm not blind to the fact that Samoa has welcomed and adapted to alot of the western ways. I don't mind the luxuries of a foreign car and many other modern materials that the outside world has to offer. Samoans are actually moving with time and it's not a bad thing at all. I could understand your stand point regarding our culture and I must say that environment has alot to do with your views, you obviously have been away from Samoa and your visit was probably an overwhelming experience. I would surely have different perspectives about Samoa if I was living in another big country as well. My point is, Samoa/Upolu is one of the fewest islands or maybe the only one that has fully controlled of it's own lands.... We are an independent Samoa with a parliament that consists of Samoans only and also a police force headed by Samoans. Our major stores and hotels are operated and owned by Samoans..... I could go on and on but the bottom line is, I am proud of Samoa because with all the western influences, Samoa has still maintained it's grace, beauty and most it's power to maintained it's uniqueness. We have .......... well preserved faasamo customs that works hand in hand with some of our Europeans ways..etc etc..but it's still remains as a strong island nation. (SeiOriana, 16/02/01)  

Whatever the chosen focus may be, the consensus is that 'culture' is negotiable, and intersubjectively defined, over time. Specific practices may look fixed, their gender-power relations immutuable but as the poster, Tongan Way, says in conclusion:

......returning to the point which I have no doubt lost somewhere above (if I ever came close to it at all), the Tongan way encompasses the notions and practices above in various combinations. The phrase is just a fond description used by Tongans to refer to how things are done amongst themselves or in their communities. It highlights the Tongan's way perhaps as if it were the better ways (as many Tongans think). I think it is merely refers to a collection of ideals and practices that have been carried out by Tongans over the centuries, but which are not peculiar to Tongans and certainly occur in varying degrees and combinations all over the world in other cultures as well. Nevertheless the expression .. inspires in the mind and heart of the Tongan national pride (or shame), memories of Tonga and the way things were done/are done amongst Tongans, national unity (or subservience even) etc. And by the same token I guess Samoans would feel similar feelings when they extol the Samoan way, or the Indians when they speak of the Indian way [sic], or the Russians with their way and so on. My apologies if I have offended anyone. With deepest respect. (Tongan Way? 1/05/99, op cit)  

I Define My Own Identity

And as for what, whose 'identity', many participants - second/third generations - are determined to decide for themselves.

Do I think Samoans are assimilating more & more of the Western World? No for those that actually live in Samoa and Yes for those who have moved on to different countries,
USA, AUS, NZ etc.... of course we are becoming more western, why? because we have
to try and fit into the customs of the country that we have now made our new homes......
I love my culture and I am 100% Samoan, and I will try and teach my children what my
parents have taught me, but I can not say that my children will do the same for there
that's what scares me. I think it is in the individual whether our culture is passed on
to the next generation. Hope my post has not offended anyone, but just wanted to share
my true feelings about my culture and where I see it in the years to come. My Samoan
brothers / sisters it is up to us whether or not we choose to forget our culture or
remember our roots. (Dream Girl, 11/02/01)

This intersects with the culture of being an individual in your own right that goes with
growing up in the USA, or other parts of the western world, the many social and economic
divisions of everyday life there notwithstanding. What has to be negotiated is complex.
Articulations of these ins and out range from clarity:

My identity as a Tongan is too important. It's ironic that I have finally realized this after
I have become so Americanized. So at least for me, I feel that it is my obligation to my
future children (LOL) to possess as much of my native culture as possible so I can pass
it along. I want my children and their children to understand the importance and
responsibilities of the extended family, the ceremonial rites of a faikava, the identities
of my familial chiefs and leaders, the meaning of our dances, the different islands where
my family came from, the various mehikitanga aunts that will preside over my family
ceremonies, etc., etc.

Almost by necessity, this means that I will most likely marry a fellow Tongan.
For she will better understand my culture that I now so desperately want to cling to.
That doesn't mean someone outside my race could be as understanding. I just think my
chances are better with a fellow Tongan...... I hope the above made sense. I hope the
above did not offend anyone. If so, I am sorry for that. But that's my humble opinion.
(Metilakepa, 17/11/00)

These contrast with the effect of hardship:

My parents migrated from Tonga to the United States in the early 60's. Here they
worked adamantly to provide food, education, shelter, clothing and all the necessities of
life for their own children and others' who came from the Island with no family or
means of support here. I being one of the younger of their children did not get to see the
full impact of the LONG SUFFERING they had to endure. My parents worked avidly to
ensure they could give their children a better future. My father worked full time being
paid close to $2. per hour and then had a side job of Gardening/Landscaping ('iate),
while my mother was a Housemaid. My parents instilled in us, their children the values
of hard work, respect, culture, and dignity. We live in the very home they purchase
some 32 years ago. My parents are both retired and live comfortably. This is not to say
that we are well off....Because I was born and raised here in America...I can say that I
have had the best of both worlds! While Tongan was the first language in the home, I
learned English from my older siblings and then in Elementary School. I read, write,
and speak FLUENTLY the Tongan and English language. My life is enriched because I
have both cultures. While my parents struggled with the American Ways that seem so
TABU to our TONGAN CULTURE and TRADITIONS, they learned quickly that they
had to integrate the two..... I don't make this all out to sound like we haven't faced one
bit of agony, trouble or strife....there were plenty of those along with the traditional
tongan upbringing, but things changed over the years. (I've got the best of both worlds!,
17/08/98)

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116 Answers to your Questions in reply to TRUE POLYNESIANS thread, at
117 in Is it wrong for me to want to preserve my culture? thread at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/
kamehameha2000-2/1681.html
118 in reply to Weekly Discussion Topic #50 (The Big Five-Oh!): Poly Kids...Does Trying To Appease
What the governing characteristics of cultural identity are varies from poster to poster. Some see racially constructed physical characteristics as tantamount and others not. These differences in standpoint and experience propel the disagreements but also show onlookers also how pragmatic articulations of culture/ethnicity/race really are at the everyday level. The gender-power politics come from either their fixing and resistance to that or their fluidity, and the gender-power relations entailed. By whom and for whom. The situation does matter and being overseas is the governing one in these cases, with being in the internet/www another dimension to this.

My mother is of German/Irish blood and I am proud to say that I am privileged to have a rich heritage from three strong nations of people. Perhaps some of you may scoff at me for having pride in such a 'diluted' bloodline, however does being a half Tongan make me any less Tongan than a full Tongan? What does it mean to be a Tongan anyway? Do I have to have tapas on my walls and attend every single wedding, funeral, birthday party, and pay homage to the touring royalty in order to prove that I am Tongan? Does the amount of blood that runs through my veins constitute how Tongan I am or not? I think not. (Tupou Fifita, 28/10/98)

Diasporic self/group identity formation and various other sorts of (national, religious, hierarchical) identifications also operate through the way the term 'Polynesian' is used throughout the life of these forums, both separately and together. A loose term that by 2001 has established a currency and a representational political resonance all of its own - on their own terms. The point to remember is that how it works here is according to the members of these communities themselves. The mobile (cyber)spaces and constitutive practices also belong to them as countermands to the dominant and repressive representations by all-knowing, all-seeing experts (de Certeau 1986, Dufour 2001, Hau'ofa 1987). What these threads are attesting to is that more often than not, the latter are just telling absolute lies, or else they are spouting theories that [are] completely irrelevant to the real situation.... (Hereniko/Duff 1999:121).

In short, representations of cultural identity are sites of political struggle and the self/group identifications that interact and interchange with these are textual and corporeal spatial practices embedded in the gender-power relations of everyday life.

Proudly Countering Categories: Becoming 'Polynesian'

It's interesting how you can creatively use language for yourself, make new connections and symbolisms.....Although you may have trouble with the history behind the word "polynesian," other polynesians do not because they have redefined it for themselves. (Brown Sugar, 26/11/00)

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Two Cultures Have You Between A Rock And A Hard Place? (KB Admin, 16/08/98, no longer on server)
119 in reply to Weekly Discussion Topic #56: Too Much Chlorine In The Gene Pool? (KB Admin (18/10/98, KB, no longer on server).
120 This is a reference to Helen Morton's study of childhood, Becoming Tongan: An Ethnography of Childhood (1996) in which she emphasises the socialisation processes during childhood that delineate Tongan forms of selfhood and intersubjectivity. This last set of threads indicate a comparable albeit nascent process, a conscious attempt to articulate the multiplex processes of socialisation for postcolonial diasporic generations. Much more study needs to be done of course but Morton's term is apposite for these online articulations of the "relationship between the individual and society" (1996:7) in a certain context and at the intersection of different meanings of the 'social' and the 'individual'. See Figure One for another, less optimistic take on constructions of the 'Polynesian body' (Teaiwa 1999).
The word Polynesian is better than being called savages as we have been. (Proud Polynesian, 1/12/00)  

These two interventions engage directly with the politics of language. They take as a given the precept that racialised, ethnic and/or cultural categories are socially embedded, which in turn impinge upon lived and re-lived lives. They understand that how things are represented matter for how the respective gender-power relations are configured, for locating where political agency can operate. Such statements are not made to prove an academic point (about the constructed-ness of any 'reality', the political purchase of all manner of discourse, that language mediates social relationships) but come from direct experiences of how everyday life is delimited by the gender-power relations of meaning-making, of which categories are a prime example. The ones at stake for these groups are the three terms - Polynesia, Melanesia, Micronesia - used to designate the multifarious Pacific Island sociocultural and physical geographies. The terms are part of the Cartesian mental and geographic maps of European colonisers and scholars. They have delimited the way the Pacific Islands have been studied and charted ever since the 18th century. There are many indigenous political activists, postcolonial anthropologists and commentators who resist the reified divisions contained in the division of the Pacific Islands into Melanesia (Fiji for example), Polynesia (Tonga, Samoa, New Zealand) and Micronesia. Centuries of Pacific traversals bear witness to these boundaries being very permeable (Ward 1999, Hau'ofa 1993). Nevertheless the terms have stuck as a shorthand for the difference between the various societies of the South Pacific. Racial/ethnic and sociocultural distinctions are seen to follow these directional ones.

Tonga and Samoa belong to the 'Polynesian' group of Pacific Islands. When they are not being referred to as distinct societies, they are both referred to as Polynesian, regarded in their similarities as opposed to their differences. This moving in and out of distinction and commonality should be evident from a number of the interventions cited so far. Most of the time it is the distinctiveness of Samoan vis-à-vis Tongan ways of life, histories, and thereby identities that are the main focus or preoccupation. Not surprising when the participants hail from the respective society. Added to this is the 'historical rivalry' between these islands, a relationship that relates to Tongan rule of Samoa and Fiji in a former era. Nowadays, some of this 'ancient rivalry' has been transmuted into competing gangs, awkward counter-prejudices and, arguably, sporting contests. Online these are articulated in various ways, either through the initial posts or during the course of threads. And as already shown, some are less light-hearted than others. The point to remember here is not only how being 'Polynesian' entails solidarity in the face of commonly shared discrimination and marginalisation in places like Salt Lake City, South Auckland or Long Beach, Los Angeles but also how it is becoming a trope for future ideal representations of diasporic identities/identifications 123. This is an identity-formation in the making that relates to the younger generations of the Pacific Islands diaspora and also to the influence these open exchanges online have in building bridges between and within distinct groups (Kami 2001; interview). Positions on the meaning and politics of the designation *Polynesian* range from outright objection to the term given its colonialist undertones:

And why call ourselves Polynesian, that's a mouthful and the word Polynesian comes from butchers who killed us with their weapons and hazardous diseases. I, myself am Tongan, no more, no less, and I think people should just state whether they're Hawaiian, Hamo, Maori, Fijian, Tahitian, etc. Enough of this Polynesian bs [bullshit]. (Don't you all agree, 30/12/00) 124

Today we have the word, which thus describes us - Polynesian. Poly meaning many,

122 The word binds us as a people. . . . in reply to above thread, at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/1886.html
123 And for Europeans wondering where such discussions look beyond the Antipodes, they correlate to debates in the EU what 'European' identity vis-à-vis its constituent national cultures - Dutch, French, German. Newcomers like Turkey and Greece and the Central European states are putting the cat amongst the pigeons of this historically constructed commonality.
124 Why is Pacific Islander and Asian always lumped together - hence Asian-Pacific Islander, shouldn't Pacific Islander be its own category??? (initial post, KR, no longer on server.)
and nesos meaning islands. I resent being called that by my fellow brethren as well as outsiders, and allowing them to be called and call themselves that. How can we adopt the name given to us by this butcher? If anyone can contrive a better name, I give them my highest regards. (~ALOJAH-, 25/11/00) 125

To a conscious dismissal of these concerns as irrelevant and moreover divisive for diasporic realities:

This is such a needless discussion thread. Such hypersensitivity over the word "Polynesia" is ridiculous. (Meilakepa, 26/11/00) 126

category schmategory!.. by the time applications or any kind of questionnaire gets caught up in how to differ us all racially, people will be bitching about dividing us by hair color.. (afatasi_girl., 5/07/00) 127

But mostly the responses to such queries are laconic. Whilst acknowledging the colonial origins of these nomenclatures for the Pacific Islands peoples, they opt to step over and through these epistemological boundaries in order to get on with life:

YOU GOTTA UNDERSTAND SON, THE 'WHITE MAN' COMES UP WITH WAYS TO MAKE LIFE LESS COMPLICATING ... SAD BUT TRUE... BY THE WAY IM, HALF SAMOAN AND HALF TONGAN *hehehehehehehe*
(BrAnd-NuBiAn...get a LIFE!!!, 3/07/00)

relish in the thought that we have an identity, and a legacy that is unrivalled. You are dwelling on the negative...there is more to life...be happy! (Fataai, 26/11/00) 128

Others go further than this though as they look to create new, more empowering meanings and thereby identifications. In this way 'Polynesian ' operates as a trope for future ideals and attitudes either for oneself or with others when living as a minority:

When I meet a Polynesian, and it doesn't necessarily mean 'of one specific islander', I am always proud to greet them and talk with them. When my kids see an Islander, they always say 'Mommy, is that our cousin?' and I think that is so special that they recognise their own kind. I am a proud Tongan, female, mother of 4 beautiful Boys, and I have a Great Tongan husband who loves his culture. We are proud to be part of Polynesia, and we all have the love, pride and joy that makes up Polynesian people!! I think that's what makes Polynesia a unique place to be part of. Thank you for your time. (Ika Vailea, Vancouver, USA, 1998)

As we take on our new identities, in New Zealand, Australia, or where ever we may be, remember our roots, our family trees...A Polynesian...thank you God for making me (Richard Wolfgramm, Salt Lake City, USA, 1998) 129

These conscious recalibrations of erstwhile racialised designations of cultural difference (Haraway 1992, Ashcroft et al 1998: 60-62) are evident right from the early years of these

126 confusing and hypersensitive, in reply to initial post (see above), at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/1828.html
127 in reply to Why is Pacific Islander and Asian always lumped together - hence Asian-Pacific Islander, shouldn't Pacific Islander be its own category? posted by Don't you all agree (30/06/00, KR, no longer on server).
128 Rejoice.. in reply to I dislike the term Polynesian initial post by Alojah (25/11/00) at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/1825.html
129 Two of the entries in the Polycafe's Polynesiana Contest in 1998, instigated to find out how people define 'Polynesia'.
forums. The distinctly Tongan Kava Bowl and the deliberate aim to develop a 'Poly' tone of the (Samoa-based) Polynesian Cafe notwithstanding, when asked, participants posit 'Polynesian' as much a synonym for Tongan and/or Samoan as it is a feeling [that] gives a whole new meaning to our many different cultures which all polynesian islands, whether we are from Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, Micronesia, Tahiti, New Zealand and many others ...(Margaret Vailoa Tavai Taugavaau, 1998)  

It is as much about specificity as it is about similarity and when growing up elsewhere, the power of mutuality in a world that is defined by change, our ability to assimilate the best of new cultures while holding onto traditional values is a source of strength for the Polynesian community. We are survivors.....(Sau Tagaloa Jr, 1998)  

Being 'Polynesian' includes being from a part of the world that is quite unknown and very scattered among the different islands yet we as 'polynesians' have a system of cohesiveness that bonds us together. We all share common attitudes and practices that allow us to relate to one another.... We also carry within us certain distinguishing physical features from being built big and broad to our very flat noses, from the light skinned to the darker complexioned. (Jude Chun, 1998)  

What is happening as all these facets of inter/subjectivity and the concomitant practices of everyday lives get written out, challenged, and reiterated online is a shift from strictly semantic arguments about what constitutes said race/ethnicity/culture - any particular 'identity' tout court - to conscious ideal representations for the future. After all, younger generations of any diaspora do not necessarily identify with the cultural practices and conventions of their elders in a strict sense. Far from it  

Whence the personal and familial conflicts that get articulated in these forums as participants deal with various expectations from all quarters. How these issues get resolved for each poster in her/his everyday life and irrespective of the future of these online forums vis-à-vis that of the internet/www, the emotional investment in these discussions, as with other themes covered here, is clear. The political economic ramifications for postcolonial identity formation are embedded in the specificities of life in the islands and/or in diaspora. Nevertheless, countless references to the notion of respect, extended family ties, community, Christian spirituality, various forms of material and moral mutual obligation, and above all 'pride' return again and again. And they are seen to operate in tandem with change and movement in the very same; at least this is the consensus that emerges from the participants themselves when asked to reflect on what constitutes their present and future 'identity'. In the midst of the 'oppression of the present' that is the everyday life of many Pacific Island communities in the poorer suburbs of USA, Australia, New Zealand or the 'mundane-ness' of everyday racism and covert discrimination still experienced by those who are more privileged, what is driving all these interactions is a postcolonial politics of identity that "means you have to represent where you are coming from." (Ta'alolo Mann, 1998)  

130 An entry in the Polycafe's Polynesiana Contest, 1998, no longer on server  
131 an entry in the Polycafe's Polynesiana Contest, 1998, no longer on server  
132 an entry in the Polycafe's Polynesiana Contest, 1998, no longer on server  
133 My gratitude to Alpona Dey for pointing this out so succinctly. See also the novels by Hanif Kureshi for a British Asian angle to this inter-generational 'culture clash' that can take unpredictable forms.,  
134 An entry in the Polycafe's Polynesiana Contest, 1998, no longer on server
Conclusion: Looking to the Future

[It] depends which perspective you take (inside looking on inside, diaspora looking from outside in, diaspora looking from outside at the outside, inside looking at the diaspora, outsider looking at the diaspora from the outside, outsider looking at the effect of the diaspora on the inside etc.). As you can see a very complex question (Alopi Latukefu, 2/05/99)  

It [Polynesian] literally means 'many islands'. Personally, Polynesian to me means to become as one, UNITY. Contrast[ed] to its literal meaning, to become as one (UNITY). ...Especially in today's world where many Polynesians are scattering throughout the world, I strongly believe that Polynesians have a longing to unite and become as one (nullima, 1998)

In these forums, meanings of Polynesian/Tongan/Samoan move beyond racialised genetic codes into futurist tropes for multiplex identifications based on plurality and adaptability. Whilst some may hold onto clear lines of distinctiveness in the face of discrimination and/or isolation and others seek to traverse these as a way to resolve tension, the ideals and hopes being expressed are very much on their own terms. As one regular says, "there is no text book solution to our journey" (Soakai (9/09/97).

Threaded through all these 'strayings' about self/group identity formation are three ideals for the future. The first is the notion of solidarity, to be achieved by practising 'love and respect'. The second is a claim for the right to be differentiated rather than absorbed (see Chapter Nine). The third is a conscious working with the symbolic power of counter-representations for communities and groups that suffer ingrained stereotypes in their new homelands. For

a 'virtual ethnic community' such as [the KB/Polycafe] can express its 'alterity' despite the non-physicality of the medium. Any internet user group is only accessed by those interested; that is the nature of this form of communication. However, the fact there is a recognisable Tongan [Samoan / Polynesian] site on the Internet vastly increases the opportunities for interactions between Tongans and between Tongans and non-Tongans. It also enables the Tongans on the KB to represent themselves, in all their diversity, challenging stereotypes and resisting the typically limited representations of them, for example in their 'traditional' dancing at multicultural festivals. (Morton 1998a:21)

That these representational limits and appropriations come from both within the respective societies and their diasporic communities as well as from further afield simply underlines the complexity of any 'identity', lest of those that have been forged under the auspices of the colonialist project.

To conclude this last chapter, and as a way of starting to pull all the threads from this one and the preceding two together, these themes are articulated online as follows. First, Polynesian can denote solidarity, a political response to others' naming by claiming it as

....our own name for ourselves ..... [it] simply means human being as does many other indigenous self labels. We as Polynesian Tangata Whenua, people of the land need to achieve some sort of political, spiritual unity to be able to claim back polynesia as our own from the overstayer nations like France and America etc. I believe the names that we call our selves only serve to divide us and are the oppressors tools. We should celebrate our differences as well as our similarities.....Its alright to get on with it when

135 In reply to What is the Tongan Way? posted by John Michel (21/04/99) on the Tongan History Association Forum, Kavabowl, no longer on server.
137 Here's my farthing's worth, in reply to Weekly Discussion Topic #11: POLY CULTURE & TRADITION: When living overseas, what cultural elements should be/are retained and what should be/are being discarded in favour of elements from the new environment? (KB Admin, 8/09/97, KB, no longer on server).

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yours is the dominant culture whose democratic systems will ensure that you stay in power. Its easy enough to get on with it when you own all the stolen land. Its easy to get on with it when your cultural ideals are the only ones that are valued in society. (supa*maori*fulla, 17/10/00) 138

And as the latter part of the above points out, this does not preclude differentiation. Cultures tout court are not monochrome, identities are not gender-free monisms, and 'race' also can, arguably, be reclaimed (albeit with difficulty):

...let me take a stab. You're having trouble merging your two identities together. And make no mistake about it, you have two identities. One is your race, and the other is your nationality. You're Samoan by race, but New Zealander by nationality. Your skin is brown, but your mind set is that of a westerner. Your roots are Polynesian, but your values are probably European in nature. This is a struggle that many young poly's struggle with. How to reconcile the differences in the two cultures. It's fine when living back in the islands. But when we have to exist in western society, we must find a way of bringing the two cultures together, where one is not suppressing the other.

But before you can assimilate yourself into the Samoan culture, you must ask yourself this question: Why? Is it a fad? Is it pressure? You have to look at the culture from a Samoan perspective, not a western one. You have to respect it, even on aspects you don't agree with.

But it can be done. It's a constant balancing act, but its mostly a case of trial and error. You talk to other Samoans about their experiences and then you pick out what works for you and give it a try. (Bevo, 1/03/01) 139

As for countering incipient cultural/racial stereotypes and given the cyber(spatial) setting in which these traversals are taking place, these encounters, countermands and disputes constitute a modus operandi for everyday life in and out of the post-colonial Pacific Islands. For

if you're going to represent, then "represent to the fullest" and display your capacity to be 'loving', 'enduring', 'strong'(in mind and spirit) as well as "intellectually stimulating". I remember something my mom always said, "Ai ma'u pe keke lava'i ho'o loto"(handle your feelings or emotions; and what she meant by that was to not allow your feelings or turmoilod emotions to direct how you handle yourself w/ others. (Flexible Ta'ahine op cit)

Inter/subjectivity practised online, and by implication offline by postcolonial diasporas straddles these fixed 'places' and 'practised spaces' by choice and circumstance. That is the whole point for the younger posters - where one ends and the other begins. By this I mean to say that in these conversations, which permeate and emerge from the others, categories like race, gender, and culture are aired, stretched, disaggregated and then dispensed with as people insist upon being able to live life on their own terms, to be allowed to cut loose from such categorisations and salvaged from reified dichotomies. These debates are not exercises in semantics, even as there is lots on terms and their meanings. Rather they are a way of (re)articulating everyday life and experience in a diasporic, postcolonial and at times, downright discriminatory environments. The latter can be the work of the dominant western 'self' when relating to 'his other' or from within Samoan-Tongan-Polynesian communities.

To my mind, and without ignoring some deep-seated tensions and disagreements between these online groups, let alone the political economic and sociocultural divisions that exist between them and their broader societies on the ground, I would venture to say that these online traversals have been redrawing the 'cyberscapes' of the internet/www before our very eyes. They have been doing so on their own terms and with more than a vague awareness of the

138 *maori are polynesian* in reply to *DO ALL MAORIS CONSIDER THEMSELVES POLYNESIAN?* posted by hak a (28/09/00) at http://polycafe.com/kamehameha/kamehameha2000-2/1243.html
broader political economic issues that are at stake. Before returning to these shortly, coming 'back down to earth' relatively speaking, this last quote (taken from quite early on in these forums' lifespans) articulates the postcolonial politics of representation at work here as well as any other:

much respect and love to each one of you tongans, samoans, fijians, hawaiians, etc., etc., from san fran, inglewood, oakland, glendale, provo, slc, euless—what-ever-point-of-the-map-you're-located-on—because-you're-still-a-poly-in-my-eyes....(lillian, 17/09/98) 140

Along with the discussion content itself, this sociocultural production processes, online/offline movements and interpersonal interactions also trace 'moral economies', which have their own online gender-power hierarchies. How these operate through these sorts of intense discussions and, in turn, are decided upon along the way will be dealt with in the next chapter. Crisscrossing these discussions, is a postcolonial politics of (online) representation over how disputes, unresolved differences in themselves, and the related issues of (un)acceptable standards of (online) behaviour. This directly relates to setting a good example, both for 'wayward' youth offline and online and in this case, where the "whole world is watching".

140 In reply to Weekly Discussion Topic # 52: Poly Violence...Heritage, Or Hate? (KB Admin , KB, 14/09/98, no longer on server).
Figure Nine: From Netiquette to Moral Economies

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1 The legal disclaimer for the Polynesian Cafe, at http://polycafe.com/cafepatio.htm
2 'Greetings' in five of the Pacific Island languages; Fijian, Tongan, Samoan, New Zealand Maori, Hawaiian respectively.
3 The Kava Bowl's disclaimer, at http://pacificforum.com/kavabowl/legal.html