MODES OF ASSOCIATION AND DIFFERENTIATION IN MAURITIUS: AN ACCOUNT OF IDENTITY IN A SITUATION OF SOCIO-CULTURAL HETEROGENEITY

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Modes of Association and Differentiation in Mauritius: An Account of Identity in a Situation of Socio-Cultural Heterogeneity.

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I, Mils Hills, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 107,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

date 10th of January 1999 signature of candidate

I was admitted as a research student in October 1995 and as a candidate for the degree of Ph.D. in Social Anthropology; the higher study of which this is a record was carried out in the University of St. Andrews between October 1995 and August 1998.

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I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of ......................... in the University of St. Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

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Abstract

This Thesis details the anthropological investigation of socio-cultural heterogeneity in Mauritius, a small island republic in the Indian Ocean. I introduce the island, its population, climate and other salient features in the Introduction, where I also reveal something of the author’s intentions, interests and ideology.

Although Mauritius has been relatively infrequently written about by anthropologists or other social scientists, when Mauritian social diversity has been discussed it has been conducted on the presumption that difference is synonymous with division. Consequently, in Chapter 1, I develop a critique of this assumption, which has found its way into the texts and discourses of both sociologists and state bureaucrats. I collapse these two categories’ products into one, by drawing upon Foucault’s notion of ‘governmentality’, and critique widespread views of Multiculturalism as being founded on the alleged coevalness of difference and division. I also introduce my three main analytical tools: intersubjectivity, transcendence and creolization.

Chapter 2 portrays individuals’ identity, agreeing that at times those Mauritians that I met did draw divisions between one another, but that this was far from predictable, nor universally practised. Chapter 3 continues this project, by focusing on specific forms of the expression of division, but again I highlight the unanticipated nature of division and difference. Chapter 4 further clouds the picture by noting that even where individuals might be thought to be unproblematically employing ethnic - or caste - based strategies in, for example, the workplace, the use of such tools was again unforeseeable, and not always successful. Even where they were successful in securing advantage, there are wider costs not previously noted in the ethnographic record.

Chapter 5 is the culmination of my argument. Through a fine-grained portrayal of a number of ethnographic moments, I point up the unifying and shared practices which have hitherto been excerpted from ethnographic accounts of Mauritius (or other ‘plural’ societies). These unifying features are as relevant to my understanding of Mauritian society as divisions, I claim, and I reflect on the contrast between ‘banal’ unities and governmental notions of Multiculturalism.

The Conclusion draws together the threads of the Thesis and charts where it fits in terms of wider anthropological and political trends.
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   You’ve given me all, that for me is all there is;
   So now I just give back what you have given -
   If there is anything to give in this.

We must always aim at the bull’s eye - although we know that we will not always hit it.

   - Goethe.

Mauritius.

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Paradise Explored

As the metal monster of the sky ranged further,
And once distant lands grew only hours away,
Our traveller found himself no nearer Paradise.

He came upon a corner of the world its people said
Was Paradise on earth. Nought but a dot, the ocean
Snorted, where ragged mountains once spumed forth.

The sea lazed gently, safe within its coral fort,
Towards unending sand. He could walk for hours
Meeting only the eyes in passing strangers’ faces,

Open faces speaking curiosity, wanting to know more
But acknowledging his right to be alone if he so wished,
Even when they ached for friendship.

Thousands of fish swam beneath his mask, and he,
Cradled by the sea’s warmth, bathed in like tranquillity.
At noon, he sprawled beneath the trees out of the sun.

Men and boys he met would want to pass the time
And chat awhile: a democratic beach
Where sand and sun and sea and air were free.

Michel Gautier.¹

¹ In Butlin 1997: 75.
Preface

From the cabinet he [a Samoan guide] chose a large fish head dressed in boiled green bananas and put it in front of me. Unfortunately I don’t like bananas and the fish head looked rather revolting, so I was at a loss to know what to do.

‘Surely you don’t expect me to eat this?’ I said, trying not to look disgusted.

-Naomi Jones (travel writer).

I believe that anthropologists have the ability to be special people. Shweder holds that whilst other individuals, such as travel writers (above) become horrified, outraged, condescending or merely bored with the difference and strangeness of others, anthropologists manifest only ‘astonishment’ (1991: 1). There are probably many anthropologists who do not react solely with astonishment, but I am amongst those who tries to maintain this response. Astonishment is a positive sentiment, separate from - and even opposed to - incomprehension. I found nothing in my field experiences which was hard to believe. I attended, saw and heard of many events which certainly challenged taken-for-granted ideas with which I had approached Mauritius; but I was never at a loss to understand why, for example, someone would give offerings to a Hindu God or take part in a physically punishing pilgrimage. This, I believe, is the attitude with which the anthropologist must approach fieldwork. It is not a question of being gullible (a ‘cultural dope’), rather that one is, as I glossed it in my field notes at the time, ‘open-minded’.3 If one isn't open-minded, one runs the risk of never comprehending. I found that being open-minded gave me new dimensions of insight into both myself and Mauritius (judged by my ongoing conversation with the ethnographic corpus). This open-mindedness is grounded in the type of humanism espoused by Schutz, who argues that certain features are ‘common to all social worlds because they are rooted in the human condition’ (1970: 79). Beginning with such a premise means that however strange and astonishing, at first sight, another's social practices, these are only different by degree rather than in kind. Astonishment yields to empathy, to comprehension and, perhaps, even admiration. This is, I believe, the historical aim of anthropology outwith the discipline’s unfortunate linkage with colonialism. In the post-modern world,

ethnography is an object of meditation that provokes a rupture with the commonsense world and evokes an aesthetic integration whose therapeutic effect is worked out in the restoration of the commonsense world (Tyler 1986: 134).

2 In Griffiths PJ et al. 1989: 51.
3 I used traditional remedies; I made offerings at temples said to be the most powerful; I said prayers for new friends and families; I was presented with statuettes of Hindu gods to which I make offerings still. I do not necessarily believe, but I do not disbelieve either.
This Thesis outlines a very personal journey which draws therapeutic conclusions from the study of other human beings. The Thesis has several aims, but as a guiding principle just one message: that ethnography is never complete. My main bone of argumentative contention is with those anthropologists, and others, that have published on Mauritius and have attempted the construction of an holistic, representative world in words which is significantly dissimilar to my experience of Mauritius and distorting of my understandings of the practices of those Mauritian individuals with whom I came to know, and with which this thesis is mainly concerned. Throughout, I am motivated by what Joanna Overing has described as ‘analytic self-awareness’ (1975: x), and in this Preface I attempt to explore the implications of this awareness.

1 IN A SMALL HALL, a carpet has been laid on the wooden floor at one end. Sitting cross-legged on the carpet is a priest dressed in white shirt and dhoti, presiding over several trays of offerings. Some time later he lights a fire of sandalwood chips. This is the Zoroastrian navjote ceremony of initiation. During the ensuing ceremony, the initiate child is invested with a sacred undershirt (sudreh) and a special cord (kushti). Before the ceremony, the child undergoes a nahn (bath) prior to entering the company of the priests. There is an audience of some seventy people in the room. Most of the women are wearing saris with red tikka marks between the eye-brows. Most are of Asian ethnic origin, although there are several white women married to members of the Zoroastrian community, and the majority of them wear saris too. There is also a small group of un-related whites who have come into contact with this family through schooling and sit, mostly uncomfortably and self-consciously, on the margins of the gathering.

The ceremony is a highly significant one to the community, and there are many family members and friends taking photographs and video-taping the hour-long rite. Once the ceremony is concluded, everyone - except some of the British schoolteachers - eats the celebratory meal of chappati bread, tandoori chicken and vegetable curry rounded off by Indian sweets - and then joins the throng on the disco-floor (which has replaced the priest, his offering and fire).

4 ‘Traditional’ Indian trousers worn by men on religious occasions, and by priests all of the time.
2. THE STREETS ARE CROWDED, produce spills out of shops and onto long trestle tables. Exotic fruits and vegetables, Indian sweets and snacks, clothes bargains and electronic Christmas toys draw the attention of hordes of parents and other interested onlookers.

The smells of many spices and cooking techniques mingle. Inside restaurants, men shape chappatis and slap them into a tandoor oven. Others stir vats of marinating chicken. Butchers' shops chop halal and other meats all day long. Modern, air-conditioned shops stand comfortably next to tiny cubby-holes selling knick-knacks. Travel agents compete with shops selling cheap international telephone calls - tempting thoughts of even more far-flung destinations. The whole town is busy from early morning to long after dark, with constant flows of busses bringing in more and more shoppers of all ethnic groups, religions and characteristic dress: Sikh turbans, Hindu saris, Muslim hats. Cars sporting the flags of many nations or territories pass by, often with their respective musics left in the vehicle's wake. There seem to be more Mercedes and BMWs than one might have expected. Walking along the streets, one is frequently stopped by friendly fellow shoppers, explaining that they come to this town every month or so just to catch up on what's new: 'it's like a carnival here all of the time' explains one.

3. THE HINDU BRIDE-TO-BE sits on a fenced-off, flower-bedecked and colourfully lit square stage, with torrential rain beating down outside and the wind flapping the large tent (salle vert) which contains the scene. It is the ceremony of Haldi, or Saffron, and a priest officiates by saying the appropriate prayers and then guiding the bride's siblings, married female relatives and parents in officially saying unconcerned or tearful goodbyes to her, and painting turmeric solution (Haldi) onto her face. There is an audience of several hundred family, friends and neighbours sitting inside the surrounding tent of green tarpaulin interspersed with the colours of the national flag: green, blue, yellow and red. A small band to the left sings and plays traditional folk and modern Hindi film-music enthusiastically.

All of the women are wearing bright, colourful and luxurious saris, whilst the men are mainly in shirt-sleeves with perhaps a blazer for younger, more fashionable males. I recognise one of the Prime Minister's bodyguards, athletic, tall, close-cropped hair; sharp in a dog-tooth check jacket. I nod at him, and he nods back - we've seen each other before.

A professional video-cameraman records both the guests and the ceremony for posterity and repeated watching on winter's days. The acrid smell of wood-
smoke, always used for cooking on religious occasions, wafts into the main tent from the kitchen area. Later when everyone eats - in shifts - from banana leaves in an adjacent tent, they are served by members of the bride's family, the same people who have done all of the cooking. At the meal, of a variety of vegetarian curries, I sit opposite a Muslim couple.

WHAT IS IT that unites each of these ethnographic moments? I imagine that the reader will already have braided these together into some wider context, perhaps that which was predicated in the title of this Thesis. These are perhaps Mauritian dioramas to be used to discuss association, differentiation and identity in socioculturally heterogeneous Mauritius.

Is the context of these three moments, above, Mauritius?

Well, yes. In a way. In actual fact it is the Indian diaspora. Those features which I have highlighted above are constituent elements of each occasion, those which are seen to be significant by the author (the organising consciousness which lies behind this structure - drawing parallels here, making divisions there). I was surprised by the amount of BMWs and Mercedes that I saw in Mauritius. I was reassured that as families in Mauritius, London or Blackburn took lots of photographs of significant events, and sometimes asked for explanation, this meant that the anthropologist (as friend or adopted member of the family), was far from out of place when he joined in asking for explanation or taking photographs. Significantly, I was invited to all three of the above-detailed moments.

To confound the reader's automatic supposition, none of the above ethnographic moments come from either the same place or time. The first is Blackburn, Lancashire, August 1997 (a Zoroastrian confirmation ceremony). The second is Southall, London, October 1997 (seen whilst visiting Mauritian friends there). The third is a district of Curepipe, Mauritius, in December 1996 (during my fieldwork). These ethnographic moments are placed alongside each other to demonstrate that the reader approaches the text with certain expectations and precognitions. Or, as de Certeau puts it, and I will explore this line of argument in

5 Or his sociolinguistic researcher-partner Laura.
much detail below, 'in spite of a persistent fiction, we never write on a blank page, but always on one that has already been written on' (1988: 43). The concept of 'Mauritius' as a closed single site of fieldwork is false. To re-emphasise: the only closure brought to 'Mauritius' through this Thesis is my interpretation of my experiences and meetings on the island generally known as Mauritius.

The focus of this Thesis is (my understanding of) Mauritius. Simultaneously, the author (as anthropologist, as traveller, as experiencer, as author) is brought into the picture, rather than being hidden beyond it (behind the pen, laptop and camera). I am part of Mauritius both in the legacies of friendships that I have left behind and to the very core of the ‘data’ with which I have returned. Hence, and recognising that this is a departure from conventional ethnographic writing, both this Thesis and the fieldwork that runs through it and against it are perhaps best categorised as being ‘experimental’. This experimentation is not, however, merely for the sake of ‘being experimental’, but rather because I find the freedom that this stance permits allows for the more realistic portrayal of my experiences in Mauritius and beyond: through the critical synthesis of a multitude of influences. By ‘realistic’ I mean that this Thesis presents a more recognisable image to me of the Mauritius that I conducted field work in than do those other ‘Mauritiuses’ evoked by the writing of other sociologists, and to whom I will introduce the reader shortly.

By being experience-centred in my fieldwork and writing, unlike those above-mentioned scholars, I hope to have avoided Friedman’s condemnation of intellectuals who ‘by lobotomizing experience from the cultural, have also created a peaceful, even charming world for themselves, a veritable cocktail party of mixed up differences’ (1994: vii). I interpret the term ‘experimental’ to mean non-rule-bound in terms of showing any necessary inherited lineage to either previously published anthropological texts or to instructed/published guides to pursuing fieldwork and writing ethnography. And yet it is this very experimental nature which makes the Thesis ‘anthropological’; which leads me to offer this manuscript as part-fulfilment of a doctorate in Social Anthropology. In the field, as in the resultant Thesis, one has to initiate one’s own methods, recognising that what might work for one researcher and her/his personality and circumstances is not guaranteed to operate in other contexts and with other individuals.6 The main message to be underscored here is that I have pursued a personal goal in the construction of this Thesis: insisting that I stay true to my ethical standards both of conducting research and writing it up. I did not, and do not, want to annoy,

6 I am grateful here for the timely encouragement of this course of action by Nigel Rapport and, in recent conversation, Keith Hart.
embarrass or make my friends, family, hosts and informants in Mauritius at all uncomfortable.

A major constituent of my ethical stance was that I strove to be as low-key, as non-invasive, to Mauritians as possible and bore in mind Werner and Schoepfle's aim of the 'ideal ethnographer [who] studies another culture by bringing external and internal diversity to bear upon an ethnographic problem'.

This privileging of diversity means, then, that the range of approaches and influences drawn upon by the researcher can be greatly advantageous: through an openness to a number of stances, an inclusive ontological grounding and a willingness to draw from a broad range of text - oral and graphetic; academic and non-academic. A mode of operation which is as easy-going in inter-personal interaction as it is in terms of selecting other texts with which to write the details of these interactions alongside and against ...

... This stance, in principle, can - and I hope throughout this Thesis does - reveal the complexity of the lives of some Mauritian individuals. This is also my retaliation against anticipated criticism that my work lacks scienticity, replicability, objectivity and so on. I do not pretend to be scientific or objective, but - and above all - I do not lack ethical foundation. Bearing witness to the success of this stance is that I am able to return to my field location.

My brand of anthropology is one which breaks with the imposition of models on data as techniques of ordering and evoking, and instead encourages the data to suggest its own modelling processes. I break with those conventional anthropological techniques, as recently summed up by Keith Brown:

[where anthropologists do still attend to local specificities, and seek to incorporate indigenous understandings of culture and society, they tend to employ terms that are part of ordinary language; 'identity', 'ethnicity', 'nation' and 'home'. In situations where tensions already exist they increasingly find that without the protective shading of language their work, intended to stand outside local disputes, can be recycled selectively as local knowledge (1998: 161).]

Such terms are often falsely glossed as local truths; however, the reader will not find 'truths' in this Thesis, other than in the sense that I am trying to present as truthful a
picture (of my interpretations of my experiences) as possible. Definitive answers or explanations of what ‘Mauritius is’, or what ‘Mauritians are’ do not occur, nor simple *reductio ad absurdum* summations of the thinking of coherent ethnic groups. Instead the reader will find a collection of texts that alternately collide and collude with each other. It is, I will suggest, possible, but simultaneously an operation lacking intrinsic value, to produce ‘truths’ in and through text, with the aid of selective recycling amongst other techniques. This is not difficult. Truths are merely explanations that appeal to someone who shares the same stand-point about things as the author. Instead, I want to persuade the reader that the ways in which I seek to explain things are convincing; to evoke a commonality between us. I want to show that the discourses of the Mauritian state and of the previous ethnographies of Mauritius are insufficient, and that there are other ways of anthropologically discussing a socio-culturally heterogeneous society, but that these ‘other ways’ are not ‘truths’, only explanations satisfactory to the author and, I hope, persuasive to the reader. I am not translating truths from Mauritius, through this text and on to the reader, but instead highlighting alternative, local ways of doing things, and alternative ways of academically describing them, for as Overing writes:

> understanding is not of words or even of sentences and single statements, but is the communication of another way of understanding things about the world. Words and sentences fit into a particular style of reasoning that gives them meaning as they sit within a network of other words, concepts, thoughts, and actions (1985: 20).

The value of this Thesis is that it presents new and often exciting material from Mauritius which challenges a good deal of what has previously been - and is continuing to be (cf. Eriksen 1998) - written about Mauritius, especially in terms of ethnicity and identity. I want to foreground the extraordinary things that, seen from my perspective, make Mauritius distinctive. To highlight, for example, inter-ethnic and pan-religious understandings which many Mauritians accomplish on an everyday basis, and may stand in contrast to several regions of both the developing and developed worlds. My focus overall is on individual experiences of identity.

There is something special to the way and quality of life that I was able to share in Mauritius and I try to ensure that at least a sense of that specialness is communicated to the reader through this Thesis. The purpose of my research was to come to an understanding of how some few individuals identified themselves, conceptualised others and lived reasonably tranquilly everyday in a context of socio-cultural diversity in a densely-populated young nation. These individuals I later cite as ‘transcending’ divisions that one expects (having ethnographically familiarised oneself with Mauritius) to exist in all social contexts of interaction. From my experience, I suggest that a very different picture can be sketched which
acknowledges that division (ethnic, religious, caste, and so on) can be analytically relevant, but only at certain times - whereas my ethnographic peers and their, and the Mauritian state's, theses of Multiculturalism tend to claim their poly-situational relevance.

In the Introduction, which follows, I locate both Mauritius and the author in more detail, and begin to hint more directly at the ways in which I conducted my fieldwork in the Republic of Mauritius.
My problem was [...] to create an ethnography strong enough to cause disquiet in my world, but gentle enough to cause no discomfort among the people I write about.

Introduction: necessary locations

The Introduction is divided into two parts. The first introduces the reader to Mauritius, the second to the author. Both are necessary operations which permit the reader a degree of insight into both (a) the topographic, demographic and economic context of Mauritius and (b) the social realms and arenas in Mauritius which the author explored and the strategies employed to enter and write about them.

Part 1: Locating Mauritius - ‘la nation arc-en-ciel’

Images of Mauritius

9 ‘The rainbow nation’.
At Lung Yu's shop, I went to Banbu to visit it the other day [...] I saw the coconut halves still being used for bailing out ration-rice and lentils and flour and dhal and red beans and butter beans and split peas and sugar and powdered milk and coarse salt straight from the salt pans at Black River.

I saw the Chinese abacus, still being used for accounts.

I saw the old scales.

I saw bros koko, the coconut halves used for floor polishing, dancing on one foot, and brushing. I saw them hanging in a bundle from wooden beams. I saw the shopkeeper's long-armed stick for unhooking the hanging up things and bringing them down for customers to see close up.

I saw tant baskets made from dried vacoas leaves, all sizes, with and without covers, long-handled ones and short-handled ones, square ones for carrying katora to work with food in, tant rasyon for buying rice in, and tweeny ones for little children to take their slates to school in. And rice sorting vann, from woven split bamboo, or made of aluminium, for sitting around in groups of an afternoon, and throwing the rice into the air, winnowing it, sorting out the "heads" that would make the rice stodgy, throwing them to the chicken waiting at our feet.

And coconut brooms stripped of coconut leaves. For sweeping up mango leaves, and for whooshing water off the verandah. [...] I saw buckets of all sizes andreso for cooking on with charcoal, with space for an air vent underneath, big ones and small ones. All hanging up on wire hooks. And a wire basket of fresh eggs in between. And a glass box of bread rolls behind the counter. And molasses cake and gato koko, from desiccated coconut. And gato ros. And gato kanet. [...] and ready sliced processed cheese, and a can of jam. There was also a plate of zasar legim, vegetable pickle, and another of fried sheep's liver.

Lindsey Collen's *There is a Tide*, 1990: 107, 108.
The main island of the Republic of Mauritius is some 720 square miles in area. Variously described as a tiny dot floating like a leaf, a speck or a pinprick, it is found in the western Indian Ocean approximately 500 miles to the east of Madagascar. Despite its tiny size, this tropical island is a microcosm of diversity being inhabited by more than a million people who are highly heterogeneous in terms of ethnic group and religious adherence, and this diversity has everything to do with the island's colonial history.

Although Mauritius had no indigenous population, the island was known to Arab seafarers and traders at least as far back as the 5th century. The Dutch became the first to settle there in the 17th century, but did not manage to establish an extensive permanent settlement on the island. Having decided, in 1641, to bring Madagascan, and later other, peoples to Mauritius as slaves, the Dutch swiftly discovered that although they wanted the slaves to cultivate land for sugar-cane and to rear cattle, the slaves were equally keen on resisting these plans. This failure of settlement was not, as some commentators have said, because the Dutch 'lacked zeal', or suffered from cyclones or a lack of food, but rather that in spite of the imposition of ever bloodier forms of torture and death, slaves continued to rebel, burn houses and government buildings and flee into the forests.

French rule in 1715 meant a change of name, from Mauritius to Ile de France, and a vast increase in both the number of slaves imported and the use of military and legal means to keep them subdued. It was at this time that several influential Governors laid the foundations for the future prosperity of Mauritius, but foundations cast in the anguish of slaves. By the early 1800s, the population had risen from about 1,000 (of whom only 135 were not slaves) to 73,000 - of whom 80% were slaves and the rest French settlers.

In the Napoleonic Wars, Mauritius was poorly defended and Britain conquered the small French garrisons. The 1810 Treaty of Paris formally marked the French surrender of the island to Britain. One clause of this treaty left an indelible mark on the island, the assurance that French settlers (Franco-Mauritians) would be permitted to keep their customs, religions and language - as well as their property. Hence descendants of French slave-owners remain amongst the richest people in Mauritius today.

10 There are a number of dependencies and archipelagos belonging to Mauritius; e.g. Rodrigues, Tromelin, Cargados Carajos.
11 Brought from the Dutch colony of Java.
In 1835, slavery was abolished, and a new form established. Freed slaves were largely unwilling to continue working on the estates where they had been so harshly treated, and so an acute shortage of labour developed. However, as the sugar industry was expanding it was necessary for the planters to find a new source of cheap labour. They turned to another section of the British Empire, India; and so began a stream of indentured Hindu and Muslim labourers from Bihar and other poor regions to Mauritius. Between 1834 and 1910 as many as 450,000 Indians arrived in the island, although approximately one third returned to India when their work contracts expired. This was a system of labour almost as inhumane as slavery, but there were, perhaps, key differences which allowed the Indians to preserve their culture (which were denied to African and Malagasy slaves who could, for example, be punished or even killed if heard speaking their native languages or playing their traditional musical instruments). For example, Indian indentured labourers were permitted to worship their religions; celebrate their festivals and speak their own languages.

In the early years of this century, Nationalist upheavals in China, and the victory of Communist forces, forced the emigration of many Chinese merchants and they and their descendants now contribute significantly to the cultural and commercial life of Mauritius.

- Population, Density, Climate and Life

The islands of Mauritius and Rodrigues, with a total area of 1,969 sq km, have an overall population density of 576 persons per sq km. About 48% of the area is allocated to agriculture, 13% is occupied by built-up areas and 2% by public roads; the remaining consists of forests, scrub land, grasslands and grazing lands, reservoirs and ponds, swamps and rocks. As at 1st July 1997, the population of the Republic of Mauritius was estimated at 1,147,876 with 573,965 males and 573,911 females, giving a sex ratio of 100.0. Given a population of 1,133,721 as at mid-1996, the population growth during the period July 1996 to June 1997 was estimated at around 1.2%.

The population density of Mauritius is one of the highest in the world and, seen from a high point, much of the central plateau where the majority of people live is almost entirely residential (see plate 1), but Mauritius never feels crowded or claustrophobic. Indeed, even this high population density is still a long way behind

Singapore at 4,295 per square kilometre, but is significantly higher than the UK with only 238, Ireland at 53 or the USA at 27.

Most Mauritians live in urban areas, but the urban/rural distinction is not always easy to make in such a small and well-developed island. The density of population, and consequent high price of land, means that most families live close together. Hence there is intense social interaction between several generations because, literally, they live on top of each other. If the land on a plot becomes entirely occupied by an extended family’s houses, they start building upwards. Logically, when a house is built in Mauritius, provision is made in the foundations for the possibility of one, two or three stories being added at a later date. Many people build their own houses, and several of my friends had both built their houses, and fitted all of the electrical wiring, plumbing, etc., as well as making the majority of the furniture.

In terms of wealth, health, calorie intake and many other indexes, Mauritius far exceeds most of the countries of the nearest continent, Africa, and indeed Mauritians prefer to compare themselves with Europe than with either of their major heritage areas (Africa or India). With a parliamentary democracy

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15 There is no trace, other than in terms of some place names, of the Dutch colonial presence. Many people speak French as their second language (after Kreol) and it is the major language of the newspapers and other media in Mauritius, as well as of much business and governmental affairs. There are hardly any members of the English colonial administration resident in Mauritius, but the
(although not without some problems), a fairly free press, a strong average annual economic growth rate, high levels of personal safety, excellent infrastructure, public transport system, free quality healthcare, including a leading eye hospital; spectacular scenery and beaches, and quality air links to all continents - it is not surprising that Mauritius is a premier tourist destination, aided by its favourable climate, as Table 1 (below) shows.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Mauritius - Meteorological data</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily maximum temperature (°C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.3 - 31.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily minimum temperature (°C)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.5 - 24.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainfall (millimetres)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.0 - 222</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainy days</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0 - 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bright sunshine (daily hours)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1 - 8.5(^{16})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The majority of Mauritians now live in concrete houses, although as recently as 20 years ago straw houses were common, with other, richer individuals then living in wooden houses. Living in a non-expatriate, non-Franco-Mauritian area, populated by people with a range of incomes, my partner and I tended to meet people who were not members of Mauritian elites. We met people who lived comfortably but who were not rich. These were people who have, perhaps, benefited - relatively - the most from the economic development of Mauritius (see below). Parents who had no need to read and write - and worked as manual labourers and drivers (the men) or domestic servants and field-workers (men and women) - now have children who are entering the professions and Civil Service. There are exceptions: in more rural areas, many people still make their living from the land, either working on sugar cane estates or growing vegetables for sale at market (onions, aubergines, etc.).\(^{17}\)

There is a fine line to be drawn between noting the - nothing less than - fantastic standard of living of the majority of Mauritians (i.e. almost everyone has a TV, video, fridge, hi-fi; a tiny minority do not have running water or electricity), and acknowledging that some have still to benefit significantly from Mauritius' development. Pre-eminent in this regard are the Ilois, Creoles and other residents of, especially, the coastal margins of Mauritius.

The Ilois (islanders) are a diasporic group spread between the Seychelles and Mauritius.\(^{18}\) They are those individuals, and their descendants, who were violently removed from Diego Garcia. Mauritius itself is comprised of 'the islands of Mauritius, Rodrigues, Tromelin, Cargados Carajos and the Chagos Archipelago, including Diego Garcia and any other island' (Constitution of Mauritius, Section

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17 And this can sometimes be an excellent way of making a living.
During the negotiations for the independence of Mauritius, the leader of the Mauritian delegation, Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, agreed to the British demand that independence be contingent on Diego Garcia being ceded to Britain. It is now known as the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT), but is actually leased to the American military as (i) a major supply point for carrier groups and submarines (including, it is believed, nuclear munitions) and (ii) as an operating base for B52 bombers and their support. Torn from their homes, given financial compensation but not advised on how to invest it, the Ilois are now one of the poorest and most marginalised groups of people in Mauritius, if not the Indian Ocean.

The Creoles are descendants of those African slaves brought to Mauritius by French colonists. Following the abolition of slavery, they moved to the only lands where they could settle; those which were most distant from sugar estates. Consequently, as most development in Mauritius has been focused on the central plateau - the most populous area - so Creoles have tended not to have access to the benefits of development, i.e. free education, skills training, apprenticeships, and so on. As Roy observes:

They had obtained their freedom. What freedom? Freedom from the whip, from the inhuman, unchristian chastisement of the white masters. But not the four freedoms, no freedom from the stigma of his epidermis, no freedom from his lot of sweat and want, from under-employment, undernourishment and wretchedness. They are said to have realised the dignity of man. Slavery has been abolished. We hear of the loud proclamis of the equality of man; of equal opportunities but they will remain a vain dream for a very long time because economic slavery which has substituted the former subjugation has gripped human beings into a worse form of stranglehold.

The Muslim community comprises adherents both of the reformist Ahmadiya sect and the more numerous Sunnis. Some Muslims and many other informants refer to this, and other such stratifications, as being 'castes'. In the Hindu community there are a number of castes. Historically the most revered and powerful caste has been that of the Brahmins, although this is no longer the case. The Babujee (warrior) caste is the next least numerous, followed by the Vaish (the most populous caste) and others. There are no 'Untouchables' in Mauritius. Although caste is nowhere near as significant as in India in terms of gaining a job, spouse, political backing, etc., it is still an important source of support, as I will argue rather later in the Thesis.

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18 And further afield, for example I met one Ilois lady in Cornwall.
19 Diego Garcia was extensively used for B52s in their carpet bombing of Republican Guard groups during 'Operation Desert Storm'.
20 Sometimes evicted from the areas in which they do settle, e.g. La Pipe.
21 This is also the case with members of other communities living on the periphery of the island, far from the factory labour markets.
The Economic Situation

Mauritius is perhaps best known in the West as the source of a great deal of the cane sugar consumed in Europe and as a premier holiday destination. However, the Mauritian economy is rather more diverse and successful than might be widely known.

The economy has been growing at an average annual rate of 5.4% since the beginning of this decade. Gross national product per capita at market prices increased from Rs 37,000 in 1990 to Rs 67,300 in 1996. Unemployment rate for 1996 is estimated at about 5.5% while inflation stood at 6.6%.

Full employment was until recently a characteristic feature of Mauritius although currently the rate of unemployment is increasing. For some time there was a shortage of workers, which led to the fairly large-scale employment of foreign, especially Chinese, workers in, amongst other sectors, textile factories. Mauritius is now one of the largest producers of knitwear and other textiles. Canny investment in and encouragement of such sectors by successive administrations means that Mauritius is well-placed to survive any downturn in, for example, guaranteed prices for sugar imports into the European Union. Currently, Mauritius' freeport and financial services industries are in expansion.

Agriculture, especially the cultivation and processing of sugar cane, still employs many people, but the majority of people no longer work on the land. There is a burgeoning middle class, although this tends to be comprised mainly of Hindus and Muslims. Many women work in factories or do piece-work sewing from home, but more and more women work in offices, whilst government service employs many people of both genders.

The overall impression of Mauritius is, then, of a densely populated tropical island which doesn't feel crowded and is far from being a Third World country. It has a modern economy with a constantly growing GDP and good service provision. It is an island which has successfully managed the transition from colony to Independent republic, and avoided the economic stagnation and socio-political catastrophe which has become almost synonymous with former colonies - in spite of it having a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual population.

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22 Web Page of the Ministry of Economic Development and Regional Co-operation (13 November, 1997 (ncb.intnet.mu/house.htm)).
The Political Situation

A member of the Commonwealth, and a Republic since 1991, Mauritius is a Parliamentary democracy with a National Assembly of 66 members and, in terms of procedure and offices, has much in common with the British House of Commons.23 62 of the members of the National Assembly are directly elected from multi-member constituencies through a four-yearly General Election,24 whilst 4 additional members are appointed by the Supreme Court. The President of the Republic (presently Mr. Cassam Uteem) is elected for a five year term by the National Assembly, and President Uteem is now in his second term. By convention, the President (the Constitutional head of state) plays no political role, and in many ways represents a powerful stabilising force in the country. Because the President is practically apolitical, he is held in general respect which is often not afforded many other politicians (see page 167-8).

The Prime Minister, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam is the son of the man who guided Mauritius to Independence from Britain and is remembered as the 'Father of the Nation' (Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam). Ramgoolam, like his father, leads the Labour Party, and is relatively frequently criticised by Labour voters and others alike with wild rumours concerning, amongst other themes, mistresses, property assets in the UK. Indeed, politics is a popular subject of vigorous discussion in Mauritius, in taverns, at dinner tables and in the various newspapers. This interest was mirrored in voting behaviour: for the last General Election (held on the 20th of December 1995) there was a turn-out rate of 79.7%.25 In that election, the coalition of the Parti Travailiste (Labour Party) and the Mouvement Militant Mauricien (Mauritian Militant Movement), both left-wing parties, won 65.23% together.26 The table overleaf details the results of the 1995 General Election (all of the seats were contested by at least 3 parties).

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23 Data in this section is synthesised from a range of sources, including www.agora.stm.it/elections/election mauritius.htm; ncb.intnet.mu/govt/members.htm [official Mauritius Government Site]; www.maurinet.com/polsresul.html; E Hanoomanjee (pers. comm); Alladin (1993) and the author's personal archive.
24 Hence, in the table percentages are of 1st, 2nd and 3rd votes cast.
25 Some constituencies recorded a turnout in the 80s, with the highest being of 87.6%.
26 However, during my stay in Mauritius, the leader of the MMM, Paul Bérenger, was dismissed as Vice Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, the coalition collapsed, and the Parti Travailiste continued in power alone.
Including the appointment of additional members by the Supreme Court, the political constituency of the National Assembly is as follows

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party</th>
<th>Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>LP / MMM - Labour Party / Mouvement Militant Mauricien coalition</td>
<td>35 + 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPR - Organisation du Peuple Rodriguais</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MR - Mouvement Rodriguais</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGD - Parti Gaetan Duval</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hizb. - Hizbullah</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Voting for Members of the National Assembly, 20th December 1995.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Party</th>
<th>% of votes cast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>David, James</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>76.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbier, Claude</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>71.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navarre-Marie, MA</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beebeejaun, Ahmed</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>59.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsang Mang Kin, TTH</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>57.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jeejah, Ahmad</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>57.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lauthan, Samiullah</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallam-Hassam,</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>57.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muhammad</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beeharry, Sheik</td>
<td>Hizb./MMP</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thacoor Sidaya, Indira</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>63.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chaumiere, Jean</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arunasalon, Jose</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>57.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramgoolam, Navin</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>81.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramnah, Premnath</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>72.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soonarane, Sachindev</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>70.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beeharry, Dhaneshwar</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>64.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jceah, Deelchand</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>60.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poonoosawmy,</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>52</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daivanaden</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meenowa, Jai</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virahsawmy,</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>60.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devanand</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rampersad, Rajman</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>59.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bundhoo, Lormus</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>67.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dayal, Surendra</td>
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<td>64.3</td>
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<td>Baloomoody, V</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>63.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bojeenauth, Vijay</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>69.4</td>
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<td>Gunness, Govin</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>63.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nath, G</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>55.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Party</td>
<td>Score</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bheenick</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>79.1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bundhun, Ved</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
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<td>Peerun, Mohamud</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>62.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boolel, Arvin</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>73.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Haton, Mohurriall</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>68.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jeelall, Yesdev</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>64.8</td>
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<td>Bunwaree, Vasant</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>72</td>
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<td>Boissezon, Marie</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>63.2</td>
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<td>Soburrun, Dharma</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>60.9</td>
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<td>Deerpalsingh, N</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>62</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sunassee</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>59.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sathiamoorthy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bundhun, Abdool</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>58.5</td>
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<td>Ganoo, Alan</td>
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<td>Aimee, Louis Herve</td>
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<td>66.5</td>
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<td>Jhuboo, Seewoosunkur</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
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<td>Peeroo, Abdoor R</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>65.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obegadoo, Louis</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>65.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purryag, K</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>65.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lallah, Sarat</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>67.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sakaram, Sewram</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arouff-Parfait, Marie-Claude</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malherbe, Clare</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>67.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chasteau de Balyon, Marie</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>56.5</td>
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<td>Ramdass, Motee</td>
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<td>Bhima, D</td>
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<td>Pillay, K</td>
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<td>Perrier, Anne Marie</td>
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<td>Berenger, Paul</td>
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<td>Chady, Siddick</td>
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<td>69.6</td>
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<td>Cuttarree, J</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
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<td>Minerve, Joceline</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
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<td>Bhagwan, Rajesh</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>64.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ohsan Bellepeau</td>
<td>LP/MMM</td>
<td>61.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monique</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jolicoeur, Benoît</td>
<td>OPR</td>
<td>62.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clair, Louis</td>
<td>OPR</td>
<td>60.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vonmally, Louis</td>
<td>OPR</td>
<td>35.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy, Jean</td>
<td>MR</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

26
As yet, no thorough research has been conducted into voting patterns in Mauritius. There are anecdotal claims that certain groups of people always vote for members of that same group, but there is no compelling polling evidence to support this although it is certainly an area which requires investigation. I remain unconvinced of those who argue that people blindly vote along ethnic and caste lines, and I explore and critique some of these assumptions - in some detail - later in the thesis.

It may well be, for example, that Muslim MPs are elected for predominantly Muslim areas, but that isn’t necessarily that surprising because, in such areas, as Muslims are in the majority it is more likely that they would stand for election.
• Languages

The range of languages potentially spoken in Mauritius is at least as broad as that of the number of ethnic groups. The vast majority of people speak Mauritian Kreol as their first language and there are significant rural populations for whom the first language is Bhojpuri, a dialect from the Bihari region of Indian from where the majority of Indo-Mauritians came.

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Mauritian Creole is a language which originated as a version of French spoken to and by slaves, but now 'We, Mauritians, have something in common. It is a very useful tool for the creation of a nation. It can release the feelings of loyalty, self-respect and complete participation. It is the creole which we speak' (Dev Virahsawmy in *L'Express* 1967: 1).

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The official language of Mauritius is English, a relic of colonialism. Although English is functionally the mother tongue only of expatriates or younger, British born Mauritians who have returned either permanently or temporarily, it is quite widely spoken. Most Mauritians speak at least two languages, with many speaking three and having substantial command of several others. An example might be an Indo-Mauritian who speaks Mauritian Creole; French (from which Creole is derived); Bhojpuri and English but has a working knowledge of Hindi. The table overleaf gives an indication of the linguistic diversity of Mauritius:

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26 The orthography for Mauritian Kreol used in this Thesis is taken from Ledikasyon pu Travayer's (1985) prototype English-Kreol dictionary.

27 The persistence of English as the official language is largely because change - to anything other than Kreol - would mean that the new national language could arguably be associated with one of the constituent ethnic or religious groups of Mauritius. Further, it is advantageous for both business and government to be fluent in both English and French, to make use of the cultural and other resources which accrue from being either a Francophone or Anglophone nation.
Table 2: Resident population by language usually spoken at home:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All languages</td>
<td>1,056,660</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creole</td>
<td>652,193</td>
<td>61.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chinese Languages</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>2,620</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hakka</td>
<td>765</td>
<td>0.07%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>0.002%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>English</strong></td>
<td>2,240</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>French</strong></td>
<td>34,455</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Oriental Languages</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>0.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhojpuri</td>
<td>201,618</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarati</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>0.03%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>128,848</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marathi</td>
<td>7,535</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>8,002</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telegu</td>
<td>6,437</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urdu</td>
<td>6,810</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>0.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creole + Chinese</td>
<td>2,069</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creole + French</td>
<td>21,387</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creole + Other European</td>
<td>1,368</td>
<td>0.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creole + Bhojpuri</td>
<td>48,579</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Hindi</td>
<td>3,428</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Marathi</td>
<td>1,779</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Tamil</td>
<td>5,312</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Telegu</td>
<td>1,797</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Urdu</td>
<td>6,479</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+ Other Oriental</td>
<td>1,701</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bhojpuri + Hindi</td>
<td>20,976</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mauritian Kreol is operationally the national language of Mauritius; almost everyone speaks it as their first language. In the early 1980s there was an attempt to follow the Seychelles' example of officially making their creole language the national language, but this was never fully pursued in Mauritius. Mauritian Kreol is a sophisticated and fully evolved language. Mauritian Kreol was French but is now a language in its own right in the same way that slaves are now free. Kreol is so much the national language that people are beginning to describe it as 'Mauritian': 'to coze morisyen twa?' ('do you speak Mauritian?'). This, however, is not always recognised by visitors to Mauritius, as the following extract from my field-notes records.

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28 Adapted from the 1990 Census results. Thanks to Laura Hills for allowing me to borrow this table (from Hills, L 1997).
29 Although this opinion is not shared by some Mauritians and many academics.
The context is the launching of a Kreol novel (*Misyon Garson*) by Commonwealth Writers’ Prize winner Lindsey Collen. The Australian High Commissioner had arrived for the book launch party and was speaking to two other expatriates:

The Australian High Commissioner turned to the couple and asked, sarcastically, “Are we all Creole speakers here?” “Oh, fluent!” tittered the white couple. A little conversational exchange took place, and then the blonde woman said why she didn’t learn Kreol: “I don’t want to spoil my French, that’s my excuse.” They all laughed.

There are organisations seeking to promote the use of Kreol, often married to political aspirations to ensure the fairer distribution of wealth and opportunity throughout Mauritius. One such organisation is *Ledikasyon pu Travayer* which publishes basic literacy material as well as full-length novels and volumes of poetry and organises adult education and political discussion classes; all in Mauritian Kreol.30

The *Organisation Fraternelle* promotes a campaign for, amongst other things, *Droit d’Antenne* to make the Kreol language more prominent on the state broadcaster (the Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation). For this organisation at least, speaking Kreol is something bound up with Creole identity, because African slaves spoke Kreol first, goes their thinking, it is their language. Indo-, Franco- and Sino-Mauritians came to Mauritius and continued to speak their own languages: Bhojpuri, Tamil, Telegu, Gujerati, French, Hakka and so on, whilst slaves were deprived of this right.31

30 See L Hills 1997 for an in-depth discussion of the activities of this group.
31 This is not an opinion that is necessarily widely held.
My partner, Laura, and I first lived in the sea-side resort of Flic-en-Flac in Mauritius, and then found a small studio flat in the central town of Curepipe (below). Curepipe is located on the central plateau of Plaines Wilhelms and was much cooler than the coast during the summery half of the year but, more importantly, it had superior transport links to the rest of the island, meaning that it was far easier to get out and about to visit people and places. It took more than an hour to get from Flic-en-Flac to the town of Quatre Bornes, and then another three-quarters of an hour or more to get to the capital, Port Louis. Whereas from Curepipe, on the Express bus, it took a maximum of an hour to get to Port Louis and about ten minutes to visit the most distant of our friends on the outskirts of Curepipe. Curepipe is a very friendly town and it seemed to be easy to get to know people. It was nice to strike up a routine: to ensure, for example, that we always bought newspapers from the same vendor, bought snacks from a particular stand, vegetables from the same market trader and so on. It was far from problematic to

32 From National Geographic, April 1993: 117.
distance ourselves from identification with either tourists (by and large, they would prefer the coast to highland, rather rainy, Curepipe) or Franco-Mauritians (they would neither walk, take the bus nor shop in the places that we shopped in). We lived in a small flat in a family compound, in what could be called an ethnically heterogeneous area, described by locals as ‘the United Nations’.

On a daily basis, Laura worked as a voluntary literacy teacher for a number of organisations, and also belonged to various clubs and societies. I met many of her colleagues, and they often proved to be useful contacts. I also spent some considerable time working at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute’s School of Mauritian, African and Asian Studies (SMAAS), as well as meeting individuals in a broad range of occupations and in a number of different areas on the island. In the evenings and at weekends, Laura and I were frequently invited to join friends for meals, celebrations, religious events and so on. Our network of informants rapidly expanded during our stay, and most of them continue to be maintained through post and e-mail. As we came to meet more and more people, so I received many invitations to meet people at their place of work, and thus become known to their colleagues as well. Hence, cited vignettes of fieldnotes used in this thesis consist of conversations with civil servants, with drivers, secretaries and others whom I met when visiting friends at their offices and so on. Both Laura and myself were overt in revealing ourselves to be researchers, and were exceptionally well-received on that basis.

Our small flat was just one hundred metres or so from a major road linking Curepipe with the smaller town of Vacoas, was Rue Abbé La Poste, and it was in a family compound (plot) of four houses, including the flat, that my partner and I lived. This area of Curepipe was, in terms of postal address, part of the district of ‘Curepipe Road’, and this represented a broadening swathe of territory stretching from all of Rue Abbé La Poste some three miles towards the major landmark of Curepipe, the ancient, and extinct, volcanic crater of Trou-au-Cerfs. In terms of further specification of residence, one would express one’s precise location not solely in terms of the house number, which might not be that well known, but instead by reference to a local focal point. Being resident in the Babujee family compound, I would say that I lived ‘kot Babujee’ [next to/with the Babujees]. The Babujees are a well-known family in Curepipe, the father of our landlord had been an accountant, and in common with many Mauritians, everyone seems to know everyone else, and sometimes this is through marriage. Others would say that they lived next to the school behind our flat (Ecole Otter Barry), or the local secondary school (the Hindu Girl’s College) further down Rue Abbé La Poste. In these ways,
one's place of residence is verbalised very precisely in terms of shared features (family, institution, shop, etc.). The 'neighbourhood' here is not Curepipe Road, but rather the top section of Rue Abbé La Poste, and with some depth back on both sides.

Around Rue Abbé La Poste, the tarmac road is worn and pitted in places, revealing the gravel on which it has been laid. Successive cyclones, buses and cars ranging from venerable Morris Minors through to top-of-the-range Mercedes have all contributed to the erosion. Entering Rue Abbé La Poste, one passes the local Co-operative shop, a ramshackly managed institution which stands opposite its main competitor, a larger supermarket owned by a Sino-Mauritian family. The Co-Op shop is endearing, with the manager's enormous greasy ledger on his desk on the right, with a young girl operating the cash till opposite him. In the gloom of the shop, one selects one's purchases. Most people began their visit by dumping their empty glass bottles of beer, rum or pop, calling out to anyone who listens the number of returned bottles, the balance of which will be deducted from today's bill. The manager usually moves forward and puts the bottles into crates, and then agrees the number of half and full-size bottles returned, and gestures to begin your shopping.

Shelving behind the manager's desk begins with bottles of fizzy drinks on the lowest shelves on the left, building up through beer to the literally dizzy heights of rum. Beyond the drinks, shelves heave with pulses and rice, in bags and sacks. A set of mouldering freezers stand against the back wall of the shop, with signs promising capitaine fish, fishfingers, chicken franks, crevettes, boeuf, agneau and other culinary feasts. Across the main section of the shop runs a long trestle table, covered in packets of biscuits and other sweet products, imported from Malaysia, France, Britain or made in Mauritius. Behind the table begin the rows of tins, from tinned butter, tuna, peas and bamboo shoots. After the food, another staple - powdered milk and next to it Australian Kraft Cheddar, a processed product not requiring refrigeration. On the walls behind the cashier are packets of aspirin, rosewater, sweets, buttons and other impedimenta.

Leaving the Co-Op, to return to the flat, one crosses in front of the Chinese supermarket. However, as - often - the Co-Op no longer stocks something which it stocked on the previous visit, a shopping expedition might require entry into this shop as well. Just past the Chinese supermarket, a cobbler has his small workshop, and as one passes, he looks up in the expectation of business and then, disappointed, returns to his work. Turning now into Rue Abbé La Poste, a wiry, balding, older man breaks off from cutting the hair of his client, clutching scissors and comb in one hand, he peers into the road. I jauntily wave, recalling the first -
and last - time that I patronised his establishment, and was soundly ripped off. On discovering that I had been massively overcharged, I began to visit another hairdresser who had a small salon on the route to the bus stop that I took everyday. Unfortunately, although he charged the going rate, his salon was somehow infested with mosquitoes. The hairdresser and myself did share an interest, however, and that was an interest in frogs. Frequently when I visited he would show me a stuffed Malagasy frog which had been stuffed and crudely stitched up, with enormous sutures across its bloated stomach.

The shop next to the barber's was that run by a Muslim tailor. A gloomy man who rarely fully smiled, he could be seen hunched over his sewing machine, its warm glow lighting both the material he was working on, and his face. In his early forties, the tailor shut his shop in the early evening whilst he went to the nearby mosque, and then returned. The tailor's shop is the last, and now one is fully in Rue Abbé La Poste. The road is wide enough for two cars to pass each other, although when the shuttle bus into and from the town of Curepipe rattles and lurches into the street, cars need to pull in close to allow it to squeeze by. At the sizes of the road are concrete lined storm drains. The one on the left hand side of the road also has the water main laid into it, and the black plastic pipe, junction boxes and water meters are all fond in or near the drain. Houses here are typical of any suburb, concrete, to a maximum of two storeys, but with more space between them than in many areas. Beginning to walk down the street, one passes several houses on the right which have high walls, closed gates and dogs. One of the dogs is kept in a kennel within the yard when the owners are at home, and it can be seen suspended on the palisade around the kennel, having lopped its front legs over the fence, it dreamily stares out at the world.

Proceeding down the street, one passes a small band of dogs, some feral, and some of those rotting, and some merely escaped. There is some rough ground on the right, which builds steeply up to a small mound, perhaps an acre in area. Chickens scratch around amidst the weeds and dirt. On the opposite side of the road to the mound, a one-storey house, perhaps 15 years old, stands in a largish plot. The front wall of the garden has recently been demolished, and behind it a small two-storey house is being built for the son and (future) daughter-in-law of the owners. The house has two smooth concrete pillars either side of the front door, and around one of these a red ribbon is tied to ward off the 'evil eye' of jealousy and avarice.

Just beyond the house under construction is the white wrought-aluminium gate to the Babujee family compound. After lifting the latch on the gate, pushing it aside, fending off the guard dog and closing the gate, all of the houses in the
compound can be seen. Immediately on the right is a two-storey house. On the
upper level, the daughter and son-in-law of the elder Mrs. Babujee live with their
two small children. From her home on the lower level, Mrs. Babujee keeps an eye
on the comings and goings into the compound. Her husband died some months ago,
and this has meant a retreat into melancholy nostalgia, and an increased fear of
crime. Directly ahead of the gate is the house in which my landlords and their two
children lived. Mr Babujee studied and worked in Britain, and met his wife - then a
Filipino nurse - there. To the right of their house is our flat, much smaller.
Adjacent to the flat is a small alleyway and then the house belonging to Mr.
Babujee's uncle and his Korean wife, and their young son.

Behind our flat, reached through the alleyway, was a patch of rough ground
which backed onto a nursery school. Across this rough ground grew a profusion of
tropical plants and weeds, significant amongst these was a fast-growing weed of the
brede family. Growing like small, spiky melons from a creeping runner the
vegetable brede malbar rapidly appeared, looking somewhat like grenades. There
would be regular visits from locals to harvest these vegetables. Similarly, when the
zamalak tree outside the flat fruited, locals and passers-by (such as dustmen, road
labourers and so on) would ask if they could take some of the abundant fruit. The
gardener who worked once a week, or so, in the family compound would sometimes
clear the ground of the taller weeds, but the brede would always prosper.

Also on this rough ground was a small Hindu Temple, constructed from
concrete, and in which the elder Mrs. Babujee would light oil lamps in front of the
deities every night. If Ashok, a local beggar and alcoholic, was exiled from his
house he would sleep on the floor. Most of the houses in Abbé La Poste had small
temples in their gardens, but these were usually shrines, a glass walled, or open,
statuette atop a small (chest-level) pillar. The Babujee temple was unique in the
area because it was so large. It was not, however, ostentatious, being constructed
from plain concrete, with a flat roof and without a tiled floor.

A day in Rue Abbé La Poste would usually begin by hearing either the bells of
a nearby Catholic Church, or the Imam's call to prayer (depending on the hour of
sunrise). Around this time, the first buses between Curepipe and the capital Port
Louis would be heard in the distance grinding their way along the main road. A
neighbour's dog would usually sing along with the Imam, and the neighbourhood
gradually stirred into action. Labourers and those going to tend their allotments
could be seen riding or pushing their bicycles along the road, with shears and other
implements tied to the bicycle. Others would be visiting the bakery at the top of the
road for fresh rolls for their breakfast or to take to work with them. Labourers and
others, on foot, bicycle or in cars have their lunch wrapped in a tea towel or a *tanti* basket. There would be flat breads, gleaming stainless steel mess tins of curry and perhaps flasks of tea.

Throughout the day, various salespeople could call by. Generally on foot or with precariously balanced bundles arranged around a bicycle, salespeople offered for purchase plastic goods (buckets, baskets, containers), *fatak* or *bros coco* brushes (respectively for us inside or outside the house), sweet cakes and so on. At set times everyday, a cyclist would ring his bell and offer fresh hot bread for sale. If there was a crisis, such as when someone was suddenly taken ill, a doctor lived close by, and neighbours could be relied upon to [provide help and support in such an event. Similarly, a local Muslim man, with family in Huddersfield, with his son, was the local taxi service.

The neighbourhood known as Abbé La Poste was in some ways typical of a Mauritian suburb. The Islamic call to prayer would abut with the Church bells and perhaps with the sound of devotees of a Hindu sect chanting or singing. Individuals from a range of social classes, ethnic groups and religious persuasion lived side-by-side, although perhaps atypically a Franco-Mauritian family lived further down the road: in the past this area would have been very exclusive, with only a few large wooden houses. Only two now remained in a state of some disrepair (due to the damp climate of the high plateau), and were lived in by Indo-Mauritians.

Having outlined Mauritius, daily modus operandii and my local neighbourhood, I now move on to discuss the manner in which I conducted my fieldwork, aiming to keep ‘the cuts and sutures of the research process’ (Clifford 1988: 146), and the discursive context I set out from, visible.
The author's studio flat in Curepipe, Mauritius.
Part 2: Locating the Author

‘Not everyone will tell you that, although everyone does it’.

- Devraj (informant).

It began to rain, a cold autumn rain. We retire to the dining tent for a conference on methods of approach. They [the natives] were running no risks with unlabelled strangers. [...] Less sophisticated members of the community, especially the women, were more than suspicious.

WH and CV Wiser *Behind Mud Walls* 1971: 2.

The anthropologist must relinquish his comfortable position in the long chair on the veranda of the missionary compound, Government station, or planter’s bungalow, where, armed with pencil and notebook and at times with a whisky and soda, he has been accustomed to collect statements from informants, write down stories, and fill out sheets of paper with savage texts.

Malinowski, cited in Kuklick 1991: 287

‘It doesn’t have to be like that’ was a constant internal refrain as I considered my own desired style of ethnographic fieldwork in relation to other ethnographies. Not like those on tropical verandas criticised by Malinowski, not like Tyler in *Writing*
Culture (above), all colonial chic writing with one’s back to one’s hosts, but something different, something related to my individual, even idiosyncratic, and hopefully amiable approach to life. This chapter introduces the reader to the writer, and locates me in a certain lineage of anthropological scholarship.

Simon During writes that Cultural Studies is a discipline continuously shifting its interests and methods, both because it is in constant and engaged interaction with its larger historical context and because it cannot be complacent about its authority. After all, it has taken the force of arguments against ‘meta-discourses’ and does not want the voice of the academic theorist to drown out other less often heard voices (1993: 20).

Although distinct from the discipline of Cultural Studies, anthropology is a cultural study which must likewise ‘relentlessly examine its own methods, positions, assumptions, and interventions, constantly putting them in question and revising and developing them’ (Kellner 1995: 94). In this section, I attempt to relentlessly examine my own ‘fieldual’ and textual methods, make visible my positions and stances and outline my distinctive, sometimes original, theoretical locations (Overing’s ‘analytic self-awareness’ (1975: x)). This section of the chapter represents a deconstruction of the staging of the forthcoming drama: a revealing of the unseen mechanics which informed and made possible the total text.
I aim to demonstrate throughout this Thesis a drawing upon a broad range of sources, a 'multiperspectival' (Kellner 1995) attitude and frame of mind which strives to include rather than to exclude. Thus, I want to place ideas theorised by just one of my Mauritian informants alongside structured academic thinking and encourage a play between the two sources, and with others. However, I realise, after Kellner, that the reading of a text or group of texts is still only a reading from the author's specific position, no matter how multiperspectival it is, and the resultant Thesis may or may not be the reading preferred by audiences (which themselves will be significantly different according to class, race, gender, region, ethnicity, sexual preferences, ideologies, and so on) (Ibid: 99).

The (a) elevation of the discourses of individuals from the field (i.e. from outwith the academy) to equality with those from within the academy and (b) drawing from a multitude of disciplines chimes with, and builds upon, the recently outlined philosophy of literary anthropology by my mentor Nigel Rapport (cf. Transcendent Individual: Towards a Literary and Liberal Anthropology), i.e. to be wide-ranging in terms of genre, showing little respect for disciplinary distinctions (between anthropology, literature and literary criticism, culture studies, philosophy, psychology and sociology) where these would seem to fracture the individual (the liberal-humanist) subject, dividing off one significant aspect from others (1997: 2).

Although the task of the anthropologist has been - until the recent advent of self-questioning, anxious and evocational writing - the textual presentation of an entire 'culture' (cf. Tyler 1986), it remains true that the anthropologist approaches his/her fieldwork with, using the phrase that Goffman modifies from the world of psychiatry, 'a presenting culture' [...] which is] derived from a 'home world' - a way of life and a round of activities taken for granted (1971a: 23). The presenting culture of anthropologists has now been brought into question. No longer can it be held that the anthropologist (or any other social scientist) is an objective surveyor and mapper of concrete facts. The presenting culture of the anthropologist encountering and engaging with the fieldwork location is riddled with considerations of power, position, prejudice, therapy, preconception, paranoia, presumption and prediction. As Overing has written:

because all knowledge has power implications, it is the right, the need, or the duty of the anthropologist (as is equally the case for those whose inquiry is of the material world) to comment openly and self-reflectively upon those implications relevant to the particular body of knowledge that one claims as one's own (1985: 24).

A possible glossing of the array of processes which underlie fieldwork practice. Hinting at a connection with 'textual', and hence seeing the field as a text to be interpreted and, therefore by definition, with a multiplicity of possible definitions.
I intend, before moving on to describe the kinds of philosophies which underline my writing and researching, to openly and self-reflectively show something of my ‘presenting culture’.

It has become both fashionable and, for those who share my perspective, necessary to write an increasing amount about the author (cf. Roseneil 1993 and, better, Rapport 1993 and Skinner 1998). As Lievrouw recently observed, ‘narrative construction is an interactive communication process that actually constitutes the scholar’s identity’ (1996: 229). It is, for me, an absolute requirement to give a hint at the kind of organising consciousness at work in, through and behind the narrative(s) of the Thesis, book, article or note.

I strove to conduct my research in a responsible manner, consciously trying to ensure that I did not project a negative image of either my discipline or my country. Further, my fieldwork was very much an expression of my identity so that, for example, I was happier that people I was with had a pleasant time than that I should leave a social interaction with reams of notes concerning the detailed construction of items of material culture that anthropologists usually obsessively collect. Better, I said to myself, to come away from ‘the field’ with nothing, than to have caused upset by asking inappropriate questions or having imposed myself in a neo-colonial manner. Like Collett ‘I am not seeking to possess [knowledge, things], I am seeking to understand - and they are not the same thing’ (1997: 21).

Mine is a form of post-colonial anthropology which does not wish to possess knowledge, nor understand for bureaucratic purposes. Consequently I did not attempt to force myself into social situations, and was fortunate in finding that most Mauritians were keen to invite me along to a broad range of events, and this after having met people almost entirely by chance. Some of the Hindu Mauritians that I came to know well would describe what, for my partner and I, was a coincidental meeting as being due to karma. Because of previous good actions, either by our ancestors or ourselves, we were (pre-)destined to meet those that our friends described as ‘good’ Mauritians. Otherwise, one said, ‘if you had met bad people you would have got right back on the aeroplane and returned to London’. However one chooses, if one chooses, to explain unpredictable fieldwork meetings and encounters more generally, either positive or negative, Pearson notes that for the fieldworker being in the right place at the right time and striking the right note in relationships may be just as important as skill in technique. Indeed, many successful episodes in the field do come about through good luck as much as through sophisticated planning, and many unsuccessful episodes are due as much to bad luck as to bad judgement. These cannot be anticipated in advance (1993: xi).

34 As Overing, and others, have observed - anthropologists have to remain aware of ‘the dependence of their specific investigative mode upon the particular question[s] they ask’ (1975: 3).
My success with meeting people on amicable grounds then, necessarily, leads to the textual problem that Pearson then draws attention to. The fact that, once having established ‘closeness’, ‘a further commanding preoccupation of the ethnographer’s task is how to make that available in a textual form to a very different kind of audience’ (Ibid.: viii.). I aim to communicate this closeness in this Thesis, not least by providing the reader with information that clearly would not have been given to an investigator who took a more distant stance. I went to places, spoke to people, did and learnt things that no-one else - in the corpus of anthropological material on Mauritius - has done.

I encountered no suspicion whilst living overtly as a researcher in Mauritius, although before departing for the Indian Ocean I had been very much concerned about the ethics of research and researching and had doubts about whether it was even justifiable to ‘do’ research. This especially so in a country which

(a) had been a colony and

(b) from whose ex-colonial power I was a citizen.

To my relief I found that there was no necessity to hide or disguise my status as a researcher, and many Mauritians were puzzled as to why I would ever have suspected it would be necessary. Most Mauritians value education and were interested, or at the very worst disinterested, in my researches and everyone had an opinion on the current state of things in Mauritius. Therefore there was no fear of those who were interested in learning from them and speaking (some of) a language other than English; either French or, especially, Kreol. Most of those to whom I spoke refused all offers of anonymity, not through some sense of bravada, but rather because in their working lives they frequently said that they tried to work with the utmost honesty and they wanted me to carry this through into my work. They insisted that I tell the(ir) truth(s) about all that I saw and heard, even though this would not necessarily be welcomed by, for example, the Government and might contrast adversely with the PR/‘spin’ image of Mauritius. 35 Here, for example, is an extract from my field notes:

I said to the group today [eating at Jay’s house in Nouvelle France] that I was a bit worried that my research results were not going to be good news [in terms of the Government’s political rhetoric of ‘Unity in Diversity’]. That doesn’t matter, they said - you’re not here to make people happy - you don’t want a job from the Prime Minister!

This reminds me of Nietzsche’s dictum that

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35 The Government would not find it hard to avail themselves of details of my research given that I had to give an undertaking to the Mauritius High Commission in London to supply a copy of my Thesis to them. I also had very good contacts who could provide me with political backing - should I have needed it - right up to the Prime Minister.
You should seek your enemy, you should wage your war - a war for your opinions -
And if your opinion is defeated, your honesty should still cry triumph over that (1961: 74).

I am required, then, to tell things as (I was told) they were, trying to avoid (by consigning them to the printed page) altering the impact, focus, situational meaning, and so on, of what I heard and saw. My aim is to 'create an ethnography strong enough to cause disquiet in my world, but gentle enough to cause no discomfort among the people I wrote about' (Glassie 1995: 13).

- Traveller, Guest, Stranger, Note-Taker

Travellers ne'er did lie,
Though fools at home condemn em'.

Shakespeare The Tempest, Act III, Sc. 3.

Edward Said sees travellers - and anthropologists are certainly travellers - as occupying the highest position of academic freedom because of their 'willingness to go into different worlds, use different idioms, and understand [or, at least, seek to understand - or construct understandings of] a varieties of disguises, masks and rhetorics' (cited in Thomas 1994: 6). Mestrovic notes the possibilities of the exoticism, rather than the threat, of the stranger; and at certain times and in certain places in Mauritius I certainly felt 'exotic'. As Mestrovic puts it,

Why can't a foreigner be exotic, instead of threatening? I am thinking of Georg Simmel's and David Riesman's mutual claim that strangers - as those who are simultaneously in and out of the mainstream group - often make the best sociologists, judges, and other professionals, precisely because they are different at the same time that they are like everybody else (1994: x-xi).

It is, in fact, sometimes very handy being a stranger, although this is not a possibility that pre-fieldwork instruction usually covers. The fieldworker can - because I found that the Mauritians with whom I had most contact both permitted and expected the stranger to - make mistakes: say the wrong thing at the wrong time, use the wrong word for something and, like most Mauritians, move between and among languages to make oneself understood. As long as one does not somehow abuse this tolerance, one's position remains secure and comfortable. Many Mauritians have found themselves in the same situation as me (i.e. wanting, or needing, to learn about another culture) when abroad. One Mauritian contact said that he reckoned that English people saw him as a 'curiosity' and had therefore

Sometimes even Mauritians are mystified as to why they choose a particular language at a particular time: after speaking to a Civil Servant, a friend said that he did not know why he spoke to him in French as opposed to in Kreol. Because he looks authoritative, he suggested: yes, I agreed, as the Civil Servant had been wearing a tie, seated behind a desk, etc.
invited him to places that his northern English friends were never invited. I discuss in Chapter 5 the shared Mauritian value of treating visitors as they would like to be treated if, and when, they were to go abroad.

Secondly, there is the theoretical benefit of strangerhood. It is only as a stranger and thus socially dislocated and placing habit in question (and, more precisely, annotating conversations and then juxtaposing these records in alien ways) that one would possibly have to deal with [...] the incoherence, partiality and contradictoriness inherent in the assumptions of people's everyday commonsensical knowledge (Rapport 1993: 125).

The outsider can sometimes see patterns, contradictions and correspondences that a resident would not necessarily see. Simmel is right when he observes that 'to be a stranger is ... a very positive relation; it is a specific form of interaction' (cited in Wolff 1950: xvii).

Following on from Said's positive rendering of the anthropological traveller, Bhabha also makes an emphatic connection between movement into new spaces and desirable post-coloniality:

if one has 'a willingness to descend into that alien territory ... [it] may reveal that the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the exoticism or multiculturalism of the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity' (1988: 22).

I hope that this Thesis also goes some way to showing Mauritians to be hybrid, complex and post-colonial, where the post-colonial mood is defined as being about becoming self-determining. In terms of both community and self, post-colonialism is about choosing, selecting - deliberately, consciously examining the past, the present and deciding a course for the future. [...] Post-colonialism is about creating and asserting identity at the same time that it seeks to undermine the generality of stereotype - most often the stereotype nurtured by colonialism (Collett 1997:19).

- Shedding The Researcher's Skin?

In 1990 Nirsimloo-Anenden published an edited version of her Ph.D. thesis on Telugu identity and it is revealing to look at her perspective of her position as a Mauritian anthropologist researching in Mauritius, and thus qualitatively less of a stranger than me certainly linguistically and 'culturally':

[M]y own role in this society for a year took on a strangely unreal aspect. I had been born and had grown up as a full-fledged member of Mauritian society. Yet, my training as an anthropologist required a considerable amount of detachment and, as far as possible, of objectivity in the study of society. I had decided to write my thesis on Mauritius because it was a subject that was dearest to my heart and closest to my aspirations [...] Because of the

37 Examples given were the Oxford and Cambridge Club, parties where Laurence Olivier and many other stars were present and so on. A friend of mine had also become very close to Cliff Richard, Cilla Black and others.

dangers of being too involved and consequently of becoming too biased, I felt that I had to keep my researcher's skin on most of the time (1990: 15).

In contrast to Nirsimloo-Anenden, I would say that the aspect of living and researching in Mauritius which was the most enjoyable and insightful for me was precisely the lack of detachment that I employed, and that lack of detachment in itself was necessary in order to fully operationalise my fieldwork ethics of communion rather than of dominion. I minimised any sense of having a 'researcher's skin' which separated my intrinsic identities from those of my occupation, other than in the occasional moments when I used the brand-name of the University of St. Andrews. But I believe that when I met people it was in a genuine spirit of friendship and equanimity, not - I hope - in a kind of double-agent role. I trust that these sentiments are reflected in this Thesis.

Like, but more overtly than, Rapport, in the English dale of Wanet, who by waiting at table generated 'a local role, a niche, a purpose which other people could recognise and appreciate' (Rapport 1993: 56), I too found a niche. Rapport gained access to a pool of local 'things' about which to talk. Similarly, as a student, as a researcher from London, England, Scotland - or however I was introduced or introduced myself - I avoided Husserl's pronouncement about the anthropologist being 'condemned' by position to see all practice as spectacle. I was alternately a useful and good neighbour when I helped an elderly lady to brush up piles of fallen fruit; a helpful ghost-writer of letters for relatives of friends to Government Ministries, applying for Crown Land for duck farming. I was a good friend who would listen to problems and grievances. I was a prestigious guest, the first English person to visit a household. I was a good guest when I accompanied friends on seaside excursions or spent afternoons on picnics. I was a good helper when I typed letters for people or checked spelling and grammar. I was a good chef when I taught friends how to cook roast chicken and potatoes. I was a bad-tempered, but obedient, chef when senior civil servants lured me into cooking for them. I was an enthusiastic child-amuser and Frisbee-maker. I was a generous fruit distributor when a zamalak tree outside my flat produced tens of carrier bags of fruit.

Generally, I tried to 'give' as much as I received, and these sometimes conscious, sometimes subconscious, strategies meant that people seemed to understand me. I was given things: I gave things - and this set me apart from other overseas visitors (even those who had done the same kind of work as me) and drew

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39 To be able to speak to bureaucrats, etc..
40 Actually, the question that demands an answer is - is there any practice which is not spectacle? That is the problem with any performative analysis - when does the performance begin and end? A
me closer to Mauritian ways and values of living. I was happy to be called ‘Anglais’ when playing dominoes and, rather generously, ‘Beckham’ on the football pitch. At other times, and to children, I was ‘Mr. Bean’. I disagree with Nadel who suggested that the anthropologist’s social identity is necessarily that of a freak in a group (in Paul 1953: 419).41 I was, obviously, an outsider, a stranger, an English-person and, in many circumstances - especially to begin with - a ‘cultural amateur’. But with time one discovers how to demonstrate local knowledge: how to pronounce town-names on the bus (Rose Hill is /Rozil/, for example); how to play dominoes with strategy (a form absent from my experience of the game in the UK); how to prepare local culinary specialities; how to drink from a bottle in an accepted manner and so on. The change from tourist (or newly arrived anthropologist) to someone who is more of a cultural savant (someone who knows the names for the many types of ‘roti’ [Indian fast-food]; knows the name of obscure bus-stops and so on) is fascinating but difficult to keep track of. There were numerous daily triumphs for me. For example, for a long time I had problems buying a bus ticket for the ‘M.G.I.’,42 although I had only to pronounce the three letters. Then I discovered, through participant-observation, two things:

(1) Even Mauritians were frequently not heard/understood the first time that they asked for a ticket, and

(2) The destination was unexpected. Why would a white person on a bus - who wouldn’t be a Franco-Mauritian, they don't travel on the bus - who must (therefore) be a tourist be going to the MGI? There was, understandably, a degree of double-take.

In adopting the distinctive approach to fieldwork that I have, I have drawn myself and those that I write about together: not in a cynical way (all the better to collect data), but rather because I knew that, preferentially, I wanted to make friends rather than enemies through my fieldwork in Mauritius. This is important (i) for the individual fieldworker; (ii) one's hosts; (iii) and also for future researchers.43

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41 No further details available.
42 The initials by which the Mahatma Gandhi Institute, my research base, was known by everyone.
43 For instance, the activities of some researchers (French and American) in some areas of Mauritius, especially Rivière Noire, has apparently led to residents of these areas being indisposed to researchers. Previous researchers have, it is alleged, paid informants to give information, and perform sexual favours. Clearly, this is not the manner in which research should be conducted and has meant that Mauritian researchers also now have problems working in these areas.
Entering, Noting and Writing the Field

I was surprised to find how easy it was to conduct field research in Mauritius. In the year before departure, I had drawn up detailed programmes of those institutions and prominent individuals in Mauritius that I would visit. I was fully prepared for research to be difficult or even impossible: if people didn't want to participate, I would have had no choice but to abandon my grand plans. The arrival of my partner and myself in Mauritius was eventful, but did not bode well. We had been trying, for more than a year, to secure research visas. We had sent reams of details to the Prime Minister's Office in Mauritius, with no result other than a request that we resubmit applications yet again. One day, out of the blue, I received a telephone call from the Mauritius High Commission in London. By chance, a new staff member had encountered our folder, and took a personal interest in the projects that Laura and I had detailed. I began to have an inkling that Mauritius would be an interesting place to work because I had a long discussion with the diplomat over whether independence was, in fact, all that it was cracked up to be. In spite of his personal interest, no visa appeared - to his surprise and our dismay. In the end, he advised us to go to Mauritius anyway, enter as tourists and then make our way to see a member of the Prime Minister's staff, whose name and address he gave us. On arrival in Mauritius, we were immediately marked out as suspicious because we were entering as tourists, and yet had an open (1 year) return ticket. After a lot of fast talking, the Immigration Officer agreed to supply us with a 72 hour Landing Permit. The next day, we went to the Immigration Department at the main police barracks and after a mutually polite and calm interview the problems were resolved; we just had to reapply for a residence permit.

Following this rather unnerving arrival sequence, I suspected that research would be just as complicated and disturbing. The very next day, however, the opposite was to begin to occur. Walking down from sightseeing on one of the highest points on the central plateau of Mauritius, Laura and I stopped to let a car exit a driveway. The car accelerated, and then turned left at the next corner. When we turned the corner, we saw that the car had drawn to a halt and the driver was walking back towards us. He thanked us for stopping to let him exit the drive, apologised for not having let us pass first and then offered us a lift into town. Rather wary - in a very British way - of such an offer, we tentatively accepted, and in my halting, and Laura's fluent, French, we began to converse. Speedily we switched to

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44 And then go to work on an even more reflexive work detailing the ways in which people demonstrated that they didn't want to tell me anything.
English; our lift had spent around 30 years in Britain. From that chance meeting, research developed. We did not get dropped in town, but were taken to visit some of the driver’s relatives and then dropped back at our hotel. That evening, we were invited to a family birthday celebration, where we met more Mauritians who had worked in Britain, and many who had not. Over the next few days, we moved in with our new friend’s family; and over the course of our stay in Mauritius this was often how fieldwork was conducted. Chance encounters, unpredictable before departure, developed into relationships of friendship, brotherhood, sisterhood ... which will extend into the future beyond this Thesis.

Much of my data was collected in contexts best described as amicable; with people with whom I interacted intensively during my stay in Mauritius. Others I met only once or twice (novelists, historians, community leaders), which is as I believe it should be: my main focus is on those individuals who are not self-proclaimed novelists, historians or community leaders. Much of my data was gathered during long afternoons or evenings chatting with friends, or visiting families for celebrations marking, say, a birthday or an event such as Christmas. At other occasions, I gathered material during visits to more spiritual occasions; pilgrimages and the like, when friends acted as guides.

- Questions

The anthropologist conducting field work endeavours to understand the way[s] in which local people themselves experience and interpret their lives by participating in and thus becoming part of local life.

- Olwig and Hastrup 1997: 1

For the vast majority of the time I was simply part of the scenery or just one of the Blades,45 a situation which brought with it the problems of familiarity and detachment. As Whyte (1955) has written: ‘Whenever life flowed so smoothly that I was taking it for granted, I had to try to get outside of my participating self and struggle again to explain the things that seemed obvious’.


Bourdieu has done much to highlight the problematics of anthropologists questioning their informants/friends:

"and what comes next?", inviting an informant to situate two "periods" in relation to one another in a continuous time (which does no more than state what the genealogical or chronological diagram does implicitly), has the effect of imposing an attitude to temporality which is the exact opposite of the attitude involved practically in the ordinary use of temporal terms (1993: 105-6).

I did not ask questions of my friends and adopted families much, other than to clarify points or to raise matters which I was intrigued by and which, at that
moment, were not being discussed. However, questioning is perhaps also something universal that binds the researcher and the local together. I found that many of the Mauritians I met would question one another about things, even in situations where, to adopt another of Bourdieu’s terms, an outsider would imagine that a practical mastery would be present. For instance, during a Hindu prayer ceremony, participants might need a lot of guidance from the priest as to what to do, when and how. An important point to be made is that just because one is a Tamil, for example, does not necessarily mean that one knows an encyclopaedic amount of detail about this religion/culture. I met many individuals who admitted that they did not know that much about their religion, culture and ancestral language.

I also like Agar’s advice that sometimes

you should not have to ask. To be accepted in the streets is to be hip; to be hip is to be knowledgeable; to be knowledgeable is to be capable of understanding [more-or-less] what is going on, on the basis of minimal cues. So to ask a question is [sometimes] to show that you are not acceptable and this creates problems in a relationship when you have just been introduced to somebody (1980: 456, emphasis added).

Several of the people I met and with whom I became close friends said that it was acceptable to ask them ANY question - even concerning caste or offerings to spirits in the garden, and it is anyway both a normal and, it seemed, the expected thing for a foreigner to ask questions about new (to them) phenomena.

Thompson has also pointed up the importance of researcher flexibility and strategy in writing and posing questions: ‘If you know somebody has very strong views especially from a minority standpoint it may be essential to show a basic sympathy with them to get started at all. [And] I cannot claim to be objective or detached from the subject-matter of my research’ (cited in Green 1993: 107-8). If you cannot reach and demonstrate some kind of sympathetic understanding with one’s interlocutor(s) then one’s chances of developing a necessary ‘shared-ground’ are lessened. However, there certainly can be times when one is put into a difficult position and in managing this I followed Armstrong’s practice:

If Blades did something which offended my personal morality I did not show disapproval but could, if disagreeing with actions [racism ... sexism ...], make statements implying my point of view or joke about events and, in a sense, ‘laugh it off’ - the typical way amongst the Blades; at other times, as Hobbs (1988) noted, judgement has to be suspended (1993: 19).

I have to agree when Armstrong remarks that the most important quality of the researcher ‘after the ability to locate oneself without imposing, is quite simply the ability to mix and mingle with a variety of people’ (Ibid.: 18).

45 A group of football supporters/hooligans depending on what one’s point of view is.
46 Only one person told me about this - although I have good reason to estimate that the practice is common.
47 Note that there is a difference in quality and sense between this and any sort of ‘entrapment’ as practised in the case of (past?) police activities, e.g. with the alleged killer of Rachel Nickell.
• Drinking (in) Identity

Due to the demands made upon me to indulge in long drinking sessions, the following morning would result in the dilemma of whether to write it up or bring it up ...


At a *səfran* ceremony (held on the evening before a Hindu wedding when the bride’s family says goodbye to her, etc.) in late 1996, just a short period into my stay in Mauritius, I decided explicitly to label myself as a preferential rum drinker and see what happened. The guests and relatives of the bride were seated under a large green marquee-structure, created by first constructing a frame-work with scaffolding, and then attaching heavy tarpaulin over it. To regular scaffolding spars were attached fluorescent light tubes to provide illumination, as well as fairy lights, flowers, freshly cut palm fronds and other decorative fixtures. In the centre of the main marquee there was the area where the bride sat, surrounded by the video-cameraman and many relatives and guests taking photographs - including the official photographer. The priest officiated, said the appropriate prayers and guided the participants through their rituals. To my left was the veranda of the bride’s families’ house, and this was where a group of Indian musicians sat and played their harmonium and drums and sang. Behind me was another marquee-ed area, on a patch of empty ground: and it was here that food was prepared, cooking on wood fires as is obligatory at such times, and served to guests sitting at long tables and eating with their hands from banana leaves. Down past the focal area where the bride was sitting, however, was a gap where men kept disappearing, and I knew that there would be a room where some men would be drinking rum. Hence when the brother of the bride (who had invited me to the ceremony) asked me if I wanted something to drink, I asked for rum and followed him out of the tent, through a rain-battered garden, (a cyclone was approaching), to an extension of the main house that had just been built. In this concrete shell there was a round table at which men drinking rum and ate *gajack*, as did the wife of the bride’s brother (who was eating but not drinking). A glass was brought for me, and I was poured a measure of Powers No.1 [rum]. I wished everyone good health and began sipping. Almost immediately the chap sitting next to me, whom I vaguely recognised, said ‘I see you like the rum’. ‘Yes’ I replied, adding that I was a great fan of Mauritian food and drink. In the space of a minute or two I learnt that this man worked with a mutual friend and I found myself invited to another party in a week’s time. Within the next couple of minutes I was chatting away with my neighbour on my left-hand side as well.

These kinds of contacts and pleasant human interchanges would never have happened if I did not drink rum and people appreciated the fact that I appreciated the way they did things and that I liked their national food(s) and drink(s).

[...] These may appear to be trifles to the non-anthropological observer, but in the field they are very significant and, indeed, often surprising to Mauritians. Indeed, by way of contrast, between the expatriate and the anthropologist, an expatriate once informed me that one of the best things about being in Mauritius was not the opportunity to experience a new set of cuisines, tastes and fruit and vegetable, but instead that in the supermarket Roquefort cheese was far cheaper than in her native Scotland.

On another occasion, it being a wet afternoon, it was announced that ‘no-one works when the weather is like this’ and two friends and I drove out to the countryside and had some rum and *gajack*. During these conversations, I learned information which I would otherwise never otherwise have heard and which is inserted throughout this thesis.

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48 Food that one eats when drinking - one has to eat when drinking in Mauritius, especially as most men drink rum or whisky at such events. As long as the household is not, for example, an orthodox and hence vegetarian Hindu household, the *gajack* is usually and definitely preferably meat: fried chicken or fish; along with bread, chillies, peanuts and so on.

49 Indicating the levels of organisation which takes place, vegetarian *gajacks* (snack food to eat whilst drinking) are available for those non-meat-eating drinkers: i.e. those orthodox Tamils or Hindus who were unorthodox enough to drink, but too orthodox to eat meat, or chose not to for health reasons.

50 The role of food and drink in unifying Mauritius is explored further below.
In Mauritius, among men, I was sometimes only accepted as what could be labelled someone worth greeting\(^{51}\) - when the answer to the question ‘*Li bwa rum*?’ or ‘*Li bwa fo*’ ['He drinks rum?'; 'He drinks spirits?'], addressed to whichever Mauritian male(s) I was with, was affirmative (usually to the questioner’s surprise).\(^{52}\) This question is, I think, a simulacrum of one addressed to an accompanier of Armstrong in his encounters with Sheffield United fans: ‘Is he o’reyt?’ I ‘knew how to drink’, as Armstrong puts it (1993: 23; 19). Knowing how to behave, in this sense, being the physiological ability to drink what was regarded as contextually appropriate amounts of rum or whisky or, occasionally, beer. It is interesting that this question was addressed to my Mauritian friends rather than myself, simultaneously indicating that they did not expect (a) a non-Mauritian to understand any Kreol and (b) certainly not to enjoy Mauritian rum.

I was very fortunate that I never fell prey to the alcohol related rupture in local relations made by one of Hobbs’ contacts:

One particularly helpful informant, who lived nearby, observed me staggering home in the early hours and confronted me the next day with: ‘I see you were doing some of that research last night then.’ From then on he was uncooperative. Research and sociology were obviously excuses for getting drunk and on state money at that (1993: 48).

Drinking in Mauritius is, for many men (excluding most Muslims) somewhat *de rigueur*\(^ {53}\) and also served, according to my informants, useful and cathartic functions, rather than being related to machismo. As my field notes record: ‘Speaking to Roshun about [drinking] programmes: if one is lacking energy because of one’s work, having a ‘programme’ means that one can leave the job for a day, have a relax, get that energy back - and return to work [vigorous pumping arm gesture] full of strength’. Roshun suffered a fair amount of stress in the workplace and, despite being well into his 30s, still lived in a small village with his rather strict, orthodox Hindu parents who did not allow him to drink at home. Being able to escape the confines of the family home and occupation and drink, joke and sing with his friends was highly important in his life.

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\(^{51}\) I am trying here to capture the unspoken, but definite, change in behaviour and friendliness that I encountered.

\(^{52}\) It was, however, acceptable not to drink rum - some people for example were recognised to always drink only beer, ‘*li bwa labiere*’. Mauritius is not the kind of place where such a choice would be a problem and, indeed, beer was usually regarded as the ideal way with which to begin a party, but if - thereafter - one alternated between beer and rum or even between rum and Power’s No. 1, this ‘melange’ was bound to upset one’s system and one would end up with a hangover and a ‘tete ki toum’ [a spinning head]. I suspect that Mauritians do not expect Europeans, coming from richer countries with Western lifestyles, to enjoy those things that they enjoy: rum, curry, rice, and so on. Mauritians certainly reward an interest in their culture and practices, however.

\(^{53}\) Although (i) Unsubstantiated rumours circulated that Muslims drank even more than Hindus - but only behind closed doors, and (ii) several Muslims that I met did indeed drink.
As I have indicated, the ethnographic context of my work was quite often with a group of relatives and close friends gathered at the house of one family for a celebration (such as New Year or a birthday, or just for a bit of a party). Sometimes the women and most of the children would adjourn to one room in the house and the men would be installed in a garage or ante-room, with a table full of gajacks, rum, beer and perhaps whisky. At other times and in other families, everyone would remain in the same room(s). Whatever the situation, if there were people there that I had not met before it would not usually be long before I was asked upon what I was researching in Mauritius. When I would declare that I was interested in Mauritian identity, the topic of conversation often turned towards the current political (one might say, although they wouldn't, ethno-political) situation in Mauritius. At other instances, material was gained in a more fortuitous manner. On the following page I present a vignette aiming to give a flavour of the way I worked and the interface between my aim to be polite to my Mauritian hosts and my requirement to gain 'data'. This vignette is one of the first occasions where I was pretty satisfied with my interaction, and marked a realisation that I now had the knowledge required to appropriately handle many of the inter-personal situations which together amount to 'fieldwork'.

• Vignette
Thursday.
Early to Port Louis. To the bus stop pre-7a.m.. Bus zips through to Port Louis - and I am there by 7:45! I walk slowly towards the offices of Le Quotidien newspaper where I am to meet D. at 8:30. Sit on fountain outside the cathedral for a while and read Le Quotidien. A lovely morning, sat opposite the Supreme Court, so see lots of expensive BMWs and Mercs, etc.. Then, I am approached by a young Indian chap - probably younger than me. Smartly dressed, car-ring, trainers, the usual yooft-gear here. I wrote down the meat of our exchange immediately after he had departed.

Him: Bonjour
Mils: Bonjour, ça va?

Him [Initiates shaking hands (which is when I realise that he has a skin problem on his hands, all scaly and dry ...)] and after a few pleasantries, he sits himself down alongside me on the fountain. I keep my sunglasses on, and then take them off (cos it's polite]. He says - in French - that he requests me to 'rendre un service' to him, his mother left home this morning whilst he was still sleeping [does gesture to indicate that he was sleeping, i.e. hands in praying attitude to the side of the head], and he doesn't have any money to enable him to get to work. He asks me if I have understood. To ensure that I get the story right in my own mind, for this journal, I say no, 'j'ai pas tellement compris'. 'Ah,' he says, 'tu [i.e. we are both young people together, rather than 'vous'] as pas compris'. 'Non,' I say, 'pas tellement'.

Then he tells me it all again, and ends by asking if I can 'rendre' him this 'service'. He asks for 20 Rupees, and after I do nothing lowers his bid to 10. I tell him that I can't do anything for him today because although I do have money - I do not have any change. Which is true [and would probably have made it worth his while mugging me! Except that we are close to the Supreme Court]. 'j'ai quelque l'argent, mais j'ai pas de monnaie'. So, I cannot help him today: 'pas aujourd'hui'!

I adopt a middle-distance gaze, but not an aggressive disinterest or anything, and he realises that I can't do anything for him, 'pas aujourd'hui?', and he shakes hands and goes: 'la prochaine fois et bonne Chevron'. 'Thank you,' he says to me. I tell him that I can't do anything for him today because although I do have money - I do not have any change. Which is true [and would probably have made it worth his while mugging me! Except that we are close to the Supreme Court]. 'j'ai quelque l'argent, mais j'ai pas de monnaie'. So, I cannot help him today: 'pas aujourd'hui'!

Then I noticed that there were 2 rather scruffy looking Creole men kind of on the fringes of the square fronting the Cathedral (which was gradually filling with cars looking for the scarce parking spaces there) - and I realised that I was, like the Inuit conception of the yearly flocks of animals/fish etc. a commodity to be approached and have a strategy of wallet-opening engaged. I stood up, and, taking a leaf out of Argyle's book on the social psychology of everyday life, looked more authoritative and less "inviting", and made it obvious, by looking at the cathedral clock every so often, that I was waiting for somebody. Then I set off to the newspaper offices.

D. wasn't there yet, so I told the security guard why I was there, 'j'attends pour un amie, ça va?' - asking if it was OK to stand and wait - out of the [passing cyclone's] rain - in the ground level garage for 3 cars through which one gains entrance to the newspaper offices. After about 15 minutes of wait, the security guard came over and engaged me in conversation in French. We had a pleasant chat, and he told me that between 1986-90 he was in London (Edmonton), and did all sorts of jobs there. Life there is 'pas facile' [not easy], 'c'est dur' [it's hard]. These were themes he also applied to life in Mauritius! I mentioned about the problems of education and paying for private tuition, etc.: as he has an 18 month old girl. He told me of the problems of the Jamaicans in London: they are, he says, 'bien sauvage' [well wild], and that he doesn't like blacks - they steal, etc.

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This indicates to the reader, hopefully, that Mauritius is quite a wealthy place - and quite a lot of people from University lecturers through to lawyers and big shop-owners had top-range imported cars.

Removing sunglasses means, I think, that one's eyes are visible and so inspires a more friendly attitude in one's interlocutor.

Research strategy.

Middle-distance gaze = disinterest, which I believe, a Mauritian way of dealing with things: non-aggressive disinterest. My stream-of-consciousness interpretation.

Awareness that we were both 'playing' roles. About the first 'non-standard' interaction that I was confident with.

Theory <=> practice

Indicates the ease with which one can strike up a conversation in Mauritius.

A familiar line in Mauritius - that life isn't easy.

Also a fairly regular line.
Commentary

This vignette is presented to reveal a change of behaviour in the researcher, from the application of techniques appropriate to the UK to a more easy-going approach, informed by the first few months of my stay in Mauritius. Perhaps the vignette is notable for me more because of what did not happen rather than for what did happen. I coped with the interaction and ensured that the youth, although left materially empty-handed, did not get a bad impression of me, such that he might have received from a tourist or expatriate who would not, I believe, know how to best handle this exchange. I had the sensation that we were both engaged in a kind of 'jousting' exchange, with him keen to explore the reasons why I was where I was at that time, doing something (hanging around) which tourists/Franco-Mauritians do not do (dressed as I was - casual/smart), and me trying to work out if his story was convincing or not.

Concluding my discussion of this vignette, then, from chance encounters, ethnographic material is revealed. Often, returning home in the evening from a day collecting discourse, I would begin reviewing my day and get concerned that I had, as it were, not 'collected' anything that day. Then, slowly, it would dawn on me that, actually, I did have usable material (gained from normal, everyday conversations, interactions, 'gossip', observation and participation in events). This for me really underscores the necessity, already mentioned, of being aware that one does not necessarily gain one's best (i.e. most revealing, persuasive, moving or even coherent) data from big, unusual, cultural or religious events. For example, the role of gossip in everyday life is substantial and hence it seems fair, in a redressive manner, to draw upon this rather neglected area of social life and conversation: 'gossip helps maintain group unity, morality and history; for the essence of gossip is a constant (if informal and indirect) communal evaluation and reaffirmation of behaviour by assessment against common, traditional expectations.'\(^{54}\) It can also be a pleasure to be included in exchanges of gossip and rumour. Hence, material gathered through what might be described as 'gossiping' features heavily in this Thesis.\(^{55}\)

\(^{55}\) I would certainly argue that it would be through analysing MY gossip that people would come to a more insightful and realistic vision of me and my personality than if they were, for example, to attend a lecture presented by me or read my C.V. biography.
As I have previously noted, I want to present 'native' texts (oral discourses) alongside the (printed) texts of formally academic scholars and alongside literature - and all set alongside my mullings-over. In this Thesis, adopting Rapport's (1994) usage, I am 'zig-zagging' between bodies of literatures, panoplies of texts, performances and discourses; zipping between theory and Mauritius; between academics and friends; between Mauritians and Mauritians - hoping to influence my/(the reader's) view of both. I want it to be an experience to read this text, as the experiences behind the production itself was made up of a multitude of events: some thrilling, some mundane, some inexplicable. Perhaps one could resuscitate the term 'happening' to describe the kind of involved participation in the reading-event that I hope to encourage (or, in Turner's terms, existential/spontaneous communitas (1974: 120)). I aim, though, to avoid the historical temptation of Structural Functionalism - which has characterised so much of the canon of Social Anthropology - to create a solid, coherent, holistic analysis where all the bits of research slot neatly together and produce in the reader the opium-like effect that Mauritian society is 'just-so'. This is the state where the author is an unconfused, panoptically-surveilling and comprehending figure who has the authority, being time-served in both the field and the academy, to convey to colleagues and peers what, for example, Mauritian identity is 'all about'.

As the following chapters will reveal, I am not that person and this Thesis is not holistic. The reality effect is just that - an effect. In this Thesis there will be no attempt to disguise conflicts and contradictions between theories or ethnographies. It is not my aim to set out exactly what it is 'to be Mauritian' today - because there is no such being, in the same way that I would argue that there is no possibility of reaching a reified, essentialist definition of a Briton. Simply put, this Thesis is an attempt to evoke my impressions of some Mauritians and some events witnessed in Mauritius and to marry those impressions with, or against, (and then to expand upon) previous research, both on Mauritius and further afield, and statements explaining Mauritius' diversity propounded by the Mauritian state. Many of my aims will be pursued through the presentation of statements from individual Mauritians - a perspective which, I will argue, has been submerged from view in previous ethnographies.

- 'Revelatory incidents': The Specialness of the Anthropological Viewpoint.
One of my major conceptual and framing problems has been that of coming to an understanding of the point at which the anthropologist doing his or her fieldwork - either in their country of origin or elsewhere - ceases to be merely an expatriate, a travel writer, a tourist. Fernandez draws a useful division between anthropologists and tourists when he writes of the 'revelatory moments' of the anthropologists' insight\textsuperscript{56} into a culture. These incidents, he continues,

\begin{quote}
are not so frequent in the flow of everyday life as to be easily noted by any tourist. And in any event the awareness of them and their significance is the fruit of participation over the long term in a culture. It is only such participation that enables us to give these moments of a sudden constellation of significances an adequate reading. [...] And it also ought to be said that being present at a "revelatory incident" is one of the attractive aspects of fieldwork ... something that makes it, despite the discomforts that often enough accompany it, and its many other challenges, ultimately rewarding (1986: xi).
\end{quote}

This seems to me to be a useful resolution. There is a partition between the categories of the tourist, expatriate, travel writer and anthropologist. Anthropologists tend to want to know more than most people, and gather their material in a distinctive manner.

VS Naipaul is perhaps a travel writer who differs from most not only in the sense that he tends to spend a long period travelling and talking through, for example, India, but also because he makes a great deal of close friendships and acquaintance-ship with those that he encounters. VS Pritchett, in endorsing \textit{A Million Mutinies Now}, describes Naipaul as a 'thinking traveller who exposes himself to the scene'\textsuperscript{57}. Like me, Naipaul 'cannot travel only for the sights' (Naipaul 1977: 8). Most travel writers and journalists are, however, only too happy to travel solely for the sights and confusions. As Miller observes, they are \textit{all} tourists:

\begin{quote}
In the \textit{New Left Review}, Benedict Anderson has made sharp criticisms of the work of the journalist and poet James Fenton which compare it with that of Kapuscinski and Naipaul. These three writers are tagged as representatives of two hardly very different types of crisis-fancying, Third Worldly literary tourist (1989: 104).
\end{quote}

The writing anthropologist is admittedly also open to the criticism of being a literary tourist - but this can also be both a source of strength and energetic originality, steering away from crisis-fancying and narcissism, and yet being a thinking individual striving to understand. This Thesis aims to prove by example that anthropology is more than the work of literary tourism and that being concerned about how data is collected does not mean that interesting and original data cannot be collected. In many ways, this Thesis adopts a manifesto that harkens back to the traditional strengths of social anthropology. I do not here refer to the past practices of the collection and presentation of data pertaining to categories of:

\textsuperscript{56} Presumably real or imagined.
Physical Appearance, Psychology (which in fact meant an 'intelligence' assessment), Ornament and Dress, Food, Agriculture, Habitations, Crafts, Navigation and Swimming, Trade and Property, Government, Social Organisation, Amusements, Morality and Justice (both of which actually dwelt to a significant extent on sexuality), War, Sickness, Death and Burial, Religion, Time and the Elements, Reproduction and finally a rudimentary vocabulary (Coombes 1994: 133).

I believe instead that the insights which anthropology has provided, and continues to provide, are a focus on the local point of view and a concern with the meanings which individuals elsewhere in the world, or in one's own society, ascribe to their behaviour and the actions of others (cf. Malinowski 1922; Leach 1971). Anthropology can be radical, as well as liberal and literary (Rapport 1997), in fact this radicalism may well come from actually being liberal, literary and individual-centred. Coombes, amongst others, is correct to observe that anthropology's relationship with colonialism is - at best - ambivalent, and often one of handmaidenship (1994: 111). But anthropology is capable of being more than a tool of colonialism, it can be a post-colonial manoeuvre, a promoter of empowerment (for example by highlighting the complexities and achievements of those individuals that we meet who are not academics). By drawing on the post-colonial and post-modernistic reconsiderations in and of anthropology, I will later explore the discursive formations, in Foucauldian terms, which have been produced about Mauritius in the texts of both sociologists and state in Mauritius (which have produced a certain idea of 'Mauritius', 'Mauritians' and their social diversity), and then signal my departure from them.

The acts of researching for and writing out ethnography are ones of collection: of ordering and reordering. Of deletion and supplementation. Of elision and division. This Thesis is a diverse collection of harvested sentences and images, ARTificially suspended in a particular time and space - that of the time and place of its reading - and adding up to nothing more or less than a sum of some of the texts (in the broadest possible sense) that I encountered and helped create during my stay in Mauritius. In his famous paper On Collecting art and culture, Clifford foregrounds the structured hoarding of stuffs that anthropologists, ethnologists, cultural studies researchers, museologists (and others) do. All collections, he says, embody hierarchies of value, exclusions, rule-governed territories of the self. But the notion that this gathering involves the accumulation of possessions, the idea that identity is a kind of wealth (of objects, knowledge, memories, experience), is surely not universal' (1993: 52).

58 I.e. reordering.
Collections are, then, by definition, partial, selective and (hopelessly) reductionist. Clifford cites Stewart’s work on museum collections which ‘create the illusion of [the] adequate representation of a world by first cutting objects out of specific contexts (whether cultural, historical, or intersubjective) and making them ‘stand for’ abstract wholes’ (Ibid). This is what ethnographies have typically done, but one of the subsidiary aims of this Thesis is to demonstrate that, in the light of these realisations, a postmodern ethnography, and hence anthropology, is possible. I share Overing’s sense of requiring contextual knowledge: ‘[i]n order for me, as analyst, to understand the variation I see on the ground, I want to know when the various principles are activated: in what circumstances does the native place precedence on one principle, over another?’ (1975: 10). Stotter has written convincingly on the benefits of the Postmodern turn in the social sciences, and neatly summarises the ‘turn’:

Among the many changes entailed is a shift in the character of not only standpoint and investigatory activity, but also its focus and mode of expression: There is a movement, first, from the standpoint of the detached, theory-testing onlooker, to the interested, interpretative, procedure-testing participant-observer; second, from a one-way style of investigation to a two-way interactive mode; third, with a focus upon a wholly new set of research topics to do with what does or can go on between people; and fourth, giving rise to a non-cognitive, non-systematic, rhetorical, critical social constructionist approach to psychology (1993: 19).

One could also add that, after Shotter and others, I have a focus based in daily, mundane interaction as well as on special moments (i.e. of ceremony and ritual). The everydayness of social interaction is an area upon which surprisingly little sociological or anthropological work focuses (although de Certeau (1988) and Shotter (1993) are notable exceptions), but referring back to an earlier section, I would remind the reader that it is everyday interactions and discourses which have more to say to this researcher than ‘special’ moments as defined by the state and previous researchers (e.g. national celebrations).

With experimentation now permissible in the production of ethnography, ‘[a]nthropologists have finally begun to give explicit attention to the writing of ethnographic texts’ (Marcus and Cushman 1982: 25). I deny any (Realist) absolute closure to my account, just as Rapport described his textual/composition as juxtaposition without essence, ‘without 'closure' as Simmel put it, except in the subjective sense that it recounts everything that the intellectual needs of the author, at a given time, have caused him [or her] to see’ (Rapport 1993: x). The abstention from the tempting finality and seal of authenticity that closure imparts to a text is highlighted by Yearley who demonstrates that closure - being only one of a panoply

59 The work of de Certeau and Shotter is drawn upon heavily below.
of available literary devices - is **strategic**. Closure is manufactured - it is neither a 'real' nor 'natural' conclusion. Yearley adds that (even) scientific narratives are deliberate or strategic: their elements are consciously arranged so that the process of science maintains a quality of rationality, direction, purpose, and completion. Scientists may even consciously or unconsciously revise the presentation of the events in their work to maintain this sense of closure [i.e. to generate coherence].

Thus it is clear that there is no discontinuity between scientific and other modes of creation ... science is not removed from the wellspring of art and poetry, nor is it the only cultural expression of rationality. It is also a human process governed by the ordinary human passions of ambition, pride, and greed as well as virtues (Broad and Wade cited by Romanucci-Ross 1991: 56).

Postmodern concerns are [not] 'epistemological hypochondria'

Postmodernism is frequently vilified as pseudo-academic, and even more frequently, and ironically, as *passé*. In this Thesis, I demonstrate that although anthropology is now certainly an uncomfortable operation, postmodernist perspectives and the awarenesses they have brought can offer some ways by which one can foreground one's limitations, and make these weaknesses into strengths by admitting limitation and moving beyond it. Barthes argues, in *The Death of the Author*, that the author is not now 'the traditional transcendent, annunciatative being, but rather that voice among many which holds together the polyphonic strands of the text's composition, an author who "resides within the controlling center constituted by the intersection of the surfaces"' (Barthes 1977: 48, emphasis added). The centre, though, is, for me, not a *literal* centre but rather a mobile one: a focusing power which moves from moment to moment; from interaction to interaction; from (oral) text to (written) text; from a friend's (ordinary) to an anthropological (academic) discourse.

Tyler usefully sums up post-modern ethnography as:

a cooperatively evolved text consisting of fragments of discourses intended to evoke in the minds of both reader and writer an emergent fantasy of a possible world of commonsense reality, and thus to provoke an aesthetic integration that will have a therapeutic effect. [...] A post-modern ethnography is fragmentary because it cannot be otherwise. Life in the field is itself fragmentary, not all organized around familiar ethnological categories such as kinship, economy and religion (1986: 125; 131).

This Thesis procures a view of culture akin to Clifford's 1988 conception: as (constantly) emergent, (continually) contested and (terminally) temporal. This is a post-modern notion, but also one which most adequately fits with my personal

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60 As well as to the process of making the notes from which these texts are then constructed, see preceding sections.


experience both of Mauritian and other cultures. Hence this allows one, at any single moment, to think of divisions between people as significant and important; and yet at the next to find that an informant who just made a broad and unquestionable statement has many friends in that other group from whom s/he has just divided her/himself. This, it seems to me, is theorising more akin to human nature than those which call forth, for example, unconscious, primordial or immanently solidary explanations.

Postmodernism permits and delights in the dissolution of linearity. I share the stance of a contributor (Roth) to Mokros’ volume on interaction and identity who ‘presents no effort at systematicity or synthesis in approaching her data from the perspectives of Goffman, Foucault, and Giddens’ (Mokros 1996: 10). Roth exercises the approach that Foucault wished people to take with his works (i.e. the ‘theory of the toolbox’). Foucault declared that:

> All my books ... are, if you like, little tool-boxes. If people want to open them, use a sentence, an idea, an analysis as a screwdriver or a spanner in order to short-circuit, disqualify and break systems of power, including if need be, those which have given rise to my own books, well, so much the better! (cited in O’Farrell 1989: 110)

By escaping any necessary closure, systematicity, or synthesis - one can expect to find in Postmodern texts a *melange*, a *métissage*, a blending of philosophies, styles, texts, literatures, moods, forms and so on. Ethnographic narrative has become ethnographic narratives. Monographs have become polyphonic: but not polygraphs revealing truths.

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A ‘compromise formation’ of ‘structured heteroglossia’.

I would like to say that as for those for whom going to a lot of trouble, beginning and beginning again, trying, being wrong, starting again from scratch, yet still managing to find a way of hesitating with each step, that as for those, in short, for whom working amidst reservations and anxiety, is equal to giving up, well, it is obvious that we are not on the same wavelength (Foucault cited in O’Farrell 1989: 130).

This Thesis is not intended to be a flawless and wide-ranging portrayal of any one Mauritian identity. I draw my own parameters and hence am hoisted, or not, by my own petard. I aim to produce - from ‘something of a mosaic of linked quotation, or structured heteroglossia’ (Cornwell 1990: 4) - a representation of Mauritian lives. There are certain features of Thesis-structure that force one to certain orders of things and ethnography is always a ‘compromise formation’ (Crapanzano 1976:

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63 Drawing on Wittgenstein’s notions of language, Gilles Deleuze - a great influence on Foucault - described theory as a ‘tool-box’ (*Ibid*).

64 Apologies to Foucault.
72) because writing about things converts social fluidity into an 'arrested gesture'. 'Compromise', however, is not always such a bad thing - indeed it is seen as the turn-de-force of the successful diplomat and, as Spencer Tracy observed in The Last Hurrah, it can be 'man's greatest friend'.65 My work is the output of a 'discourse detective', I have made it my key interest to listen to and learn from discourses; and then to tie together a 'mosaic of linked quotation' - quotations from Mauritians, myself and established academics from a multiplicity of fields and ages. My main philosophical sources are post-modernism, post-structuralism66 and individually-centred interpretative anthropology which have helped me maintain a sense of 'where I was going' and also of maintaining, or 'sealing-in', a sense of the freshness of research which, clearly, decays with the distance embodied in the passage of time spent away from the field and with each subsequent re-write.

- Aims

As I have made apparent, I approached my fieldwork following an intensive amount of intellectual soul-searching. I decided to be a wholly overt researcher in Mauritius and determined to interact with people on a basis of amity and friendship. I found fieldwork to be a hugely - and usually mutually - enjoyable experience, and believe that power imbalances between researcher and researched were minimised. I am continuously in contact with friends in Mauritius and intend to return frequently in the future. Field research was conducted as a dialogue and my interaction with Mauritians is a continuing and, I hope, equitable conversation. I have focused as much on events and statements which feature in daily life as I have on more extraordinary times (such as religious festivals, etc.), although one of my later conclusions will be that there are similar levels of inter-cultural comprehension and inclusion operating in the context of both the daily and rare event. My aim here is to demonstrate that it is through the daily enactment of what might preliminarily be defined as 'tolerance' between Mauritians of differing ethnic (and other) groups, as well as on the special occasions, that ethnographic focus can reveal the processes and mental standpoints whereby individuals come to understandings of each other.

65 The Last Hurrah, Dir. John Ford 1958.
66 I wish to record my debt here to the Undergraduate courses of Nigel Rapport which I followed, for my first degree, at the University of St. Andrews. Those courses have done much in developing my idiosyncratic perspective.
This Thesis examines fluid aspects of human social life. Hitherto, the anthropological investigations of Mauritius and a great deal of the rest of the planet, have attempted to find the hard edges of cultural forms: ethnic groups, races, religions. However, there is another path - and this Thesis tries to follow it.

In this Thesis I work with individuals and I write about individuals in an idiosyncratic manner. I see ‘culture’ as an ‘intentional world’ which is, according to Shweder (1991: 74), created by humans’ search for meaning, and this process of seizing meanings and resources from the intentional world (or sociocultural environment) changes that world or environment. Consequently there is no logical requirement that the ‘identity of things remain, fixed and universal, across intentional worlds’ (Ibid: 75), or within one either. This makes this Thesis, in part, a work of Cultural Psychology. As Shweder observes ‘Cultural psychology is the study of intentional worlds’ (Ibid: 76) and the functioning of individuals within those worlds. This is the anthropology of empowerment: individuals create, maintain, alter or destroy their worlds (cf. Goodman 1987: 7-16). I move between levels of analysis: from state discourses to the comments of individuals. From individuals ‘transcending’, as I will put it, divisions imposed on Mauritian society by previous researchers, to statements shutting off one group from another. From shared practices which unite, to actions or statements which divide. This is a diverse set of social worlds, and I have drawn on a diverse set of literary tools with which to represent, or evoke, these worlds.

Lila Abu-Lughod, Hannerz reports, regards anthropology as conventionally (whilst it seeks to account for and explain cultural difference) producing and maintaining difference (Hannerz 1996: 31). This difference, naturally, usually accompanies distancing and inequivalence as well as creating an account which is static, homogeneous and de-humanising. Abu-Lughod suggests three strategies by which anthropology might try to avoid these proclivities:

1. To focus on practice and discourse and hence highlight ‘contradictions and misunderstandings, strategies, interests, and improvisations, and the play of shifting and competing statements with practical implications’ (Ibid).
2. To emphasize connections which present cultures as more than ‘isolated units’ and the circumstances by which an ethnographer arrives in the field (Ibid.: 31-2).
3. To refuse generalisation and
to tell stories instead about particular individuals in time and place. This is again to subvert connotations of homogeneity, coherence, and timelessness, and to bring out similarities in lives. As real people are portrayed agonising over decisions, enduring tragedies and losses, trying to make themselves look good, suffering humiliations, or finding moments of happiness, a sense of recognition and familiarity can replace that of distance (Ibid).
• Influenced by such critiques, the aims of this Thesis, broadly and briefly put, are as follows:

1. In describing and conceptualising the actions and discourses of individual Mauritians; I will argue that ethnographies and state discourses have, to date, dehumanised the role and abilities of individuals. My project is an ambitious one: to resist totalisation, reification and holism. I will demonstrate that the continued analytical reliance upon the immutable categorisation of the population of the plural society of Mauritius is untenable. Although previous ethnographies have noted that Mauritius has - somewhat mysteriously - maintained stability and order following Independence, the day-to-day management of diversity by individuals has been neither previously studied nor highlighted.

2. I will later state that the discourses both of antecedent ethnographies and the Mauritius government are similar, but amount to little more than representational models which must be contested in the considered ethnographic record. I show that although categorisations and divisions do explain some of individual Mauritians' social reality, this is an exceptionally partial view and there are some important means and moments by which Mauritians transcend the social divisions that one expects to find.

3. The techniques which I adopt to present these alternative and contesting views of Mauritius are distinctly Postmodern, and the array of techniques, texts, opinions and discourses that I mobilise makes this Thesis dialogic and, even, polyphonic. The main notions which underpin my account are intersubjectivity (individual Mauritians generally recognise one another to be coeval); transcendence (individuals transcend divisions imposed by state and sociologist) and creolization (individuals take part and believe in things which are not formally part of their ethnic, caste, religious (or other) group's set of beliefs and practices).
The ethnic divisions of Mauritius are changing. They are no longer mere categories but are becoming corporate groups. The danger of communal conflict increases.

- Benedict 1965: 67

We should [...] remember that Mauritius very nearly anticipated the breakdown of Lebanese national society in the late 1960s, when inter-ethnic relations were tense and occasionally violent. There is no guarantee that similar or even more serious riots may not break out in the future.

- Eriksen 1990: 89

As Mauritius progressed towards Independence, Raman decided to found the Stella Clavisque Club in an attempt to counter increasing possibilities of communalism. At the foundation meeting, hundreds of people attended and 'with only one motivation - to bring back the people of Mauritius to sanity and to the harmony that had always existed'.

- Raman 1991: 218
Chapter 1

Mauritius: Unity, Diversity, Division.

From Sociological Categorisation to Governmental Ideology

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first presents previous academic writings on the island of Mauritius by Mauritians and non-Mauritians alike, drawing out both similarities and dissonances. The second connects the sociological divisions of the Mauritian population with governmental ones, and then demonstrates the departure of this Thesis from these antecedent discourses and manoeuvres.

This chapter is concerned with the cultural construction of national identity and is designed to provide the foundations for my broadening argument which distinguishes between this construction of Mauritian identity/ies by (a) the state and previous ethnographies and (b) the individual Mauritians that I met.

The point is that questions of form are not prior, the form itself should emerge out of the joint work of the ethnographer and his native partners.

- Tyler 1986: 127.

Part 1: The Sociological Divisions of Mauritius

Together with the Seychelles and Madagascar, Mauritius is a haven for the botanist, biologist, zoologist, ornithologist and other ‘-ologists’.

Lonely Planet guide Mauritius, Réunion and Seychelles, 1993: 44.

In introducing previous sociological and ethnographic research on Mauritius, and outlining through summary the kinds of ways that Mauritius has been presented in ethnographic, and other academic, literatures, the first part of this chapter is divided into two numbered parts. Section One of Part One deals with the writings of non-Mauritian academics, Section Two with works by Mauritian scholars.67 The

67 It is so ordered not to privilege Western, outsider’s discourses (as Simmons would have it: [b]ecause of communal biases, few Mauritians have been able to write about their island with objectivity, and few non-Mauritians have published anything about the island’ (Simmons 1982: 250)), no - it is merely a device to permit me to move more seamlessly from discussions about
majority of these texts see ethnic and other social divisions as being immanent in all interaction in Mauritius. This belief in immanence is then drawn into the realms of the state. Consequently, following this literature review, I make connections between ethnographic and state discourses and stances before chiselling out my distinctive and, in this context, radical rupture with the majority of antecedent texts and governmental positions.

Overall, the chapter combines to show how sociologically perceived divisions between presumed solidary groups in Mauritius are adopted both by the Government of Mauritius and the majority of social scientists. The focus on division, I argue, is compromised both by the writings of some Mauritian scholars (who note that, historically, Mauritius has been a socially and ethnically tolerant and stable society) and my understandings of the practices and discourses of the Mauritians that I met. This chapter therefore sets the backdrop against which my departures from previous researches/state rhetorics will be played.

Section One - non-Mauritian academics (Apocalypse Now, or Later).

A common thread which unites the writings of non-Mauritian academics is a suspicion that the socio-political stability of the island is temporary and permanently compromised by the socio-cultural heterogeneity of its inhabitants. Those who write before the Independence of Mauritius (1968) are pessimistic not only for socio-political stability, but also for its economic, subsistence-agriculture, survival. Those who have researched on the island more recently accept that the economic, agricultural and population-expansion problems have been successfully overcome, but remain deeply concerned about the islands’ diversity. Consequently, their mood is generally downbeat and suspicious.

• Following my outline of each scholar’s text, a brief summation is included providing key points which will contrast with Section Two (on Mauritian writers) and which will be shown to be significant in the second part of this chapter and beyond.
Published in 1960, Meade et al.'s report for the Mauritius Legislative Council (The Economic and Social Structure of Mauritius) is one of the first to demonstrate the pessimistic streak which runs through most of the texts subsequently written about the island's population. It begins with a historical overview of the development of contemporary Mauritius, for example the public right of access to its beaches, that which was 'first reserved by the French for military purposes and under the British became an inalienable and imprescribable part of the 'domain public' in 1899' (Meade et al. 1960: xviii). Moving, as directed by their parameters of study, to the then contemporary situation, Meade et al. argue that the immediate future of Mauritius is determined by its rapidly expanding population. Following WWII, the eradication of malaria and improvements in public health, an acceleration in the population growth rate occurred, making it one of the highest in the world. This, the authors believed, was 'a truly terrifying prospect' with the possibility of a serious decline in living standards unless the population issue was firmly tackled (Ibid: 3). One of the means of tackling this problem which Meade et al. addressed was emigration (to Britain, British Honduras and elsewhere) but this was rejected because '[m]any Mauritians will find difficulty in migrating on grounds of colour, race, language, lack of skill, and so on' (Ibid: 6).

Sugar, the authors concluded, was likely to remain a major source of income for Mauritius, but growth in other economic sectors was at least theoretically conceivable because although '[n]early every enterprise in Mauritius must be, if not wholly the concern of one family, at least wholly the concern of one race', it is from 'diverse combinations' of ethnic group members working alongside each other that future economic growth might spring' (Ibid: 26). Meade et al. found problems, however, with the levels of unemployment in Mauritius, not least because there was a disinclination of 'many unemployed or under-employed persons to do manual work [...] which leads to the paradoxical existence side by side of unemployment and shortage of labour' (Ibid: 60). This dislike of manual work, especially amongst young Creoles and Indians is, say the authors, both a matter of social prestige and due to their knowledge that the possibilities of promotion are limited and this is a serious obstacle in the further development of the island.

Other cultural explanations are invoked to explain why, for example, there are high rates of absenteeism on sugar estates, especially on Mondays and Saturdays:

hence if a text is mainly about, for example, Christian Mauritians, I will not attempt to summarise all
Excessive drinking at week-ends and late cinemas on Sundays with special showings on Mondays beginning usually at noon are among these. It has also been represented that the poor physical state of many of the labourers makes it impossible for them to work a full six day week, an argument which may be partly supported [...]. The island habit of week-end visiting of relatives may be another contributory factor (Ibid.: 63-4).

Comparison, state Meade et al., is inevitably made between Mauritius and other islands with large populations and few natural resources, such as Hong Kong and Puerto Rico. Both of these islands have established important export industries, despite importing virtually all of the raw materials required. There is no similar future for Mauritius, they assess, because the above-mentioned islands have larger domestic markets, more homogeneous populations and greater national unity. In addition, unlike Hong Kong, Mauritius is not ‘peopled by one of the most industrious of all races’ (Ibid.: 126). There might be some small benefits accruing from establishing some clothes mills, they instead suggest, or through the encouragement of small-scale rural crafts, such as basket-making (Ibid.: 142, 145). Tourism is similarly blighted; although there are some natural attractions it may well not be worth the investment in the necessary infrastructure required, from government coffers, to encourage this industry (Ibid.: 146-7).

- Overall, Meade et al.’s predictions for the future of Mauritius are gloomy. The population is escalating beyond control and will rapidly outstrip the resources available to support it; there is no future for emigration and it seems that there are practically no possibilities for the future economic diversification and development of the island. The Report concludes that the ethnic and racial ‘compartmentalization’ of Mauritian society impedes what few prospects for development there are, because ‘it [is] very difficult for citizens of different racial groups to combine together voluntarily for a common purpose. We encountered several examples of this attitude’ (Ibid.: 173).68

Burton Benedict

The anthropologist Benedict published his famous Mauritius: The Problems of a Plural Society (for the British Institute of Race Relations69), just three years before Mauritius independence in 1968. His professional opinion was not optimistic. Mauritius, he explained, was smaller than Trinidad, highly ethnically heterogeneous

that the author says.

68 I will later invite the reader to compare such statements with the contemporary writings of Mauritian and with my field experience.
and economically under-developed. In addition to Mauritius' small size, population of almost three-quarters of a million (then increasing at a rate of three per cent a year) and isolated location far from world markets, any benefit gained from the availability of cheap labour was offset by the increased costs of transportation to and from the island (Benedict 1965: 1). The potential success/survival of Mauritius was dependent on three things: (i) the limitation of exponential population growth; (ii) the expansion and diversification of its economy and (iii) the 'welding together of its heterogeneous population to form a single nation' (Ibid: 2).

Drawing on historical sources, Benedict demonstrated that as far back as 1829, a Mauritian company had made overtures to the Governments of Madras and Singapore for indentured Indian labourers, but it was only with the abolition of slavery in 1835 that 'regular' Indian immigration commenced, 'and continued off and on with varying degrees of government control until 1907, with a few additional immigrants being brought in 1922-3' (Ibid: 17). Hence, in just twenty-five years the proportion of Indians in the Mauritian population rose from a negligible level to some two-thirds, a level which has been maintained from the time of Benedict's work until the present day.

As regards the growth of a national identity, Benedict held that the immigrant groups which flowed into Mauritius have not combined 'in the way that most immigrant groups to the United States became Americans in the second generation' (Ibid: 22). At some moments, he writes, 'Mauritian' refers to someone of French descent; at another a light-skinned Creole, but almost never refers to Indians or Chinese. In spite of this lack of cross-cutting national identity, Benedict is reassured that although Mauritius is a plural society

- it is not faced with the correlation of ethnic or cultural differences with territorial division as are many of the new African nations (for instance, Nigeria or Kenya).
- Residental interspersion is a unifying feature of the plural society of Mauritius' (Ibid: 25).

Hence, when there are disputes in villages, villagers may well align themselves territorially - rather than ethnically, linguistically, religiously or culturally - so that 'Muslims, Hindus or Christians will side with their neighbours against their co-religionists in another part of the village' (Ibid). This is the first indication that, on a daily basis, relations between Mauritians are not always or wholly governed by considerations of group membership.

Benedict also draws attention to class differences which occur within ethnic communities that, he adds, 'does not necessarily diminish the pluralism of Mauritius. It can create an upper, middle and lower class for each ethnic section

69 Fieldwork paid for by the British Colonial Social Science Research Council.
rather than single classes cutting across all sections' (Ibid: 27). Benedict is careful to emphasise the dangers of social pluralism and to note that dangers may not necessarily fade with the rise of new social structures (e.g. class).

Benedict then moved on to discuss the position of the Creole community. He declares that the 'lowest stratum' of Creoles are amongst the poorest people on the island, being mainly fishermen and labourers and

among them one frequently finds what Smith has termed the 'matri-focal' family. These are families composed chiefly of a mother and her children in which the husband/father role is peripheral. During the course of her child-bearing years a woman may have children by several different men (Ibid: 28-9).

The endogamy of the Creole community is characteristic of all communities in Mauritius, says Benedict, and 'this and the distinctive patterns of family and kinship are fissive factors of the plural society of Mauritius' (Ibid: 31).

However, Benedict is more generous in his analysis of the Hindu community, and states that endogamy is not directed along caste lines and that caste also has no relevance to occupation except in the field of ritual where among Sanatanis the priests are Brahmins. [...] Caste persists chiefly as an endogamous category, particularly among Northern Hindus. High caste is also a label of high prestige in some contexts (Ibid: 37).

It is in the field of language that Benedict feels that national unity is most compromised. The linguistic multiplicity of Mauritius was, he wrote, a striking feature of the island, but

inhibits communication between various sections of the population. It is associated with the national heritage and cultural distinctiveness of each ethnic category. Like religion it can become a political symbol organizing one section of the society against another (Ibid: 39).

Whereas the Kreol language was more widely spoken, it was held 'in contempt' and 'utterly useless to anyone beyond the narrow limits of Mauritius' (Ibid: 41). In conclusion, Benedict paints a grimly apocalyptic vision of a territory where ethnic divisions were changing, no longer being 'mere categories' but instead becoming corporate groups. Hence, the danger of communal conflict increases' (Ibid: 67), fuelled by the very practices which make each section of the plural society distinctive.

- Benedict's conclusions are in much the same vein as those of Meade et al.. The future for Mauritius is not bright, and the presence of so many divisive ethnic, racial, religious and linguistic groups, and the prospect of Independence, leads him to predict a high probability of internecine conflict. However, he importantly draws the reader's attention to the fact that in village disputes, common residence can transcend ethnic, and other, divisions.
Oddvar Hollup

Oddvar Hollup's 1993 Dr. Polit. thesis (*Changing Conceptualization of Indian Ethnic Identity in Mauritius*) concerns itself with the construction of a common identity by Hindus in Mauritius. Hollup argues that there has been a 'gradual transformation' from a caste to an ethnic identity amongst Hindu Mauritians. Caste, Hollup suggests,

has lost much of its associative characteristics, meaning and content if compared to caste hierarchies in the Indian context. [...] It has become increasingly difficult to distinguish one caste category from another by the help of diacritical markers due to a process of greater homogenization (uniformity) among the Hindus, both in terms of religious practices (sectarian affiliation) and the increase in intercaste marriages (Hollup 1993: 3-4).

Hindu Mauritians are becoming less concerned with which caste individuals belong to, as their knowledge of others' caste declines when

the older generation passes away and caste is [thus] becoming less relevant for social interaction. Caste populations or categories still exist, but without a clearly defined hierarchy, which has virtually been dissolved due to absence of pollution barriers and frequent intercaste marriage (*Ibid.*: 3).

Caste difference is sometimes still recognised, he notes, but is not connected with an ideology 'supportive of human inequality' as is the case in India. Castes instead function as 'emblems of social or kin groups, which are now fluid because of intercaste marriage' (*Ibid.*: 4). Caste identity does not stigmatise, he continues, although it can aid nepotism (*Ibid.* 4-5). Now, the 'caste system' refers simply to solidary groups based on kinship and marriage. Hollup emphasises the role of the liberal, reformist Hindu movement *Arya Samaj* which by promoting, in the plural island context of Mauritius, 'universalistic and achievement-oriented principles, opposing the value of birth-ascribed status for caste, rights to priesthood and hierarchy' has permitted Hindu ethnic identity to be more broadly homogenised, discouraging caste division (*Ibid.*: 6).

Ethnicity as used by Mauritian Hindus, he moves on to observe, does not emerge from competition for resources, but is instead a socially and politically strategic means by which to acquire resources. A Mauritian *national* identity is used only by Mauritians when they are abroad. However,

[i]f there is something uniquely Mauritian which they all share it must be the lingua franca, Mauritian Kreol, but yet it is not the national [i.e. official] language. It is English which is the official language, another colonial symbol representing a viable compromise (*Ibid.*: 12).

Hollup is unclear as to what a national unity in Mauritius might be based in, and what appeal it has to people in creating a loyalty vis-à-vis the state. It is somehow dubious to what extent a shared Mauritian nationhood can be successfully created which can surpass primordial loyalties and allegiances based on shared elements of identification such as ancestry, kinship and distinct ethnic identities (*Ibid.*: 15).
Hollup's key analytical theory is that of 'Kreolization', defined as 'the local impact of foreign cultural dominance has made on other culturally distinct ethnic communities resulting in a gradual acculturation or assimilation' (Ibid.: 17). Hollup tempers this with the ability of local peoples to make selective choices and employ filtering devices to choose between those changes offered by Kreolization.

- Hollup updates and expands upon Benedict's chapters centring on Hindu Mauritians and focuses on the changes that have occurred to Mauritian Hindu conceptions of caste, concluding that the relevance of caste has declined, both in comparison to India and to Mauritius in historical perspective. Although agreeing with other scholars (e.g. Eriksen) that citizens of Mauritius only think of themselves as 'Mauritian' when in contact with non-Mauritians, he draws attention to the modernising aspects of Mauritian Hindu identity, but despairs at the possibility of the concurrent emergence of a true national identity.

**Thomas Hylland Eriksen**

Part A:
The anthropologist Eriksen is the author who has written most widely on contemporary Mauritian society. In 1989 he published an article in Trinidad, published in *Equality*, comparing that island with Mauritius. He argues that Mauritius is a 'nation of nations' and that 'compromise is the order of the day, be it in politics, in the economy, in the media or at a dinner party'. Although Mauritian society has undergone great changes, Eriksen posits that 'underlying cultural patterns have proven difficult to refashion' because 'ethnicity is a pervasive, though elusive, aspect of social life'. Although Mauritians often deny it, he continues, being a member of an ethnic group is highly useful in gaining employment, in political terms and in locating a spouse. State policy is to present Mauritius as a 'mosaic of Hindu, Muslim, European, African and Chinese influences, and it is highly unpopular to encourage the dissolution of cultural boundaries'. The rise of the new political party the Mouvement Militant Mauricien (MMM) in the 1970s tried to overturn ethnic political groupings, but came unstuck. The multicultural nature of Mauritian society is taken into account in Mauritius, unlike in Trinidad, says Eriksen, not least through the establishment of 'best loser seats' in the National
Assembly to ensure that all ethnic groups have some parliamentary representation. At Independence Day and other commemorations, an attempt is also made at representing all diversity: 'they will always include Indian music and dance along with Creole segas (the sega is similar to the calypso)’. The Mauritian state, he continues, is aware that it must make concerted efforts not to ‘upset the precarious ethnic equilibrium’. Although the MMM has, to date, failed in its bid to be a non-ethnically based political party, Eriksen explains that it has made the point that ethnicity need not be the ‘bottom line in politics’.

• In all daily social interactions, Mauritians are constantly reminded of their ethnicity and related social status. Eriksen’s message here is that Mauritius is currently stable, but that - along with Benedict - he feels that this stability is gravely jeopardised by diversity, and if the Government of Mauritius is not successful in making Multiculturalism take root, and cross-cutting links between communities do not then emerge, the future is worrying.

Part B:
In the final chapter of his 1990 M.Phil. dissertation (Communicating Cultural Difference and Identity - Ethnicity and Nationalism in Mauritius), Eriksen specifically addresses the issue of nationalism in Mauritius and the degree to which it can be said that Mauritians feel ‘Mauritian’. He begins by surveying the ways in which Mauritians speak about themselves. The first term that he analyses is that of ‘nasyon’. This has several meanings, such as: (i) my people, i.e. other members of my ethnic group and (ii) when used by a Hindu to refer to the lower castes (ti nasyon). Mauritius, however, says Eriksen, is rarely referred to as a nation (nasyon), instead it might be described as ‘enn lil’ (island) or as ‘enn peyi’ (country). Many politicians, instead, he argues, avoid the word and speak instead of ‘le peuple mauricien’ or ‘tous les Mauriciens’. Eriksen’s conclusion is that the majority of Mauritians do not yet consider themselves to be either a ‘people’ or a ‘nation’.

In terms of symbols of national unity, the vast majority of those currently in use are vestiges of colonial times, writes Eriksen. Indeed, the use of symbols and other items and locations associated with colonialism usefully ‘overcomes problems of ethnically-specific symbols, although the solution cannot be permanent’. Hence the colonial coat of arms featured on artefacts from bank notes through to Ministry

70 And presently available from his WWW site, and hence unavailable with original page numbers (www.uio.no/~geirthe/index.html).
publications is frequently used, along with the Latin description of Mauritius as ‘Stella et Claviscus Maris Indici’.\(^7\) The majority of coins now feature the profile of the politician who guided Mauritius to Independence and was its first Prime Minister (Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam). Generally, Eriksen remarks, Mauritians recognise that whereas Mauritius’ multi-ethnic constituency attracts tourists, they themselves feel it to be more of ‘a strain rather than an asset’. Eriksen then considers the claims of some Mauritian academics for a ‘pluriculturalisme mauricien’ which its leading proponent Dev Virahsawmy promotes as being based in and through the Kreol language. These claims Eriksen regards as having gained little popular support. Rhetorically he enquires: ‘Is this because an all-encompassing tolerance entails loss of own ethnic identity in Mauritius?’ Eriksen then discusses two case-studies from Mauritius which attempt to advance the idea of a ‘pluriculturalisme mauricien’, in the first, and in the second an attempt to transcend ethnic identitities with national ones.

The first case-study is of village hall Independence celebrations in March 1986.

The [cultural] show encompassed two Sino-Mauritian entries, two Tamil contributions and one Telegu, one European song, three performances representative of the Creoles, three each by Muslims and Marathis, and four entries in Hindi or Bhojpuri. The programme was printed in English, and the opening and ending speeches were held in Kreol.

The aim, above all, says Eriksen, was to demonstrate and propagate a sense of ‘unity in diversity’; the Multiculturalist rhetoric of the state. The argument is that if an individual defines him or herself in national rather than in ethnic terms, s/he ‘will then modify his [/her] representations relating to politics, economical relationships, marriage strategies, friendship etc. - and then proceed to modify his [/her] patterns of action’. Unfortunately, according to Eriksen, this version of ‘unity in diversity’ is contradictory to most Mauritians’ desires: they do not want to lose their distinctive identities (ethnic and otherwise) and replace it with a vague, bureaucratic notion of identity.

The second case-study is that of the funeral of the Father of the Republic, Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, in 1985. A Hindu religious ceremony was performed at his official residence, following which the body was taken to be cremated at the Botanical Gardens in the north of the island. Along the way, flowers were thrown at the motorcade and Church bells pealed. At the Botanical Gardens, the public, police, top civil servants, fellow politicians and members of the diplomatic corps paid their final respects. His son\(^7\) then set fire to the funeral pyre. Eriksen

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\(^7\) The Star and Key of the Indian Ocean, its leitmotif established by British colonial authorities.

\(^7\) The Prime Minister at the time of writing, Dr. Navin Ramgoolam.
concludes that although the ceremonies did not deviate from Hindu religious practice, there were important elements which transcended mere ethnic boundaries. First, music accompanying the mortuary procession was Chopin and Handel rather than 'Indian' music:

the administrators lifted, as it were, Ramgoolam's person above the Mauritian everyday reality of petty skirmishes to a higher, more universal sphere; this could be interpreted as meaning the level of humanity tout court but was, more likely, intended to give symbolic content to pan-ethnic Mauritianism.

The highly visible role played by both the Police and their Special Mobile Force (SMF) was due to the fact that, according to Eriksen, 'state representatives informed people that law and order was being maintained on a national level, and that this was done in a just way, not according to ethnic belonging (uniforms are identical)'.

Moving on to the linguistic situation in Mauritius, Eriksen notes that the Kreol language has, over some 150 years, proven capable of 'uniting otherwise very diverse groups into a reasonably homogenous linguistic group'. However, he adds, that this does not concomitantly imply that ethnic differences or assessments have been eradicated. In general political terms, he observes that Mauritians 'tend to interpret political events in ethnic terms'. Hence if a Minister, who is known to be, for example, a Franco-Mauritian, decides to reduce the export tax on sugar, this is criticised from an ethnic point-of-view (i.e. s/he is favouring his/her ethnic constituency). The Kreol language is, in fact, negatively valued by Mauritians, it is 'in contradiction to social mobility'. This is partly because it is associated with the 'despised (and publicly inarticulate) ('Black') Creoles' and also because it is a language that has no place on the international stage. Also, many Mauritian intellectuals doubt its ability to conceptualise the increasingly complex Mauritian socio-cultural reality. In their - and in many's view, Kreol is a beautiful language in poetry and songs, an accurate one in the fields, a colourful one in the bar. But, they claim, its syntax and grammar cannot accommodate concepts of abstract and complex character, such as those necessary in, e.g. sociological research, industrial design, or philosophical thought.

In spite of this, in a bold gesture, the leader of the MMM always addresses public meetings in Kreol and its followers' 'discovery that their leader, an obviously educated and refined Franco-Mauritian, would rather speak Kreol than French, was a source of pride and wonder'.

Notwithstanding the rapid rate of modernisation and industrialisation that has swept over Mauritius, Eriksen points out that

like in the traditional small-planter's enterprise, workers are recruited according to individual kinship bonds with the employer - and this ethnically-based principle of recruitment, incompatible with large-scale industrialisation, then, remains unchanged.

It is more convenient for the employer to employ those that s/he is related to. In larger factories, however, this pattern has not been able to continue, and there have
been resultant wider social changes, such as a dramatic uptake in the amount of women in the workforce and increased inter-ethnic (work-place) contact.

A sense of Mauritian identity is only called upon in contact with outsiders, Eriksen concludes. Exclusively when abroad or in conversing with tourists do individuals explicitly label themselves as Mauritian.

- Eriksen here draws further attention to the efforts of the Mauritian state, at both village hall and national ceremonial levels, to transcend ethnic senses of belonging, and to replace them with ideas of national unity. Eriksen cautions that, in spite of these efforts, individual Mauritians want to retain their ethnic identities because they are useful in securing advantage. At present, he adds, Mauritians, alarmingly, do not consider themselves to be either a people or a nation. His subtext is that whilst there have been substantial changes in terms of modernisation and development in the workplace, these changes have not been mirrored by a decline in ethnic identity amongst Mauritians, nor of the adoption of a shared set of symbols which bind people in spite of their ethnic origins. Citizens of the Republic of Mauritius are only ‘Mauritians’ when they meet with visitors to the island or when they themselves are visitors abroad.

Part C:
Eriksen’s main published work to date has been his 1992 monograph Us and Them in Modern Societies: Ethnicity and Nationalism in Mauritius, Trinidad and Beyond. The key issue addressed is the articulation of statements and enacted processes through which Mauritians express division, principally on ethnic grounds. Eriksen argues that in any social interaction where the actors hail from differing ethnic groups ‘a series of inter-ethnic situations is bound to occur during [...] brief, sporadic interaction’ (Eriksen 1992: 15). Mauritius is, like Trinidad and Tobago, ethnically diverse and the main ethnic categories, represented in both demographic statistics and folk taxonomies are:

- blacks, Indians, Chinese, Europeans and culturally ambiguous categories of phenotypically "mixed" people. Indians, most of them Hindus and Muslims, are the most numerous in Mauritius; whereas blacks, who are as a rule Christian, are about as numerous as Indians in Trinidad (Ibid. 17-18).

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73 As this thesis entered completion, Eriksen published a further volume: Common Denominators, Ethnicity, Nation-Building and Compromise in Mauritius, Berg, Oxford: 1998. However, this work contains very little new data/analysis, and represents solely a reworking of his previous book and articles, which themselves borrow heavily from one another.
Neither island possesses an ethnic majority, but ethnicity is used cognitively and normatively to organise social worlds. Hence ethnicity can be regarded as a means for the ‘ranking of individuals or, from a structural perspective, a criterion for social stratification. Globally speaking, and all other things being equal, whites and browns rank highest, black and Indians lowest in both societies’ (Ibid: 19). This is extended, argues Eriksen, from the realm of social hierarchy into the field of political representation. Eriksen argues that Mauricians and Trinidadians believe that members of their own ethnic group are better able to serve their interest than others, and thus Hindu communalist politicians have their constituencies in the rural hinterland where the majority of electors are Hindus. He also cites the example of the Franco-Mauritian (i.e. white) politician Paul Bérenger in Mauritius, whose electoral success he credits as being due to the fact that ‘blacks generally acknowledge whites as their legitimate leaders’ (Ibid: 20).

The ethnic dimension of politics cannot be ignored, says Eriksen, and although many of his informants state that ethnic conflicts in Mauritius were created by politicians, Eriksen declares that, in truth, ‘[t]his is wrong. Ethnicity not only plays an important part in non-political social fields in both societies, it is more fundamental outside the realm of institutional politics’ (Ibid: 36). Ethnicity is an ever present agent, the director and creator of actions and hence, he later notes, it is impossible for an individual to be ‘simply “male” or “middle-class”: one is Indian male or coloured middle-class’; in short ethnicity is ‘dominant as a principle for cultural differentiation’ (Ibid: 43).

As well as being active in political spheres, be they informal everyday interactions akin to those between Eriksen and his Pakistani greengrocer or formally at the ballot box, Eriksen contends that there is also an ethnically-based division of labour in both Trinidad and Mauritius. In labour, he suggests, there is a fairly close correspondence between ‘folk assumptions’ and the ‘actual division of labour’ between Indo-Mauritians who work on the land and black civil servants and administrators (Ibid: 37).

Because of these divisions, Eriksen notes that the governments of Trinidad and Mauritius have attempted to surpass the ethnic dimension of politics through the use of coalition-building, trans-ethnic parties, but both efforts have been unsuccessful (Ibid: 43). Although since Independence in 1968, Mauritius has been able to avoid inter-ethnic violence, all Mauritians are, he reports,

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74 In his 1998 volume, Eriksen makes use of the same examples.
concerned to retain their ethnic distinctiveness. Rituals celebrating particular religions are widely attended, there is little intermarriage between groups, and there is currently an upsurge in popular interest in cultural origins (Ibid: 58).

A nationalism is required for Mauritius to fully enter the modernised world, suggests Eriksen, with the demands of an industrial economy for near-identical workers who are able to travel to wherever their labour is required on the island. The Mauritian state has realised this, he reports, and has instituted processes designed to develop a panoply of 'national symbols which can be endorsed by anybody and which are thus not associated with one particular ethnic group' (Ibid: 58). At the national level, the qualities of meritocracy, justice and equal rights are asserted, but this is in great tension with the fact that ethnicity is still of major importance in, for example, gaining employment and prosecuting marriage (Ibid: 59) and by the willingness of Mauritians to converse on these issues. Indeed, ethnic conflicts and cultural differences are acknowledged everywhere as facts of social life - and the absence of a hegemonic ethnic are some of the conditions for - or expressions of - the kind of inter-ethnic compromise realised in Mauritius (Ibid). It is at Independence celebrations, and other 'invented traditions', that the state tries to redefine cultural reality, and if these events are successful 'people will accordingly redefine their cultural universes and modify their models for action (although patterns of social action itself are more inert than their models and may thus remain unchanged for a while)' (Ibid: 80).

The official language of Mauritius is perhaps a case-study of Eriksen's revelation of compromise at state-level: 'perhaps English is a good compromise as a national language because nobody speaks it' (Ibid: 77). This has meant that symbolically no one ethnic group of the island is regarded as having its ancestral language as the national language. At the more individual level, Eriksen cites a common Mauritian proverb that 'Sakenn pe prie dan so fason' ('everyone prays in their own way') (Ibid: 79), as illustrating the characteristic inter-cultural tolerance of Mauritius. Eriksen presents individual Mauritians as saying that ethnic peace is ensured by not even discussing ethnic politics or religion (rather contradicting his earlier point that Mauritians endlessly discuss ethnic conflict/difference). One informant75 told him that 'we walk on eggs all the time' (Ibid: 86) - controversial and inflammatory topics lie just beneath the surface at all moments with '[t]he kind of socio-cultural complexity peculiar to Mauritius' (Ibid: 83), and at several moments a human tragedy such as that seen in the Lebanon was apparently only

75 NB in 1992, Eriksen referred to this informant as an 'expatriate', in 1998 as an 'intellectual' (i.e. hinting that s/he was Mauritian (1998: 47).
narrowly averted. Eriksen cautions that '[t]here is no guarantee that similar or even more serious riots may not break out in the future' (Ibid.: 89)

- A key theme of Eriksen's analysis here is that of 'compromise'; English is the national language because it means that none of the diverse populations of Mauritius hold it as their ancestral language. Although Mauritians commonly cite a proverb which explains the island's diversity - by stating that everyone can pray in their own way - Eriksen's conclusion is that Mauritius' future stability is precarious, a 'Lebanon-style' conflict was only narrowly avoided in the past and may, indeed, occur in the future. Even on a daily basis of interaction, he notes, many people feel that they have to be careful of what they say, and to whom, in casual conversation. Ethnicity is present, even dominant, in all social contexts in Mauritius, from the sphere of party politics through to that of factory work and is endlessly discussed. Again, if the state is not successful at promoting Multiculturalism to its population - the future is bleak.

Part D:
Discussing the existential status of the island metaphor, Eriksen (Do cultural islands exist? in Social Anthropology 1993) further refined his arguments concerning the survival of ethnic groups, in the face of what he now labels 'cultural entropy', meaning that 'the dissolution of internal cultural boundaries [...] is positively encouraged by the Mauritian state'. The state needed to pursue nation-building strategies, and this has been tackled by, for example, establishing a unitary educational system, a uniform labour market and a sole national language. Returning to his earlier motif of compromise, Eriksen comments that the state has had to compromise its entropic manoeuvres to ensure that each ethnic group is guaranteed certain rights which are in turn reinforced in the spheres of education and the media. Recognising that social-structural changes in Mauritius have entailed some breakdown in inter-group division, Eriksen qualifies this by noting that '[d]espite such objective changes, the flow of personnel between ethnic groups is nearly zero, the intermarriage rate is extremely low, and ethnically distinguishing symbols are fiercely protected and overcommunicated'. Ideologies persist, he states, which hold that one's own ethnic group is morally superior and self-sufficient.

76 Page reference unavailable; article downloaded from Thomas Hylland Eriksen's web page (www.uio.no/~geirhe/index.html).
• Eriksen here builds upon his earlier publications, and notes that in spite of vigorous Government campaigns aimed at fostering Multiculturalist behaviour, there has, as yet, been no breakdown of hard-edged cultural groups; few intermarriages or contacts between members of different ethnic groups. Each ethnic group, he alleges, regards itself as superordinate over all others.

Part E:

In a 1997 article, entitled *Romanticism, Enlightenment and Lessons from Mauritius*, Eriksen specifically discusses the issue of Multiculturalism with reference to Mauritius, and especially those moments when Multiculturalist theses are in conflict with human rights, as internationally defined. Eriksen outlines the predicament. Polyethnic societies, at least those possessing liberal democracy, assert that all of their citizens are entitled to exercise the same freedoms and have access to the same opportunities. Simultaneously, each of these citizens, or groups of them, have the right to express their difference from others and to make these differences visible 'in the public sphere'. A careful balance is therefore required between the permissible degree of expressions of difference and 'common, societally defined rights; in other words, the challenge consists in finding a viable compromise, for the state as well as for the citizens [...] between equal rights and the right to be different' (Eriksen 1996: 51).

Eriksen explores the historical roots of nationalism, tracing it back to its origins in German Romantic and French Enlightenment thought, and notes that in the contemporary world ideologies argue 'the importance of cultural homogeneity for political identity'. In terms of human rights theorists, their ideologies assume the universal sharing of 'a specified set of societal values'. The main problem which has beset the ideal of a culturally homogenous state has been, argues Eriksen, the fact that 'hardly any ethnic group has its territory by itself'. Allied with this is that as globalisation proceeds apace, any existing cultural boundaries are being broken down, and hence it becomes increasingly 'difficult to defend the idea that even a 'people' is culturally homogeneous and unique' (*ibid*.: 52).

Eriksen points out Friedman's important observation that this boundary-breaching, or 'cultural homogenisation', and 'ethnic fragmentation take place simultaneously; they are consequences of each other and feed on each other in dynamic interplay', and hence societies become multicultural. However, Eriksen defends the position that culture is not 'a legitimating basis for political claims'.
Cultural differences amongst ethnic minorities/majorities is only defensible as long as these differences ‘do not interfere with individual human rights’. Multiculturalism, he continues, can, however, encourage a multitude of options: such as a ‘disguised form of hegemonic individualistic thinking about personhood (the world seen as a smorgasbord of identities to be chosen among by free individuals) and human rights’ or be ‘liable to regress into nihilism, apartheid and the enforced ascription of cultural identities’ (Ibid: 53). The former has the possibility of injecting positive notions into human rights, whilst the latter does not.

Perhaps foreseeing the potential of attack by the comparison of Mauritius with other once seemingly stable, multicultural societies, Eriksen notes that during the bloody dissolution of Yugoslavia, although Serbs, Croats and Muslims were culturally very similar, they justified ‘their mutual hatred by claiming that they [were] actually profoundly different. This kind of situation, where ethnic relations between groups which are culturally close take on a bitter and antagonistic character, is more common than widely assumed’ (Ibid: 54). Mauritius, Eriksen asserts, is one of the most peaceful diverse societies in the world, and this is in spite of the fact that its inhabitants are keen to keep and, at times, assert their cultural identity and maintain ethnic boundaries. These potentially wholly divisive tendencies are kept in check, Eriksen adds, by the use of compromise and tolerance, allied with a certain gallows pragmatism:

Notions which form part of a shared cultural repertoire include the admission that it would have been impossible to win a civil war, that secessionism would have been absurd, and that the country's political stability rests on a precarious balance between ethnic group interests. Therefore Mauritians have developed many more or less formalised methods for the maintenance of this balance (Ibid: 56).

One of these balance-maintaining techniques is the search for and employment of ‘common denominators’, for “‘multicultural’ or not, people need to have something in common if they are to have a society” (Ibid).

- Maintaining his reliance on the notion of precarious compromise, Eriksen points out that despite its highly socio-culturally heterogeneous population, Mauritius is a very peaceful country. Mauritians actively maintain their ethnic symbols and practices, he continues, but their inherently divisive and conflictual tendencies are kept in check by their realisations that a civil war would be impossible to either operate or win, and that therefore everyone must cooperate - for their own best interests. Through a system of checks and balances, Mauritians untidily ensure that precarious peace prevails.

77 Cf. Eriksen 1998 for a more general exploration of this theme.
• Overview of Section One

Section One has served one purpose: to indicate the flavour and interests of previous ethnographic investigations of Mauritius conducted by non-Mauritians. This represents a comprehensive overview of the published and unpublished literature on Mauritius.\textsuperscript{78} The key sentiments of these non-Mauritian scholars, then, are that Mauritius is - because of its diversity - a deeply and dangerously divided society where Mauritians have no sense of their own identity unless they travel abroad or speak to tourists, and this absence of cohesive nationalism further threatens national unity and stability. Eriksen, especially, is therefore keenly supportive of the Government of Mauritius' efforts to foster a sense of national belonging, and enforce incorporation through Multiculturalist policies. Mauritius, most authors conclude, is delicately balanced on the edge (precarious stability) of the abyss of internecine strife.

In the second section, below, I discuss the writings of some Mauritian scholars which make some important contrasts with those above and begin to hint at the positions which I will adopt.

\textsuperscript{78} Although I could also have included the work of two political scientists (Simmons' book \textit{Modern Mauritius: The Politics of Decolonization}, 1982 and Mukonoweshuro's article, \textit{Containing political instability in a poly-ethnic society: the case of Mauritius}, 1991). However, neither of these works do anything more than rehearse the perspectives that Section One has presented.
In his book *Les Chrétiens de l'Ile Maurice*, Moutou states from the outset that 'Christians' do not, properly speaking, constitute a homogenous ethnic group (Moutou 1996: 12) and so he looks at each ethnic group in turn (as there are Christians in all of Mauritius' ethnic and racial groups). The generally non-violent basis of broader inter-ethnic group relations has much to do with Mauritius' colonial past, he argues: 'En vérité, par un concours heureux de circonstances, l'Ile Maurice a été épargnée de la rigueur des confrontations interethniques grâce au leadership éclairé des Britanniques qui ont gouverné le pays avec autorité de 1810 à 1968' (Ibid: 13). However, since Independence, more than 80,000 Mauritians have emigrated to countries where 'dit-on, l'herbe est plus verte'.

Moutou describes the diversity of traditions and cultures in Mauritius as having created a highly attractive kaleidoscope (Ibid: 23). In state/governmental terms, Moutou argues that in fighting for the goal of resisting the institutionalisation of the ethnic partition (cloisonnement) of Mauritian society, 'les pouvoirs publics ont décidé à partir de 1983, année du recensement, de ne plus demander aux Mauriciens de mentionner la communauté à laquelle ils appartiennent' (Ibid: 38) in the Census. This was during the first government of the Mouvement Militant Mauricien (MMM) - a left-wing radical party - and was a major public break from the ethnic classification of the Mauritian population enacted by successive administrations (colonial and post-colonial).

Moutou is one of the few Mauritian scholars to devote a significant amount of time to discussion of the Franco-Mauritian community. He writes that the poor whites amongst them find it hard to find work, their access to the white oligarchy is inexorably blocked and consequently many of them find it easier to emigrate. Moutou argues that for the Franco-Mauritians only fortune and race count (Ibid: 68). However, they are also a minority, and their future may be in doubt: they are

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79 The cover to his book describes it as a 'must' for those interested in the social anthropology of Mauritius.
80 'The Christians of Mauritius'.
81 'In truth, by a fortunate set of circumstances, Mauritius has been spared the rigours of interethnic confrontation, thanks to the enlightened leadership of the British, who governed the country authoritatively between 1810 and 1968'.
82 'They say the grass is greener'.

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isolated in both space and time, he writes, still keeping a 19th century set of traditions, rules of elegance and language. Hence, very few Franco-Mauritian women work, and they ‘mélangent rarement avec les autres races et ethnies et s’il s’avère nécessaire de rendre visite à un indien il est invraisemblable qu’un blanc emmènera sa femme avec lui. [La plupart des] enfants vont aux écoles réservées aux blancs’ (Ibid: 77).84

Drawing on the common experience of Indian indentured labourers and African slaves, Moutou expands the wry musings of the novelist Bernardin de St. Pierre:

je ne sais si le café et le sucre sont nécessaires au bonheur de l’Europe mais je sais que ces deux végétaux ont fait le malheur de deux parties du monde. On a dépeuplé l’Amérique pour avoir une terre pour les plantes, on dépeuple l’Afrique pour avoir une nation pour les cultiver’ (Ibid: 91).85

Moutou also attempts to explain the current plight of the Creole population of Mauritius and, in some of the most controversial passages of this book, notes with regret the disinterest shown by, for example, Creole fishermen towards acquiring those items which would help them in gaining their livelihood. He suggests that this disinterest in modern technology finds its origin in the servile heritage of their slave-ancestors.

- Moutou pursues ambitious aims in this book, not quite attaining them. He does, however, point up the fact that, generally speaking, relations between the various ethnic and racial groups of Mauritius are amicable. However, by noting that a substantial number of Mauritians have emigrated he also draws attention to the fact that Mauritius has had some problems. From his earlier Civil Service career responsibility for fisheries, he explores the marginalisation of the Creole Mauritians, and lays the blame for their status mainly at their own door; because they are unable or unwilling to shake off their servile mindset. In terms of the Franco-Mauritian community, Moutou again portrays Mauritius as somewhat less of a social paradise than might be expected; even today a Franco-Mauritian will not take his wife with him if he should have to visit someone who happens to be a member of a different ethnic group.

83 ‘The public authorities decided, from 1983, a census year, no longer to ask Mauritians to cite the community to which they belong’.
84 ‘They rarely mix with other races and ethnic groups, and if it becomes necessary to pay a visit to an Indian, it is unthinkable that a white will take his wife with him. [The majority of their] children go to schools reserved for whites’
85 ‘I don’t know if coffee or sugar are necessary for the happiness of Europe, but I know that these two vegetables have brought unhappiness to two parts of the world. We have depopulated America to get ground for these plants, and depopulated Africa to have a nation to cultivate them’.
Whereas non-Mauritian academics such as Eriksen seek to draw parallels between Mauritius and Trinidad, Ramhota (in his unpublished 1995 London School of Economics MSc. dissertation *A Disappearing Tradition*) makes a significant distinction between the two ethnographic contexts. In his study of worship at Kalimai (rural shrines where Hindus make offerings to the goddess Mother Kali), Ramhota argues that Mauritius is fundamentally different to Trinidad because in ‘other countries where indentured Indian labourers were recruited, such as Trinidad, Indian customs and religious practices were derided and even forbidden on the plantations’ (Ramhota 1995: 4). Critically, he adds that Mauritius is special because, hand-in-hand with a colonial denigration of Indian cultural practices, went practical concessions to incorporate Hindu religious needs within the plantation routine. There, therefore, existed a relatively cordial interaction between the whites and indentured labourers at work, although they remained separate from each other after work. The villagers called those whites "sahib" or "kaptan" who assisted them in celebrating their rituals. Thus, despite being the bearers of very different cultural traditions, the kaptans and the Indians co-inhabited the estate, where a limited cultural intercourse took place (*Ibid.*).

Later, Ramhota usefully notes one of the culturally unifying features of the Hindu celebration of Holi (the festival of colours), where individuals of any ethnic or racial group are welcome: ‘[o]ne of the reasons behind the smearing of colours on the faces is to erase the caste and class distinction among the people’ (*Ibid.*: 9). However, he continues to caution that, since the late 1980s, the festivals and rituals of Hinduism have come to be manipulated by Hindu politicians (*Ibid.*). Ramhota also emphasises the cross-cutting nature of spiritual belief and practice. For instance, ‘[a]lcohol and non-vegetarian foods are offered to the protecting deity of the village who is called "Dhi", in Bhojpuri, and known by the term "ministre prince" in Creole’ (*Ibid.*: 10). Hence the existence and power of these spirits is believed in by more than just Bhojpuri-speaking Hindus.

Discussing social change, Ramhota reveals that Mauritian Hindus are now ‘prone to speak French, English, and Creole (French dialect) rather than Hindi or Bhojpuri (a dialect of Hindi) with their children at home’. Also, aware of the importance of speaking world languages, ‘middle class Hindus who attend religious

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86 At the Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Moka, Mauritius
87 Elsewhere in this Thesis, I will emphasise strongly the pragmatic decisions that individual Mauritians make to transcend divisions that the state/previous ethnographies make, which work with categories such as ‘Christian’, ‘Tamil’, impose. These will include, for example, a Hindu asking a Christian to advise them as to which Saint they should pray for the return of stolen property.
activities to display their "Indianness", tend to speak French or English for part of the
time with their children at home' (Ibid: 25).

- Ramhota's key concern is with explaining change in relation to rural Hindu
religious beliefs and practices in Mauritius. The nature of Kalimai worship has
changed, as have wider social practices. He highlights the fact that both formal
religious and cultural ceremonies - which might be expected to be the preserve
of just one ethnic community - are participated in by a range of people in
Mauritius (e.g. Holi), and that this is also mirrored in more popular, less formally
organised, practices as well (e.g. sacrifices to the Dhi/Ministre Prince).

3

Dr. A Cader Raman - psychiatrist.

In an invaluable volume for those conducting research in Mauritius, Dr. Raman
offers a unique perspective on Mauritian society. The son of a famous Muslim
community leader and peace-maker, Raman was the first Mauritian to become a
psychiatrist. In his 1991 autobiography (Not a Paradise I Love You Mauritius),
Raman details his childhood in colonial Mauritius, where people of colour and
colonising whites were strictly segregated; his move to London to commence
University studies and his conscious decision 'not just to stick to my Mauritian
friends [...] I would try to mix with the people of Britain and see how they lived and
how they felt and thought' (Raman 1991: 93). To this end, he demonstrates a form
of pragmatism that I will return to elsewhere in this Thesis; for example at a
Muslim League dinner, he found that pork chops were on the menu, he
turned to Patel [another Mauritian] and told him that eating pork was against the
Muslim faith but he retorted "We are not fighting for a religious Muslim State but for a
political Muslim State". All these had a profound effect on me, and my father who was
worried that the English people would turn me away from the Islamic traditions was
wrong (Ibid: 95).

As Mauritius progressed towards Independence, Raman decided to found the
Stella Clavisque Club in an attempt to counter increasing possibilities of
communalism associated with the advent of self-governance in other former British
colonies.88 There had been some indications that some political leaders were
encouraging the espousal of communal sentiments, and so at the foundation

88 Communalism here defined as by Indian scholars, such as Hasan, as ‘an ideology and a movement
that employs narrow religious loyalty as a basis of collective action, and, in the process, accentuates
artificially contrived distinctions and heightens community-oriented consciousness’ (Hasan 1991: 4
(n.)).
meeting of the Stella Clavisque Club, hundreds of people attended ‘with only one motivation - to bring back the people of Mauritius to sanity and to the harmony that had always existed’ (Ibid: 218). The Club inspired a movement for national understanding, and set about

the noble project of creating a nation, the Mauritian Nation, not by political structuring but in the hearts and minds of people, and to eradicate communalism for ever from our soil. I had considerably changed from the traditional Muslim to feel that I am a citizen of the world and more so of my country, Mauritius; in my heart, I am born a human being first and a Muslim second and my religion is a private thing between myself and God and that I should not make any difference between myself and any individuals in Mauritius whatever their religion, colour, educational background and sex (Ibid: 220).

Through a combination of populist techniques, Raman believes that a deep ‘psychological impact’ was made on Mauritian youth, and he shares the aim of the (late) politician Sir Gaetan Duval to ‘get rid of the communal ideas and attitudes fostered on them by their parents, and to think politically as Mauritians’ (Ibid: 229, 295).

- Importantly, Raman is the first author cited in this chapter to claim that there had (routinely) been social harmony in existence between (of colour) individuals in Mauritius before the state had any unifying (Multiculturalist) input. Raman and his colleagues at the Stella Clavisque club sought to harness that pre-existing harmony and tie it into the creation of an independent, modern Mauritian nation, and hence to destroy the recent phenomenon of communalism. Raman also usefully draws attention to the impact of social change, and its concomitant stresses, on a modernising country, but through his actions reveals the kind of pragmatic and well-meaning leadership which has, by-and-large, characterised post-Independence Mauritius.

4

A Devi Nirsimloo-Anenden - novelist and Dr. of Anthropology.

In 1990 Nirsimloo-Anenden published a version of her SOAS Ph.D thesis entitled The Primordial Link: Telegu Ethnic Identity in Mauritius. Nirsimloo-Anenden focuses on the role of ethnicity both as ‘a resource and as a tool’, and then adds that ‘we [Mauritians] often hastily ascribe attitudes and actions to deep-felt ethnic impulses’ even though Mauritians are ‘constantly aware of our multiple identities’ (1990:1). She argues that ethnicity is superordinate to other sources of identity, but later reveals that the more she studied ethnic identity:
the more one felt that the nature of the study was more archaeological than anthropological - the patient brushing of surface-layers to reveal hidden ones, underneath which were yet further layers of meaning systems and symbols (Ibid: 4).

Ethnicity, she continues, is extensive, complex, all pervasive, secret and, paradoxically, 'fairly visible'. Nirsimloo-Anenden found herself faced with a social fact which 'took with disconcerting rapidity, a different face, and a strange substance'. Like several other of the more recently published Mauritian authors and all of the non-Mauritian ones, Nirsimloo-Anenden argues that it is only in a broader than usual social context, for example where a Mauritian meets a non-Mauritian, that his or her terms of reference will not be caste, class, religion, colour or language, but simply his own *Mauritianess*. However, the situations where narrower identities interplay are far more frequent, thus creating this state of mental tension that is often to be felt among Mauritians in general; a state of tension which is unfortunately exacerbated by their constant preoccupation with politics (Ibid: 6).

- Nirsimloo-Anenden begins with an assumption that ethnicity is predominant in the social interactions of Mauritians, and supports the conclusions of Eriksen and Hollup (above) that a Mauritian is only a Mauritian when abroad or in contact with non-Mauritians. She also supports Eriksen's earlier argument (Section One, 3C) that it is the ceaseless interest in politics which makes Mauritius a tense and unstable society.89

5

**National Seminar on the Language Issue - 1982.**

Perhaps the hardest thinking about nation building which has taken place publicly was at the *National Seminar on the Language Issue* in Mauritius, held in 1982, and whose edited proceedings were published in 1984. Beginning with the often contentious area of language and national unity, the Seminar's remit became broader. The Creole language, states Auckloo in the proceedings, is a powerful instrument, the *principale arme destruictrice du communalisme qui est essentielle pour l'unité du peuple mauricien. C'est ridicule de demander à un peuple d'apprendre une langue étrangere afin de pouvoir s'unir* (Unmole 1984: 13-14).90 Jugessur called for a broader cultural integration, based in language, so that a national consciousness would be achieved which is at one with

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89 This reminds me of a statement by Hourani concerning the Lebanon: 'The very smallness of the Lebanon increased the tension. Everyone was involved at a few removes or none, in the political process; the mass of unconcerned private citizens living remote from political life, which makes the stability of larger states, scarcely existed' (Simmons 1982: 13-14).

88
Mauritianism which is the spirit of nationalism that makes the local people think in terms of national interests rather than in terms of group interests and thereby cement them together into one harmonious fold (Ibid. 15-16).

The collective will to operationalise this is present, he declared. Calling for a role in instilling national consciousness for the educational system, Jugessur adds that group affiliations are necessarily more powerful than national ones, and hence what is required is 'a real solid dose of basic education to lift oneself above these conflictual facets of our society' (Ibid: 18), i.e. that the state has to force people, through education and other means, to think above narrow group interests.

Nowbuth argued for the evolution of a Mauritian culture which 'provides for equal opportunities for all the sons [sic] of the country' (Ibid: 29). 'Only a structure' has to be created, by the state and its agencies, he argues, and a 'genuine and natural Mauritian culture will evolve by itself', because 'Unity is diversity' (Ibid: 30-1, 33). Other Seminar participants profoundly disagreed with this viewpoint, and argued instead that there 'is no one Mauritian culture - dancing the sega or [the] speaking of the Creole language or Bhojpuri does not make one a Mauritian nor are they the only components of our multifaceted culture' (Hawoldar Ibid: 157).

- The conclusions of this seminar are generally positive. Because of the seemingly natural predilection of Mauritians to understand each other, argues Nowbuth, once the state has elaborated a structure for a national culture to develop within, this culture will intractably develop; although other contributors doubt the very possibility of the existence of a single, reductionist notion of a national 'culture'. Participants did agree, however, on the importance of education in bringing Mauritians together, and as virtually everyone shares the same language at present (Kreol) then everyone has purchase on a weapon capable of destroying communalism. Although differing in their interpretation of the most desirable paths towards national unity, the various participants at this seminar were optimistic, after the fashion of Raman (above), that stability and equality could be achieved in Mauritius.

6 NJ Roy - author.

90 'It is the principal destructive arm against communalism that is essential for the unity of the Mauritian people. It is ridiculous to ask a people to learn a foreign language so that they can unite.'
Mauritius in Transition, by Narain Jay Roy (1960), is neither wholly an academic work nor wholly popular musing. Roy speculated on a broad terrain both of personal experience, as a Mauritian who has travelled abroad, and comments on others’ writing on the island. Describing the diverse range of races on Mauritius, Roy wrote that

There are all shades of colour on the faces of people from white to ebony black. We can see typical Negroid, Mongolian, Aryan and Latin faces and we can also meet a mixture of these. We can see very fair faces with matted hair, African faces with Chinese eyes, Chinese faces with Indian names, Indian faces with French or English names and European faces with Indian names. In point of physiognomy Mauritius is quite a little museum and the same type of face may answer to the name of Peter, Raoul Issop, Sinnatamby or Ramparsad (Roy 1960: 9).

Unlike the writings of colonially sponsored researchers at about the same time (see Meade et al., Benedict above), Roy saw the diversity of Mauritius as being ‘naturally’ advantageous. Mauritius, he concluded, was

a little bit of Europe, a little bit of Asia and a little bit of Africa combined. He is brought up in this mixed atmosphere, and has the advantage of several languages and literatures. The White children do not frequent the same type of primary schools but our girls and boys rub shoulders with them in the secondary schools [not now so much] and often beat them in competitive examinations (Ibid).

Roy reveals that at the time of writing, there was a higher level of visible differentiation between members of ethnic groups than is the case at present:

A very high percentage of men dress the same way and wear a suit, although there are still a very few people wearing dhotis, the Indian or Chinese pyjama or vest. There is more diversity of dress among the women. Christians and Chinese largely wear the European frock, the Hindus and some Muslims the sari, the Muslims the pyjama and long frock, and elderly Chinese women wear the pyjama and blouse. Very few Indian women still wear the Indian frock especially at home and in field works (Ibid: 10).

Roy also went beyond the rather limited discussion contained in the coloniser’s accounts when he notes that although ‘some people’ do have strong feelings for the culture and country of their ancestors, the ‘average Mauritian’ is loyal and proud of being part of the Commonwealth. With a remarkably generous tone he declared that ‘even as an imperialist nation the British are better than others’ (Ibid: 11).91 Further, he added, in a manner which makes it hard to believe that it was penned at around the same time as Benedict, that although there seemed to be irreconcilable differences on the surface of public interaction, in fact there was an ‘underlying sense of solidarity’, an ongoing culmination of an increasing level of unity which would

weld us together into our cherished dream of a Mauritian nation. We agree to differ and we differ to agree. As we go on living here generations after generations we begin to realise that this is our Sole Motherland and we must give all our sweat and all our devotion in sinking our differences to forge our ideal (Ibid: 12).

91 Indeed, both Roy and some of my informants thought of British rule as - surprisingly to me - a time of good, wise and sensitive government.
• Roy shares with Raman an awareness that traditionally the various communities of Mauritius have cooperated and happily coexisted with each other. Mauritius, he suggests, has always been united, and the socio-cultural heterogeneity of the island is *advantageous* because of the range of languages, literatures and cultures that everyone is exposed to. Consequently, he claimed, coloured children achieved better results at school than did the children of Franco-Mauritians and British colonists.

♦ Overview of Section Two

Section Two has aimed to present a digest of the writings of Mauritian scholars, and to give some historical perspective against which to compare the texts of both colonial (*Meade* et al. and Benedict) and more recent non-Mauritian researchers. One of the key themes which emerges from this section is that, historically, Mauritius' diverse population seems to have coexisted happily. Thus the dire comments of Meade and Benedict did not take account of the practical fact that as a kind of social harmony had taken root under colonialism, this harmony might well continue following Independence. Many of the authors considered in this Section are more optimistic about the possibilities of post-Independence social stability and peace than those encountered in Section One, but still conceptualise Mauritians as belonging, at one time or another, to inherently divided groups based in caste, ethnicity, religion, language and so on.

In the second part of this chapter, I want to move on to outline the crossovers that I see between

(a) the image of Mauritius as presented by all non-Mauritian scholars and some Mauritians (e.g. Nirsimloo-Anenden); i.e. that on a daily basis, when a Mauritian is *not*, for example, meeting with a non-Mauritian, division along ethnic and other bases is ever present, and

(b) the discourses and actions of the Government of Mauritius which support and maintain (a).
Part 2: Governmentality and Division in Mauritius: enacting sociological categorisation

Certain ideas have a lasting impact on the intellectual landscape by solving complex problems with apparent ease (Langer 1984).92

As we have learned, it has become conventional to describe Mauritius as a society which is simultaneously diverse and, hence, divided; although some Mauritian writers have countered this by claiming that (historically) mutual tolerance and understanding have characterised social relations. However, I will now argue that writings by Mauritians more recently, by non-Mauritian anthropologists and the Government of Mauritius build upon the axiom that ‘difference = division’, and thus contradicts the insights of Roy and Raman (that, historically, Mauritius is peaceful and generally unified in its diversity). Before I discuss the actual categorisations that, like all other governments, the Government of Mauritius makes, it is necessary to inquire into why it is necessary to know, for example, the racial, ethnic and religious composition of the population of a state.

Foucault, writing of literature beginning with Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, states that:

> The art of government [...] is essentially concerned with answering the question of how to introduce economy - that is to say, the correct manner of managing individuals, goods and wealth within the family [...] how to introduce this meticulous attention of the father towards his family into the management of the state (cited in Burchell, Gordin and Miller 1991: 92).

It is the element of ‘managing individuals’ which I shall make most use of in my discussion of the machinations of the Mauritius Government, and then link its manoeuvres directly with ethnographic writing and broader social policy (i.e. Multiculturalism).

The collection of demographic data and the promotion of philosophies (ideologies, ideals) such as ‘Unity in Diversity’ are characteristic as forms of knowledge and sets of analyses which, as Foucault states, can be traced back to the late sixteenth century and signalled the rise of the nation-state, indicated through the emergence of ‘statistics’; ‘meaning the science of the state’ (Ibid: 96). Foucault argues that (control over the) population comes to be the ultimate aim of expanded government:

> In contrast to sovereignty, government has as its purpose not the act of government itself, but the welfare of the population, the improvement of its condition, the increase of its wealth, longevity, health, etc.; and the means that the government uses to attain these ends are themselves all in some sense immanent to the population; it is the population itself on which the government will act whether directly through large-scale campaigns, or indirectly through techniques that will make possible, without the

full awareness of the people, the stimulation of birth rates, the directing of the flow of population into certain regions or activities, etc. (Ibid.: 100).

This control over the population Foucault describes as 'governmentality', and I will employ this term heavily in the forthcoming paragraphs and generally throughout the Thesis - both in relation to state and ethnographic discourses and texts. An example of the kind of text which demonstrates governmentality can be found in a précis of the weighty Mauritius Government document Vision 2020: The National Long-term Perspective Study. Written by the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, from the imaginary perspective of 2020, the authors state that the objective of this study is 'to rally the population round the vision of "Mauritius 2020" and to enlist their support to translate that vision into reality'. Hence:

Earnings from tourism keep rising, despite the ceiling on capacity to protect the environment - there are few other quality destinations still left, and people are willing to pay more for our speciality: friendly efficiency in a beautiful setting. [...] Small, neutral, stable, accessible, efficient, polycultural and hospitable, Mauritius is the 'natural' centre for many organisations and events: regional headquarters for companies, economic development and cultural organisations, international agencies; and the site for a succession of international conferences, trade fairs and festivals. [...] In the drive for economic development we have not lost touch with our traditions of community, in which everyone cares and is cared for. We have used our growing prosperity to eradicate poverty - things are much better now, and we can afford to make sure that no-one gets left out. [...] We have maintained a social harmony which is impressive and precious, with diversity continuing to be a source of enrichment rather than a cause of division. Mauritians get on so well with the tourists because they get on so well with one another. [...] It is based on a continuance of our traditional values of tolerance and mutual respect for different communities, cultures and religions - now extended to cover differences between women and men and young and old.

To achieve a rosy future, the Government of Mauritius believes, it is necessary for the population of Mauritius to be united. This calls for a certain kind of discipline, and as Foucault, the historian of discipline, notes:

discipline was never more important or more valorized than at the moment when it became important to manage a population; the managing of a population not only concerns the collective mass of phenomena, the level of its aggregate effects, it also implies the management of population in its depths and details (Burchell et al. 1991: 102).

Vision 2020 asks for the population to continue to remain in control of the divisive tendencies of its diverse population in the interests of the state’s progressive development. The state’s belief that this discipline is necessary (i.e. was not fulfilled earlier) was well illustrated in 1996.

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93 Source: Government of Mauritius web site, hence no page numbers available (ncb.intnet.mu/house.htm)
94 It is probably a commonsense that to ensure that international money markets and foreign investors feel reassured that the political structures and 'social system' of a country are and will remain stable, population problems are not to be 'talked up'. Hence the then Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs in Mauritius (Paul Bérenger) was roundly attacked by his opponents for mentioning, on a visit to Europe in 1996, the matter of the alleged assassination of three Mouvement Militant Mauricien/Parti Travailiste workers immediately before the Municipal Elections (at that time the MMM and the PTR (Labour Party) were governing as a coalition). He was criticised because some politicians feared that he would promote the message in Europe, and the
I will come to argue that through focusing on and encouraging - by policy and other means - named groups, presumed to be solidary and coherent, to unite, the product of these efforts is, in actual fact, the opposite. Two quotes from anthropologists of policy help set the scene and point out the unfurling road ahead:

1. Policies are most obviously political phenomena, yet it is a feature of policies that their political nature is disguised by the objective, neutral, legal-rational idioms in which they are portrayed. In this guise, policies appear to be mere instruments for promoting efficiency and effectiveness. This masking of the political under the cloak of neutrality is a key feature of modern power.

2. It is standard anthropological practice to focus on a concept that appears, to the people concerned, to be axiomatic and unproblematic, and to explore its different meanings and how it works as an organizing principle of society

(Shore and Wright 1997: 8; 14).

Distances, and boundaries, are not what they used to be
(Hannerz 1996: 3)

Before discipline can be enacted on the wider population (for example, through the enforcement of Multiculturalist policies), the population has to be known:

The population of Mauritius shall be regarded as including a Hindu community, a Moslem community and a Sino-Mauritian community, and every person who does not appear, from his way of life, to belong to one or other of these three communities shall be regarded as belonging to the General Population, which shall itself be regarded as a fourth community.
- Schedule 1 para. 4 of the Constitution of the Republic of Mauritius.

The population, estimated at 1.1 million comprises Indo-Mauritians (66%), General population, i.e., people of mixed European and African origin (31%) and Sino-Mauritians (3%)

The importance of these community references in the Constitution is a consequence of the need to “ensure a fair and adequate representation of each community” in the National Assembly, but anyway governments always classify their populations in terms of categories: they are bureaucratically ‘good to think with’. The latest, more detailed, figures available show the Government of Mauritius as calculating the current composition of Mauritius as being 50% Hindu; 32% Christian; 16% Muslim; 0.4% Buddhist or Ba’hai; 0.05% without denomination and 0.20% as being atheists.

These are, in the Foucauldian meaning of the word, the ‘statistic’ versions of Mauritius’ diversity, and yet they mask actor-significant internal sub-divisions

wider world, that because the party workers killed happened to be Muslims, there was a ‘Muslim problem’ in Mauritius (although the predominant rumour held that the killings were actually drug-related.). Even the possibility of division within Mauritius’ diversity must be denied in the political and economic interests of the country.

95 Cited by Moore 1986: 123.
97 Based on (rounded up) figures from The Statistical Division of the Ministry of Planning and Economic Development of Mauritius, cited in Moutou 1996: 248.
within these groups. For example, the category of ‘Hindu’ can be broken down into a group comprising Hindus (of several castes); Tamils (where caste seems less important); Marathis; Telegus and others. The category of ‘Christian’ is revealed to be even less significant in terms of any commonalities on the ground, as it comprises people mainly from the ‘Creole’ sector of the population, as well as members of all others. Muslims are comprised of followers of at least two sects (the more orthodox Sunni and the more liberal Ahmaddia). Buddhists are mainly of Chinese origin, and Ba’hai followers are mainly converts from one branch of Hinduism. The masking error of this form of ethnic categorisation is that it connects religion with ethnicity, whilst this conjunction is not mirrored in popular belief. The state has elaborated its own clear definition of ethnicity, because it makes governing simpler. It is this fetishizing of simplicity that I will condemn both state and academic for throughout this Thesis. Governments, and antecedent ethnographic and other surveys of Mauritius, have sought to categorise Mauritians so that, at all times, they are regarded as ethnic beings who need to be helped to ensure that their overcoming of this divisive reality is promoted and preserved.

Statistical renderings of the Mauritian population give the Government the impression that it ‘knows’ its population, and hence gains legitimacy to enact power up on it. Hacking writes that statistics have ‘a certain superficial neutrality between ideologies’ (1991: 184), in the same way that Shore and Wright note that policy is presented as neutral (above), but I shall now begin to argue that beneath the matter-of-factness of statistics lurks power, and a specific form of it. I will further promote the idea that - much as pre-fieldwork reading about the area in which one will conduct fieldwork usually conditions what is seen, investigated and concluded in the field - ‘[m]any of the modern categories by which we think about people and their activities were put in place by an attempt to collect numerical data’ (Hacking 1991: 182). Collections of statistics, Hacking continues, have helped to determine laws about society and the character of social facts:

[l]it has engendered concepts and classifications within the human sciences. Moreover the collection of statistics has created, at the least, a great bureaucratic machinery. It may think of itself as providing only information, but it is itself part of the technology of power in a modern state (Ibid: 181).

Reconnecting with Foucault’s theses, the ‘biopolitics’ form of power which arose in the nineteenth century permits “comprehensive measures, statistical assessments and interventions’ which are aimed at the body politic, the social body” (Ibid: 183). The next section deals with a specific enactment of collected statistical data aimed at the Mauritian social body.
• 'Unity in Diversity'

There is much more to Mauritius than just sand and sea. It is a world in miniature with a unique socio-cultural hinterland which cannot fail but impress and inspire. If you despair of man ever overcoming national boundaries, religious bigotries and racial prejudices to live in peace and harmony, come to Mauritius, for Utopia is not some way up there in some cloud cuckoo land over the rainbow, it is all happening here. For in Mauritius representatives of the world’s most important ethnic and religious groups have come together to give and take, to care and share, to build a home and found a nation.

- Air Mauritius publicity.

The diversity of Mauritius is apparent to even the most casual visitor. Temples, mosques, cathedrals, evangelical halls, meeting houses all stand cheek-by-jowl with each other. Chinese shops stand next to those run by Muslims which stand next to those run by Hindus. The foods of many communities are sold on the streets and eaten by all: Chinese mein (noodles) and boulets (fish and meat balls); Indian (Hindu) dhall puri, Indian (Muslim) briani, and so on. The key constituent of the governmental ideology and discourse of explaining this apparent harmony in paradise is ‘Unity in Diversity’:

Mauritius has indeed won recognition as a land of peace and stability where traditions and cultures drawing their origins from various sources have been developing in harmony and mutual enrichment, thus providing to the world a living example of ‘UNITY IN DIVERSITY’

- Ex-Prime Minister Sir Anerood Jugnauth.

‘Unity in Diversity’ is a trope frequently drawn upon by Ministers of the Mauritius Government and the (apolitical) President of the Republic. At commemorations of the trans-shipment of indentured labourers and of the abolition of slavery, on Independence day, at academic and other international conferences, for Hindu festivals open to all: ‘Unity in Diversity’ is employed. It is an attractive phrase, with pleasant connotations, and is also rooted in some truth: there are people from a wealth of different traditions and heritages in Mauritius and, since Independence, they all have Mauritian citizenship. In the extract and photograph below, the then Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs demonstrates, commemorating at Appravasi Ghat the 160th anniversary of the arrival of the first Indian indentured labourers in Mauritius, a typical instance of the discourse of ‘Unity in Diversity’:

98 Air Mauritius pamphlet Mauritius, Cultures.
100 E.g. the Head of the Holi Mela (Spring festival) organising committee stated that Holi is an occasion for everyone to forget what racial, religious or ethnic group they belong to (1997, fieldnotes).
101 Appravasi Ghat is the landing platform in the harbour at Port Louis where indentured Indian labourers first set foot on Mauritius.
We all know [indistinct] Mauritius, and maybe this is part of our strength. When one thinks of Fiji, for example, one knows how history is at the basis of the problems in Fiji, and maybe that is part of our strength that all of us, our granddains as we say in Mauritius, our ancestors, all of them came from outside the island. From other parts of the world. From Mother India, China, Europe, Madagascar, Mozambique, and as far away as Senegal. Now I believe that somebody who is not a political leader especially, but anybody, any patriot, who has not looked deeply through the history of slavery in Mauritius - and there were those leaders, or simple people, ordinary people who fought against slavery and later on, when came the time of indentured labour, when thousands and thousands of men mostly, but women and children also, travelled across the Indian Ocean from Mother India to here, Mauritius, and elsewhere of course. I believe that any political leader who has not spent a good part of his life reading about that, researching into that part of our history is not fully equipped to help build a strong nation in diversity, but in unity also. This is why on every occasion that I have had not only to read about but also to research into the history of the coming of the indentured labourers to Mauritius, their struggle for dignity, freedom, cultural identity, on every occasion that has been given to me, I have not missed that occasion. I wish, on this particular occasion today to say thank you to all of the Mauritian, the local people, the historians, and others who have kept alive that memory of the long and painful, but also glorious, history of indentured labour in Mauritius.

- M. Paul Bérenger 2-11-96

In 1994, Khedarun, Ballah and Soobader published a volume of the selected speeches of the former Prime Minister and, still active, veteran politician, Sir Anerood Jugnauth. They argue that right from his Maiden Speech to the National Assembly (in 1963), Jugnauth's aim was to ensure that all Mauritians, regardless of 'creed and religion' came to stand under the same banner of unity. In Mauritius' diversity, they add, Jugnauth 'feels a richness, so much so, that he is always

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102 My recording.
prepared to take any risk to prevent any attempt at shaking up this Unity that can come from diversity' (*Ibid*: 7). Indeed, in the aforementioned Maiden Speech, Jugnauth argued that:

> We must stop thinking about communities, we must stop thinking in terms of Hindus, Muslims or General Population. We must try to think in terms of Mauritians because everyone born in this country, who is a citizen of this country, has got equal rights and we have got to see to it that with progress and independence those rights are respected, be it the right of a Creole, of a Muslim, of a member of the General Population or of a Hindu. There is no question of the majority ruling over the minority. We all know that the majority has the right to form a government but that does not mean that because that right is exercised, the minorities will be trampled down (*Ibid*: 13).

Moving forward some thirty years, Jugnauth, as Prime Minister, more fully expresses this perspective in familiar terms, cited earlier, where he states that Mauritius provides to the world "a living example of 'UNITY IN DIVERSITY'" (*Ibid*: 267). What I label as the master trope of 'Unity in Diversity' also appears in other guises, such as the 1970s slogan of the *Mouvement Militant Mauricien* 'enn sel lepep, enn sel nasyon' ('one single people, one single nation') and 1980s Ministerial 'pluricultural Mauritianism', supported by the noted Mauritian intellectual Dev Virahsawmy (cf. Alladin 1993: 82-4).

- **Statistics Creating Division**

In a brief comment on statistics, above, I cited Hacking's work, which draws heavily from Foucault's theorising - and it is from statistics (e.g. Hindus x%, Muslims y%) that governments derive their ability to intervene in the lives of their populations: 'comprehensive measures, statistical assessments and interventions' [...] are aimed at the body politic, the social body' (Hacking 1991: 183). Thus statistics become part of the bureaucratic technology of the state's power. The state intervenes to ensure that once having created these clear-cut divisions (which it presents in statistical form), they do not translate into corporate divisions which actually threaten (undermine) the power of the state (which, again, requires both a unified territory and a known population upon which to rule). At the same time that the Government works with, through and on division (a version, no doubt, of the ancient form of governing known as 'divide and rule'); as a pragmatic and realistic administration it must also call for national unity. Hence, as the President of the Republic (His Excellency Cassam Uteem) declared when opening a conference on Multiculturalism, the Government can act as either (a) a watering-can to encourage the population to be unified in its diversity, or (b) a fire hose to extinguish conflict.

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103 There are more critical interpretations of Jugnauth's political career.
Naturally, he commented, the Government would rather play the role of a watering-can.104

The Mauritian state has taken several steps in terms of policy to ensure that the ideology of 'Unity in Diversity' is bureaucratically backed. For example, in the early 1980s it was decided to ban the names of sports clubs or teams which used ethnic markers such as the Hindu Cadets (cf. Hollup 1993: 258) and to bring to an end the practice of forcing all those completing census returns to declare their ethnic group membership (see above). These were all part of the broader manifesto of the (then) radicalised political party the Mouvement Militant Mauricien, led by Paul Bérenger, and have not been reversed by succeeding administrations. Successive administrations have, however, continued to fund cultural centres for each of the main ethnic groups in Mauritius (especially for Hindus and Muslims, although there is also an African Cultural Centre which is substantially less well funded than the others) and support major events within each community by sending a Minister along to make a supportive, if unoriginal, speech.

In so doing, the Government believes that it is publicly valuing each ethnic groups' contribution to Mauritius and hence, as Banks put it, inventing a 'collective history that will be the root of the national culture without appearing to favour any one group over another' (1996: 157). I am not, however, convinced that, for example, these cultural centres which hold talks, publish pamphlets and so on, do have a positive role. Rather, by acting as artificial focusing nodes, I would suggest that they seem to be functioning as 'a way of making and articulating us/them sentiments' (AP Cohen).105 Institutions designed to foster a sense of belonging to a cultural heritage in Mauritius may sometimes achieve this - but because of the funding-differential between the centres and wider (more party-politically orientated) actions, each cultural centre is isolated, and traditional, local senses of 'sameness but difference' and 'Unity in Diversity' are actually being challenged by the very centres which are meant to be promoting it. For example, Hindus are expected, by these socio-cultural organisations and heritage-promoting institutions, to feel close to Mother India; Muslims to Pakistan (or the Arab world). Muslims are being persuaded to prefer to learn and read Urdu; Hindus either Hindi or Tamil or Telegu (etc.). In the past, however, as Raman and Roy noted (above) individuals did indeed understood each other and peaceably cooperated without the efforts of such

104 Opening address at the conference The Making of a Multicultural Society, Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Moka, Mauritius, Autumn 1996.
institutions. Wieviorka draws attention to the very real problems which Multiculturalist policies (such as promoting cultural centres) can produce:

Moreover, many problems are exacerbated or left pending by this type of policy: it often becomes a source of tensions between groups and, in the last resort, it may weaken the institutions that promote such policies, confining communities to definitions that do not correspond to the processes of cultural fragmentation which all groups in our societies are experiencing. By creating a political or an institutional offer, affirmative action policies are an invitation to practices of lobbying in which not all the minorities have comparable resources, and which encourage the emergence of influential individuals who often do not represent much more than themselves (Wieviorka 1997: 150-1).

As this Thesis progresses, an implicit strand of my argument will be that those intercultural understandings which arise from the actions of individuals are far more effective, if less consistently rehearsed in terms of using the same words, than governmental discourses of ‘Unity in Diversity’ and concomitant state funding for cultural centres and associated Ministerial support. Illustrating the problems involved, in an interview I conducted with Goolam Mohammed Isaac (a schoolteacher and leading member of the Muslim community in Port Louis), Mr. Isaac told me that whereas a folklorist employed by the government at a Hindu-dominated institution maintained that the Hindi dialect Bhojpuri was only spoken by Hindus in rural Mauritius, in fact Bhojpuri has always been spoken by everybody - of all ethnic and religious adherence - in the villages.

Clearly, then, there is at least a suggestion here that government policies have not always had consequences which have promoted ‘Unity in Diversity’. Raman adds weight to this suspicion in alleging that the Government of Mauritius has, unwittingly, encouraged ethnic or racial division, especially in terms of housing. In the early 1960s, a massive programme of public housing was established, but Raman accuses the Government of making the mistake of permitting each cité (or housing complex) to be inhabited by members of one ethnic group or by a vast majority of it. We found that where a cité was inhabited by a majority of one ethnic group[,] pressure was put on the small minority to leave so that the whole block became in the end inhabited by one community. There the Government made a bad mistake of going against the cultural pattern of the people[,] as in the capital [and elsewhere] one would see in the same area or large house with rented rooms[,] people of all communities living happily together and by concentrating one community in a cité the Government was sowing the seeds of future communal tension unknowingly (1991: 195-6).

The latter sentences set the scene nicely for the development of my argument that, intentionally or otherwise, through its policies (of Multiculturalism) the Government of Mauritius has not achieved the same level of success, in terms of inter-community understanding, as have ordinary individuals on a daily basis (which, I will later demonstrate, they continue to do). Governments want to maintain the permanent and easy division of a population into readily recognisable (knowable) segments, or categories. This is for much the same reason that
ethnographers operate the same divisions: i.e. to lay claim to knowledge of a population and hence speak or act (respectively) on their behalf. Governments, meanwhile, feel the need also to create a sense of nation, so that they can have a claim to their governance - and hence the ideology of 'Unity in Diversity' comes into play. This simultaneously permits the Government to posit the constant existence of, for example, ethnic and religious categorisation and yet note that there is a higher, overarching level of secular and civic unification. This is the main thrust of Multicultural theory.

- The Multiculturalist Thesis of 'Unity in Diversity' (and its critics)

Mauritius is frequently taken as an exemplar of a multicultural society, understood as the situation where a society has within its population people from many diverse heritages. This is fairly unremarkable and can be allowed to pass: for the moment. However, 'Multiculturalism' is a less neutral notion. Vertovec usefully describes it as conveying a picture of society as a

mosaic of several bounded, nameable, individually homogenous and unmeltable minority uni-cultures which are pinned on to the backdrop of a similarly characterized majority uni-culture. In common parlance these discrete uni-cultures are regularly referred to as 'communities' (1996: 51).

But, Multiculturalism, besides being descriptive, is also a philosophy, or part of a philosophy (i.e. Multiculturalism), and refers to the aim of having a national culture which manages, more-or-less successfully, to accommodate differences between groups in the greater interest of the stable continuation of the nation-state. Moore states that if Multiculturalism is to have any meaning 'the distinction between the core values of groups and the need for an overarching or more generalized framework of values [...] is particularly appropriate' (1986: 18-19). Kim makes the same point in posing one of the most important questions concerning cultural/ethnic identity: '[h]ow can a society of multiple ethnic identities support and give confidence to all groups while upholding the communal values and responsibilities that transcend allegiance to each group?' (1996: 348). Similarly, according to RS Sharma, Multiculturalism counts, among its key tenets, 'the ethic of accommodation - the need for non-coercive relations with others who are assumed to be in fundamental moral conflict with us.'106 Sharma had previously, and correctly, noted the genesis of Multiculturalism in 'the idea of critique, post
structuralist theory', where there is a 'decentering of existing paradigms' and '[n]o privileging of one particular language/literature over another' *(Ibid.)* - but misses the point that Multiculturalism privileges - depends upon, establishes - (a) the existence of a structure over and above (b) divided individuals - both of which are created by governments.

Both Moore and Sharma and other theorists of Multiculturalism (including governments, such as Mauritius') conceive of a multicultural society (characterised by mutual tolerance for each other's beliefs and ways of life) as one solidly based in the ethic of *accommodation* between segments of society. I contend that there is a basic error at the heart of this line of Multicultural thinking; namely that the notion of accommodation is actually rooted in *Structuralist*, hence Modernist, thought - in holding that there is 'something' into which 'something else' can be accommodated, and that a differentiated population necessarily acts segmentarily. In the Mauritian political context:

1. Multiculturalism begins with the assumption that there are permanently circumscribed and clearly definable categories (of ethnicity, race, religion, etc.) motivating individuals towards divisive behaviour which means that they can, and must, be absorbed into a more, and higher, civic sense of Mauritian culture. However,

2. This is at odds with the simultaneously held belief, propagated by the Mauritius Government, ethnographers and other social scientists, that Mauritian culture is *created* by these diverse ethnic, religious, racial and other groups. Ethnic or religious blocs, for example, are now expected to subsume their identities (distinctivenesses) into something which is a product of the socio-cultural complexity of all of these, and other blocs. This is illogical, and hence lends credence to the fears of those Mauritians who, to Eriksen at least, expressed fears about losing their group identity (cf. Eriksen 1990.).

In fact, I will later argue that there is no necessity for any group to compromise its ethnic, or other, identity because the stability and inter-cultural understanding that has evolved in Mauritius is itself the pragmatic product of individuals exercising their ethnic (and other) group statuses in certain specific, not to say contextual, ways - and this has not, and need not, threaten national cohesion. Indeed, daily life for the majority of Mauritians that I met has far more to do with working to

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106 *Source = handout given to accompany a paper Professor Sharma delivered at the Workshop on American Studies and International Relations, held at the University of Mauritius 22-30th April 1997.*
improve one's local community (i.e. neighbourhood) and ensuring that if anyone requires assistance, they receive it than with endlessly dividing and re-dividing their social worlds into ethnic or other enclaves.

The notion of accommodation, critiqued above, takes for granted that there is in extant a single secular culture to which citizens should and could adhere. As Moore puts it:

*Where a multicultural society appears to function successfully, considerable interest attaches to a careful analysis of how far and in what ways particular groups have been able to maintain their core values, and more especially, to which overarching values all of them appear to be willing to subscribe (1986: 19).*

I will be arguing that far from subscribing to OVERARCHING values, many of the Mauritians that I met shared (horizontally, if you will) intersubjective understandings of each others' behaviour. And this is one of the lynchpins of my re-theorisation of Mauritian identity.

By ‘intersubjective’, I mean the sentiment that Anderson attempts to capture:

*An American will never meet, or even know the names of more than a handful of his fellow Americans. He has no idea of what they are up to at any one time. But he has complete confidence in their steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity (cited in Morley 1995: 67).*

The vast majority of those Mauritians that I met recognised the beliefs and practices of other ethnic, religious and cultural groups as being coterminous and coeval with their own. Similarly, I was also often told that all Mauritians, Mauritians and myself and, indeed, everyone everywhere were connected: we had the same blood ("meme disang") under differentially coloured skin. We are also always part of other people's worlds, we are born into history, we are part of the lives of others, and they of ours. As Schutz notes:

*Acting upon the others and acted upon by them, I know of this mutual relationship, and this knowledge also implies that they, the others, experience the common world in a way substantially similar to mine. They, too, find themselves in a unique biographical situation within a world which is, like mine, [thus, unique but also similar] structured in terms of actual and potential reach, grouped around their actual Here and Now at the center in the same dimensions and directions of space and time, an historically given world of nature, society, and culture, etc.... man takes for granted the bodily existence of fellow men, their conscious life, the possibility of intercommunication, and the historical givens of social organization and culture, just as he takes for granted the world of nature into which he was born (1970: 164).*

Consequently, I suggest, for example, that the fact that Muslims and Hindus tend still to marry endogamously means that they have something in common. This might well be more important than the fact that everyone marrying in Mauritius has to have a civic wedding (i.e. accommodating to the overarching values of the secular state), as well as their religious ceremony. People are not necessarily bound together by civic practices encouraged by Government, I will later argue, but they may very well be bound together by shared - or different but recognisably of a similar order - practices (i.e. they intersubjectively recognise each other to be more-
or-less coeval, share certain values and practices). This is an ethos of common understanding that exactly fits Sharma’s above-stated premise that socio-culturally heterogeneous societies must be characterised by ‘non-coercive relations’.\(^{107}\) Rather than sharing overarching ideals, derived from representational/ideological models such as ‘Unity in Diversity’ and, more broadly, Multiculturalist thinking; individual Mauritians operate with a more pragmatic set of notions about their fellow citizens’ socio-cultural heterogeneity; which happens to be both more difficult (a) to ethnographically describe and (b) for the Government to influence and control. My point is that Mauritian individuals relate to each other as coevals by recognising that their different ethnic/religious/cultural practices are equivalent; not that they share a similar civil culture (as Multiculturalism/governmentality would require).\(^{108}\)

In this thesis, I will be drawing upon three main tools through which to re-evaluate Mauritian identity. These are:

1. Intersubjectivity;
2. Transcendence and
3. Creolization.

As I explained above, intersubjectivity will be applied to those understandings that I found individuals made of others’ social practices and beliefs, thereby establishing that although a member of another group does something in a different way, they are seeking the same ends as oneself (e.g. fasting to demonstrate devotion; marrying endogamously). Transcendence will be applied to the ways in which I found individuals and groups being and achieving more than a familiarity with the ethnographic/governmental literature of Mauritius would lead one to expect (overcoming such textual divisions which do not necessarily ‘map out’ into social realities). Creolization will be used to refer to individuals being more than just ethnic, caste or religious beings. They can and, I argue, do, share some behaviours and beliefs - across and between - ethnic, caste, religious and other lines. This is a view of Mauritian social life which differs radically from that established by both state and sociologist but, as the following chapters will reveal, is a productive and insightful one which may occasion a review of the literature of other plural, or diverse, societies.

\(^{107}\) The recent struggle in Turkey between the military who were agitating for a secular state, and one part of the coalition government who were attempting to make Turkey more Islamic is a good example of the difficulties of imposing any form of values. Here, the people had democratically voted for an Islamist government, but the unelected military - paradoxically - were in favour of an assuredly secular society.
My politicised arguments will, then, ethnographically support Mestrovic’s condemnation of state- and academic-sponsored Multicultural tolerance:

The postmodern program of promoting organized tolerance (for example through the aegis of Multiculturalism) is fundamentally flawed, and doomed to failure. This is because any and all organized systems of tolerance will automatically be intolerant of some groups and all traditional cultures. For example, the campaign for tolerance towards homosexuals in the United States is intolerant to fundamentalist Christian, Hispanic, and other cultural groups who do not tolerate homosexuality. [...] The postmodern focus on tolerance may have resulted in the paradox that extreme forms of intolerance are tolerated because even the intolerant have a point of view that must be heard (1994: 10-11).

Hence, Mestrovic and I condemn governmental notions of tolerance and Multiculturalism (whilst recognising that they may appear both persuasive and liberal) because they are isolated from the less officially organized - but just as valid for our attention - real social worlds and practices of individuals. In this Thesis I want to elevate into ethnographic focus the daily and generally successful practices and discourses of some individual Mauritians; to demonstrate that there is another, alternative, order and level of conceptualising Mauritius’ ‘tolerance’ than that previously operated.109 I am opposed to - in Mestrovic’s usage - the so-called postmodern program of promoting organized tolerance, and believe that the actions of individuals (in mutually ‘tolerating’ socio-cultural heterogeneity) challenges, through this Thesis, (a) the claims of the state to unify and encourage tolerance amongst its population and (b) of previous ethnographers’ assertions that they have best captured the nature of social life in Mauritius.

My notions of tolerance are generally of non-centrally/bureaucratically organized tolerances; of unorganized tolerance. This alternative order of intersubjective/cultural comprehension does not, like the state’s, have the air of contemptuous superiority on the part of those who do the tolerating. To tolerate is to put up with something or someone, not to sympathize or understand. Enlightened tolerant persons will fall unwittingly into the trap of narcissism because by being tolerant they feel that they are better than traditional persons. Yet narcissism opens the door to all sorts of ethnocentrism and bigotry which, in the end, will result in the repetition of the alleged evils of traditional bigots (Mestrovic 1994: 11, emphasis added).

Interestingly, this connects well with allegations made by some radical Mauritian political movements that BEHIND the all too publicly avowed commitments to ‘Unity

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108 Although some practices and philosophies may be shared, and I address these later in the thesis. Of course, not all Mauritians take their referents from ethnic, or other group, membership - and I describe some of these individuals later as well.

109 However, I should add that the state does have an important role to play in encouraging and supporting the actions of individuals against for example, movements which might seek to coalesce individuals towards fractious actions. But, the grassroots approach of individuals may well be the only way to achieve effective, if sometimes uncomfortable, harmony. Certainly, the efforts of state-sponsored movements to bring peace to, for example, the Former Republic of Yugoslavia, Somalia and so many other places has come to little.
in Diversity', some Mauritian politicians continue to think communally (i.e. with bigotry). As the Muvman Anti-Komunalis\textsuperscript{110} (MAK) puts it:

\begin{quote}
[The Mouvement Militant Mauricien (MMM)] still maintain that “community” is a plain fact, a psycho-social reality: a form of “identity” which makes people feel secure. Without this identity, this hegemonic view holds, people would walk around feeling insecure. From this definition, the MMM, over the years, has invented an entire political strategy, with all concomitant tactics, based on community, referred to by the enemies of the MMM as “the MMM’s scientific communalism”, while the enemies who say this also use this same kind of communalism (in \textit{Dorad} vol. 21, November 1996: 5).
\end{quote}

The MMM, other political parties and the Mauritian state, argue the MAK, perpetuate communal thinking by continuing to believe that people are permanently and naturally divided one from the other by the ethnic and racial classification of difference. Bérenger’s alleged ‘scientific communalism’ (whereby he tries to gain political advantage by seeking votes from certain sectors of the population) is frequently singled out for attack by his political enemies:

\begin{quote}
La nation mauricienne est un grand famille. En politique, j’ai toujours refusé de me laisser entraîner par le sectarisme. J’ai toujours pensé que le communalisme, qu’il soit scientifique ou pas, est méprisable (Prime Minister Ramgoolam in \textit{L’Express}, 18 aout 1997).\textsuperscript{111}
\end{quote}

Supporting MAK’s scepticism, there are moves by some ethno-political movements to attempt to redefine the term ‘community’ so that it becomes synonymous with an \textit{ethnic} marker. Hence, the Secretary-General of the Mauritius Tamil Council,\textsuperscript{112} noted that ‘Le Tamil’s Council \textit{n’est pas un parti religieux} and that the Tamil Council cannot be religious:

\begin{quote}
 quand à l’intérieur du dit mouvement on a des chrétiens, ba’hais, catholiques, musulmans, protestants, sivaïtes, orthodoxes, saktites, jainistes, vishnuites, bouddhistes, etc.? [...] On n’est pas cultuel, mais culturel (Le Quotidien [newspaper] 29.11.96).\textsuperscript{113}
\end{quote}

In the same interview, he adds an intriguing note to the major political argument of Mauritius (and other multi-ethnic societies, such as India), that one should not be communalist: the Secretary-General states that ‘Le Mauritius Tamil Council \textit{est un parti communaliste mais non sectaire}\textsuperscript{114} and continues to denounce racism, casteism and sectarianism (\textit{Ibid}). Here, then, claims are made that there is something that links individuals above and beyond their religious affiliation, and rather than that ‘link’ being, say, class-based or interest-based, it is the fact that these individuals share a certain \textit{ethnicity}. This may or may not be the case, depending on the individuals, but it is the suggestion that the best way of

\textsuperscript{110} Anti-Communalist Movement.

\textsuperscript{111} ‘The Mauritian nation is a big family. In politics, I have always refused to let my self be swept along by sectarianism. I have always thought that communalism, whether it is scientific or not, is contemptible’.

\textsuperscript{112} M. Devarajen Kanakasbee.

\textsuperscript{113} ‘when in the interior of this movement, there are Christians, Ba’hais, Catholics, Muslims, Protestants, Shiites, Orthodox, Shakitites, Jainists, Vishnuites, Buddhists, etc. [...] We are not a cult group, but a cultural group’.

\textsuperscript{114} The Mauritius Tamil Council is communalist, but not sectarian’.
elaborating the claims of a certain group of individuals is through an ethnically-selective means which MAK would focus on. Why should it be that rather than a number of like-minded individuals who share concerns about, for example, taxation, public order and so on, becoming members of a political party - it is assumed that they should instead cohere around the sharing of ethnic substance? I would share the suspicion of MAK that politicians do attempt to gain power and influence by presenting themselves as representatives of a certain ethnic bloc of the population, when they may actually be nothing of the kind.

Some Mauritians do indeed openly discuss politics in ethnic terms. A politically active acquaintance, and prominent member of the MMM, noted that:

In UK or Europe, people vote for a Government, or a party. Here I would rather vote for a party with a Hindu at its head, otherwise the Muslims will get in. Some people may call us communalist [for doing this] ... but we [Mauritians] are fragmented; each unit; each component tries to promote their culture, their religion, [...] It is not like that in UK because you are all mostly Christian, either Protestants or Catholics.

This, in a sense, confirms Eriksen’s observation that ‘[i]n Mauritius ... it is evident that agents genuinely believe that members of their own ethnic categories (or related ones) serve their interests better than others’ (1992: 20-1), but at the same time Eriksen fails to enquire deeper into this. From my cited informant, his justification for always voting for a Hindu, and a Hindu of his caste too, was that it would protect Mauritius, democracy and economic prosperity into the future, something which he felt he could not trust, say, Muslim candidates to do. This sentiment does not seem to be solely motivated by self-/community interest. He believes that it is Hindu politicians who can assure peace and stability in Mauritius for all.

The Hindu orthodox group Arya Sabha takes a rather different line when its then head (Moolshankar Ramdhonee), in marking the 50th anniversary of the Independence of India, declared that ‘Nous ne devons être gouvernés que par nous-mêmes’ - ‘nous’ here referring to the Hindu community who support this movement: not least the Prime Minister who congratulated Arya Sabha for its contribution to the development of ‘la culture’ in Mauritius. But which culture? Tellingly, the newspaper by-line for this story was a quotation from M. Ramdhonee: “Unité des hindous pour conserver leurs avantages”.

115 This is interesting, not least because he supported a part which was led by a Franco-Mauritian who, although it was well known that he was ‘content manze indien’ [happy to eat Indian food], he wasn’t a Hindu.

116 Interestingly Epstein cites the example of Parenti who, in 1967, published a paper which looked at the persistence of ‘ethnic voting’ in the United States, and concluded ‘melting pot or not, ethnic voting may be with us for a long time to come’ (in Epstein 1978: 4).

117 ‘We don’t want to be governed by anyone other than ourselves’. From L’Express newspaper, 16 aout 1997.

118 ‘The unity of Hindus for conserving their advantages’.
Hindus, meanwhile, refuse to talk about things in terms of community or caste at all, and denounce them, and those that rely upon them to gain promotion and other favours, as 'bullshit'.

- Reprise: ‘Unity in Diversity’, Social Anthropology and this Thesis

All political parties in Mauritius openly declare their support for the ideology of ‘Unity in Diversity’, and it is an appealing feature in both tourist and other literatures. Ramesh Ramdoyal, until recently the head of a major educational institution in Mauritius, has written movingly on ‘Unity in Diversity’, and neatly summarises what the Mauritian state understands by it:

‘Unity in diversity’ in our pluri-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-religious, multi-racial society is not an empty slogan. Unity in Diversity is a national hymn borne everyday to the heart of every Mauritian, in the call of the muezzin, in the pealing of the church bells, in the sound of the gong, as these daily rise from every nook and corner of the land. [...] It took a lot of heroism, sacrifice and hard work to turn this den of iniquity, this pit of prejudice into what it is today: a cosmopolitan garden of the Ocean, where freedom and justice, sweetness and light are the birthright of each and everyone (1994: 14).

Whilst wholly agreeing with, and sharing his delight at, the diversity of Mauritius which Ramdoyal points up, it will by now be clear that I wish to promote a view which takes a more critical view of the theory of ‘Unity in Diversity’ (which is more than a way of describing an existing reality and is instead a programme intended to impose a certain form of governmentality on the Mauritian population). Not least, this is informed by the reactions of Mauritians themselves to (a) ‘unity in diversity’ and (b) being informed that previous ethnographies have stated, for example, that they have no Mauritian identity unless they are abroad or are talking to tourists.

Mils: What is your reaction to the phrase ‘unity in diversity’?
Carl: [15 seconds pause] - What is unity? What is peace? Is it not saying things because one is afraid of the effect that it will have on others?
(Interview with novelist and school Rector M. Carl de Souza).

‘Unity in Diversity’ is, I suggest, merely a continuation of the Government’s manoeuvres of statistical categorisation (as outlined above). It propagates of the idea that Mauritius is an island of competing ethnic categories which can and should fruitfully be brought together through the Multiculturalist rubric of ‘Unity in Diversity’. I argue that the categorisation of Mauritius’ population by antecedent ethnographers and Government ministries - and then the claim that from crosscutting division between categories emerges (much along the lines of that classic model of African and then Melanesian social life the Segmentary Lineage System) -
is dehumanising and totalising, leaving little room for conceptions of individual strategy and creativity. The very idea of 'Unity in Diversity' is a representational model employed by government and ethnographer alike (enforcing governmentality and maximising power).

I claim that a strength of the discipline of Social Anthropology is the pursuit of research from the individual's point of view, and that this is concomitant with my belief, born from long-term participant observation, that overarching, governmental structures transcending ethnic, religious, racial and other divisions have no, or little, place in the lives of those individual Mauritians that I came to meet. The people that I met and came to know as friends and acquaintances did not interact in ways predicted by either 'Unity in Diversity' or its academic disciples cited in the early section of this chapter. This is my crucial rupture with previous ethnographies and state rhetorics (discourses of governmentality). I want to re-humanise anthropological study, to re-elevate the individual point-of-view to the centre of the anthropological enterprise and to deny totalising schema which, whilst highly attractive and allegedly powerful explanatory tools are far from adequate; ethically dubious and over-simplified visions of an ultra-complex social reality.119

I find the fascination of Social Anthropology, as did Leach, to be in the fact that 'there are no 'laws' of historical process; there are no 'laws' of sociological probability. The fundamental characteristic of human culture is its endless diversity. It is not a chaotic diversity but it is not a predestined diversity either' (1971: 51-2). Mauritian culture is, it is suggested by non-Mauritian ethnographers and the Mauritian state, more diverse, and hence divided, than other countries/regions because of the range of ethnic, racial and religious groups present. 'Unity in Diversity' and sociological categorisation have, however, sought to diminish diversity by concentrating on viewing the activities of individuals in Mauritius as the manifestations (effects) of the manoeuvrings of gross ethnic, religious and racial blocs (divisions). I will now move on to argue that 'Unity in Diversity' and the permanent categorisation of Mauritian individuals (i.e. as blocs of undifferentiated ethnics) are representational models which are not of the same order as actions and, further, do not aid the anthropological comprehension of individual actions and discourses, nor shed light on the achievements and creativity of individuals.

Anthropology, state Holy and Stuchlik, has always been 'rather strict about long-term fieldwork, participant observation, and other research techniques

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119 As are all cultures/societies/groups where human beings associate.
developed specifically for obtaining information about what people actually do, down to the most minute details' (1983: 1). From these observed details (or 'data'), analysis and explanation has conventionally been pursued through recourse to such notions as social structure, society, etc. The major division between behaviour and explanation is as to

(a) whether 'society, or structure, is an objective reality' to which people respond in certain ways, where this society/structure 'is an autonomous agency and individual people are its agents, and the only acceptable explanation is in terms of the functioning of the system'.

OR,

(b) conversely, that the society/structure 'emerges from, and is maintained or changed' by people and their behaviours, and here individuals are 'autonomous agents and systems are consequences of their actions' (Ibid: 2).

Holy and Stuchlik dedicate their text, and my interpretation of anthropology also shares this broad aim, to explaining 'why people do things they do' (Ibid: 3), which I place in the (b) category of anthropological explanation. This Thesis presents individual people doing or saying things, rather than relying on the actions of unitary aspects of social structures (Hindus, Muslims, Creoles, men, women), and hence is in the tradition of Holy and Stuchlik's approach.120

Holy and Stuchlik are also critical of the undifferentiated manner in which anthropologists discuss their 'data'. Differences, which we all find in our field notes, are regarded as incidental, they argue, and 'data' is still regarded as a unitary concept, 'a sum total of information obtained about a particular case and through it about a social structure conceived of in an equally unitary way' (Ibid: 7).121 Holy and Stuchlik demonstrate this thesis with the case-study of a well-known anthropological figure: the segmentary lineage system. Whereas, they write, it first appears that the segmentary lineage system is 'simply a form of society manifested both in actors' notions and in social processes', the situation is, upon more critical examination, more complicated and contestable. It appears, they continue, 'that the view that the segmentary lineage structure is a representation of empirically observable social processes is not all that well founded' (Ibid: 9). In fact, the neatly balanced view of, for example, Nuer society so beloved by Evans-Pritchard (e.g.

120 Ladislav Holy founded the Department of Social Anthropology at the University of St. Andrews.
121 This reminds one of Overing's comment that "In the world of anthropology we are always faced with the worry of how to handle 'chaos' in our data. In our field notes there inevitably lurks a certain amount of material that we perceive as 'disorderly', 'illogical', and 'contradictory'. We ponder over such data, feel guilty about their presence; and in the end must make a decision about how we are going to deal with them' (1985: 152).
1969 [1940]: 139-onwards) and others is rather more uneven. Holy and Stuchlik cite Smith who critiques anthropologists for mistaking ‘ideology for actuality’ and not looking beyond it \(\textit{op. cit.:} 10\). Certainly, it would be a naive anthropologist, or human being for that matter, who did not recognise that ‘people often say they do such and such and can be observed actually doing something else’ \(\textit{Ibid.:} 12\).

This Thesis acknowledges this social fact, no matter how uncomfortable it may be for the author who thereby precludes him or herself from taking the easier path of, say, assuming the constantly meaningful existence of ethnic and other categorisations. I will be demonstrating that although there certainly are times when ethnic categorisations are meaningfully employed by individual Mauritians, at other times these are not appropriate, nor should they be expected to be, and so, instead, other views of the social world are drawn upon. This is a departure from preceding ethnographies which, although sometimes acknowledging the potential existence of moments when ethnicity will not be employed, usually argue that, for example, in all daily social interactions, Mauritians are constantly reminded of their ethnicity and related social status and that a sense of \textit{Mauritian} identity is only called upon in contact with outsiders: when they are abroad or talking with tourists (cf. Eriksen 1989; 1990).

Hannerz draws upon Sperber’s suggestion of an ‘epidemiology of representations’ which makes some representations more contagious than others, as Hannerz puts it ‘[t]hese are the ones which become “more cultural,” in the sense of establishing themselves more widely and more enduringly in society’ \(1996: 21\). I will prove that there is an alternative way of looking at Mauritian diversity which differs from that pursued by both the Mauritian state and previous ethnographies; and which tries to reject such epidemiology. I collapse these two classes of text into the category of ‘governmentality’, after Foucault (cf. Burchell \textit{et al.} 1991). Foucault, I have explained, understood the term government, which led to forms of discourse and practice known as ‘governmentality’, to mean ‘the conduct of conduct’: that is to say, a form of activity aiming to shape, guide or affect the conduct of some person or persons’ \(1991: 2\). Clearly, by dividing up the population and then advocating unity in, and on, its diversity - the Mauritius Government is aiming to shape, guide and affect the conduct of its population (remember one of the aims of the \textit{Vision 2020} document, above, ‘to rally the population round the vision of “Mauritius 2020” and to enlist their support to translate that vision into reality’). Similarly, by insisting on ethnic and other categorisations as being pervasive to all
social contexts, antecedent ethnographers aim to influence the conduct of persons; not least their academic peers and other scholars of Mauritius.

I will demonstrate, however, that these jointly governmental fetishizings of categorisation overshadow individual diversity and, moreover, individually generated strategies of pragmatically managing socio-cultural heterogeneity. This does not mean that categories, such as ‘Hindu’, ‘Creole’, ‘Brahmin’ and so on are never employed by Mauritians, indeed they are, just that holding that these categories are immanent in all social contexts of interaction is an insufficient description of my field experience.

Shotter (1993) has written powerfully on the ways in which explanations become unquestionable, i.e. a statement becomes ideological. In the case of the Mauritius Government this is clearly perceptible; in ethnography we are perhaps a little less used to looking for ideology. This Thesis will, however, demonstrate that the presumption that Mauritians are permanently categorised into groups (based on ethnicity, etc.) is one such ideology which is legitimised by other anthropologists drawing on that ethnography and sets the parameters for further sociological research in that society. As many contemporary anthropologists (cf. Rapport 1993) reject closure in the ethnographic account, so we should also reject closed systems of thought - such as that represented, I argue, in governmental discourse (discourses of governmentality): governing people as a state and governing subjects as anthropological author is essentially the same practice: the exercise of power to create biddable subjects.

There is, in this Thesis, in short, an alternative view of Mauritius which, whilst not as utopian as state discourses of ‘Unity in Diversity’ nor as fractious as ethnographies of segmentary division would have us believe, is more realistic to my knowledge of the ethnographic context. This Thesis is an account which is more faithful to the individual Mauritian social universes which I became part of than those unified, totalising, mythic structures that Eriksen, Hollup, Benedict, Meade et al. have presented, which the state of Mauritius and Multiculturalist theoreticians promote. My work will jar with antecedent ethnographies, and from these conflicts we have much to gain.
• The Alternative view: 'Dilo trankil pena fonder'\textsuperscript{122}

There is an alternative view possible of Mauritius or, to be more precise, a possibility of presenting a selection of alternative views. I return to the individual point-of-view, informed by material collected through long-term participant-observation. I attempt to go beyond the theorising of governmental structures (ethnographic categorisation, 'Unity in Diversity', etc.) by a return to anthropology's roots: the concern with the local viewpoint, the 'native's point of view' (Malinowski 1922: 25); the coming to an 'understanding of the way of life of [...] people' (Leach 1971:1)

Notions such as 'Unity in Diversity' and the permanent immanence of ethnicity are representational models, or, in more politicised terms, ideologies which do not reveal

(a) the native's point of view, nor

(b) help the understanding of a single particular people:

| Me hear dem a talk bout Unity                      |
| Dem have a plan fe de Effnick Minority            |
| Dem say Liberation totally                        |
| But dem hav odder tings as priority               |
| Dem hold a Conference annually                    |

(Benjamin Zephaniah 1995: 44).

By surpassing those notions and tropes, I in turn make a radical political statement: Culture(s) are the products of individuals, and so being are more complex than simple textual/ethnographic models can manage to communicate. These latter governmental models require criticism in the same way that ethnocentrism has, largely, been successfully dealt with in anthropology. The elevation of representational models derived from the powerful (the state, ethnographers) as explanatory mechanisms is, if you will, 'hierarchalist' and must be countered. Representational models are the folk models of the powerful, they describe ideal states and not necessarily realistic (operational) realities. As Holy and Stuchlik put it, people 'hold specific social theories which are statements of basic values and whose important components are ideas about what the state of affairs ought to be. Such notions are usually called ideologies' (op. cit.: 100). Billig adds that ideologies are 'patterns of belief and practice, which makes existing social arrangements appear 'natural' or inevitable' (1997: 15). The aim of my formulation of Social

\textsuperscript{122} 'Still waters have no depth'.

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Anthropology is taken from Edmund Leach, and that is to attempt to disregard the ideological, the seemingly natural, the already said and written:

My [...] thesis is that ethnographic facts will be much easier to understand if we approach them free of all such a priori assumptions. Our concern is with what the significant social categories are; not with what they ought to be. [...] All I have tried to do here is to show that an unprejudiced re-examination of established ethnographic facts which does not start off with a battery of concepts thought up in a professorial study (or bureaucratic statistician's office) may lead to some unexpected conclusions (1971: 27)

In aiming to achieve my target of presenting a persuasive possibility that there is another way, or set of ways, of describing and interpreting Mauritius (cf. Intersubjectivity, Transcendence and Creolization), the next chapter explores the diversity contained within some of the identities of some of the Mauritians that I met. It aims to highlight the individuality of these informants and thus demonstrate that any presumption that behaviour or discourse can be predicted by an analytical awareness of the ethnic (or other) group membership of an individual is misplaced. There is diversity at the very heart of group membership; in that sense it may be that the sociological/governmental reliance upon labels and textual strategies such as 'the Hindus ...', 'the Muslims ...' are shown to be fatally compromised as immanent sources of action and description.
Chapter 2
Individual Expressions of Identity

Ethnic identity is one of many identities available to people. It is developed, displayed, manipulated, or ignored in accordance with the demands of particular situations. Human beings are aware of their surroundings and manipulate other individuals or situations in order to achieve what they perceive to be a more desirable context for themselves.

- Royce 1982: 1-2
Chapter 2
Individual Expressions of Identity

- Introduction: Individuals as social dummies?

The quotation on the preceding page sets the distinctive scene to this revisionist chapter. Social life is a process, during which, in Mauritius as elsewhere, ethnic (racial, religious, caste and other) categorisations - familiar to the anthropological academy - are sometimes useful (and, hence, used). However, at other times such categorisations may be less appropriate, or wholly inappropriate, means by which to best grasp the meanings and significances of individuals' behaviour. Being informed by both the discourses of Multiculturalism (in the form of 'Unity in Diversity') and previous ethnography, I might have expected to find that all Mauritians enacted and drew upon their ethnic identity at all times; that it was predominant in all interaction; that it was, from the native's as well as the anthropologist's point of view, always significant. In fact, this is far from being a realistic (in terms of matching with my field experience) means of portraying individual Mauritian social realities. The processual nature of social life means that people are more complex than has hitherto been recognised in anthropologising Mauritius (or elsewhere) because:

For good or ill, people are not social dummies. They are 'wired' to some extent, in having learned their social roles and having learned what is meant when certain signs are given, but they can be something else as well: they can seize the situation, suffer acute states of purposiveness, feel joy and pain even when they are not socially supposed to, try to gain ends - many of which ends were learned as the 'correct' ones to seek, but many of which, too, were not - and compete with each other for scarce ends. Intelligence and purposiveness make the actor more than the social dummy (Dolgin, Kemnitzer and Schneider cited in Holy and Stuchlik 1983: 108).

This is a vital quotation in further establishing the stance that I adopt with reference in my writing and theorising about Mauritians. This chapter - by celebrating the diversity of some selected individuals' statements about themselves - shows, as do other chapters, that although ethnicity certainly does play a role in many Mauritians' lives, this picture is distinctly blurred in comparison to the clear-cut images presented by antecedent ethnographers. I will demonstrate, in this and forthcoming chapters, that at times non-ethnic and ethnic identifications and strategies work side-by-side; sometimes ethnicity is dropped entirely and some Mauritians consciously, and forcefully, reject ethnic categorisation in their daily lives.
Some comparative ethnography provides me with some support in the quest undertaken in this and later chapters. Peter Mewett, in his analysis of Clachan (Isle of Lewis, Scotland) society, pursues somewhat similar aims to myself. Mewett argues that one of the foundations for the analysis of social relations requires that the anthropologist comprehend the 'commonly agreed bases in which people associate with and differentiate between one another' (1982: 102). Such bases, he continues, amount to part of the social knowledge shared by everyone in the community (Ibid). I might not agree, a priori, that this social knowledge is shared by everyone, but would qualify Mewett's proposition by acknowledging that associational categories (such as Hindu, Muslim, Creole, etc.) are likely to be shared and used (at times) by a large number of Mauritians. Mewett then outlines the role that such categories usefully perform:

The vast number of actual relationships found in the small community are simplified and classified by reference to a number of commonly understood associational categories. These provide the focus for group formation and the means by which each person can socially position - or, put differently, know about - each other person in the community. The social position of each person produces a commonly known and understood basis for their interaction with others in the community. In this way a local structure of interpersonal relationships is produced. A local social organisation, therefore, emerges from the associational categories that inform the everyday social activity of the community (Ibid: 102).

This, and preceding, chapters accept that associational categories are indeed sometimes used, but then begins to build up to a more dramatic anthropological revision of Mauritian social life by relativising the role of ethnicity, and other such sources of 'division', through an emphasis on the importance of the individual as the focus of ethnographic fieldwork, remembering that: 'the tendency in modern social thought has been to treat ethnicity as a given and to explore its consequences' (Steinberg 1981: ix-x), and 'identity is at the heart of all anthropological inquiry' (Herzfeld 1992: 3).

Leaving these quotations as hints in the reader's consciousness, the sets of individual discourses which I list below are drawn from my field notes, and for each I have summarised the main strand of identity which I heard expressed, and mnemonically added my interpretation of that strand. Concluding my analysis of each individual is a short review section contextualising the impact which I establish each individual makes on this developing ethnographic, humanistic revision of Mauritian identity.124

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123 Cited in Banks 1996: 78
124 The individuals that I present here are not representative of any generalised 'Mauritian' individuals, although they could be, rather they are some of those people that I came to know best during my fieldwork.
Individual 1: Dev

I came to know Dev very well during my time in Mauritius, and over the year we became very close. A good deal older than myself, he had spent a large proportion of his life in the UK. He had completed National Service in Britain, in the RAF, and then continued in that Service travelling the world. Following his departure from the RAF, he spent many years working with airline companies operating out of London. During all of his years abroad, he returned home to Mauritius as frequently as possible, and some 18 months previous to my first meeting him he had moved back permanently. I found Dev's company enjoyable, and learnt a great deal about Mauritian politics and values from him. In terms of religious matters, his - and his wife's - explanations and teachings were highly influential on me.

Some of Dev's repeated discourses (in no significant order) are now presented, which give an insight into an individual as a rounded, more complete person than could otherwise be achieved.

I found Dev to be:

1. Grateful for the education and welcome that he received in the United Kingdom. He came to Britain in the 1950s, worked as a plate-washer in London whilst a student, and then enrolled for National Service. He served in the RAF as a processor of photo-reconnaissance film, travelled widely and was posted to Cornwall, Tavistock, RAF Bridgnorth; Malta, the Middle East and elsewhere. He always maintained that the welcome into his home and heart that he extended to Laura and myself - and other visitors to Mauritius - was because he owed 'so much' to the UK, in terms of an education, career, friends ... so much so that he compared a brother-in-law (and his opinions on West Indians and Jamaicans in London) with Enoch Powell,125 and spoke favourably of the National Front ('When you get to know them'). He maintains that the England of today is 'a shadow' of its former self. 'I knew it at its best' he said. As a frequent party-goer in his youth and, later, through his work with several airlines, he came to meet and become friends with many significant figures in the British pop music and film industries (e.g. Cliff Richard, Cilla Black).

2. A dissatisfied Mauritian - e.g. “we are backwards here". He critically referred to the situation where Hindu widows with children find it difficult to re-marry, because virginity is prized in a bride. In the political sphere, Dev was dismissive of the corruption which he saw as having seeped into the Mauritian bureaucracy following Independence from Britain. He is staunchly in favour of meritocracy in employment and promotion, and has rejected overtures from politicians seeking to give him work because of the electoral influence that he could exercise in his local community. Equally aggressively opposed to the arrogance of all rich elites: Franco-Mauritian, Hindu, Muslim or Chinese.

3. A forthright, honourable Mauritian. A slight rogue, a brave fighter, a supreme fixer who knows all sorts of people at all levels, speaks his mind and doesn’t care what people think. He does not shy away from confrontation if he knows that he

125 On the subject of Pakistanis and Jamaicans living in London. The brother-in-law was mugged by a Pakistani whilst studying in London and working nights in a cinema in Leicester Square.
is in the right. He is keen on giving free vent to his opinions, even to Government Ministers. Hence, in heated conversation with one Minister, he re-labelled Mauritius, promoted by the Government as the economic 'Tiger of the Indian Ocean', as the 'Great White Shark' of the Indian Ocean. He continues to tackle people like this, as he always has, even though he knows that it will preclude him from getting another job - and in spite of the fact that the Government offers him jobs. 'I am finished' is his interpretation of the corner into which he has painted himself because he refuses to be a 'yes man'.

4. A concerned grand-parent, so perturbed with the way that his grandchild was being brought up by his (more-or-less estranged) daughter-in-law that he and his wife now look after her until his son father returns to Mauritius from London and re-marries.

5. A dutiful husband, acts as the responsible head of household; the position that his wife expects him to maintain with dignity, and hence she condemns him when he does something which she sees as undermining the family's dignity. As an upholder of family dignity, he might be required to, for example, chastise relatives for talking outside the house, etc.. He frequently falls out with other members of his family who behave in a way that he regards as inappropriate. He knows that he and his immediate family behave with probity and responsibility and is deeply upset when others who claim to be as good as him do not act according to the same expected patterns of behaviour.

6. A 'macho' man, who has had many discreet liaisons in the past and could 'take you to places and show you things you wouldn’t believe' in Mauritius. Discretion is vital because of the size of the island and the fact that his car is one of the few of its make/colour on the island - if he had been discovered, he would have been in real trouble. He told me of one relationship he had abroad that makes him cry even now, because he knows that he should have stayed with her and not returned to Mauritius. Before he dies, he wants to see this lady once again.

7. An observant Hindu, conscious of the right and wrong way of doing things, such as prayers - although he frequently consults his wife who is highly knowledgeable. He is a head of household who behaves appropriately; a good neighbour and a good Samaritan. If a neighbour, relative or friend needs to go somewhere and doesn’t have a car, he will turn out to ferry them to hospital, the airport, a funeral, etc.. He realises that some of the practices that he endorses are in contrast with those of the West, for example ‘We marry first and then learn to love’, but does not say that any one way is better than another.

8. A believer in the power of spirits, which protect the health of him, his extended family, the house and guests. The spirits are located locally and he regularly makes offerings to them. These beliefs are significant because the sense of events being in the control of god(s)/spirits inform what he does and how he does it; ‘what will happen is written’, he would say about events such as ill-health, death and good fortune, and when it was time for him to die - that would be it, he had no control over it.

9. Someone who knows his job inside out and is proud of his employment record, though the constant use of electronic keyboards in his Telex and ticketing work with various companies means that he has lost much of the use of one of his hands and is in almost constant pain in that arm.

10. A travelled person - UK/Madeira/France and elsewhere, and hence is not happy when others attempt to publicly demonstrate their mastery of, for example, foreign languages. At one public meeting, the speaker annoyed Dev very much because, Dev said later, he started in Kreol, moved into French and then used

126 For example, that a relative should not be drunk at 10:30a.m..
English - just to assert his supremacy over him and other members of the audience, when he was just as good as him, and could speak both French and English with more fluency.

11. Someone who enjoys their food and drink, especially meat. When he and his family were fasting, he used to fantasise about what he would eat when the fasting was over. Roast lamb, roast potatoes, brussel sprouts and apple sauce featured heavily.

12. Anti-Muslim, especially in relation to the Muslims that he has met living in the UK. However, in Mauritius he also has many Muslim friends, and although they won't invite him into their house, he invites them to his. He frequently exchanges ribald conversation and gestures with Muslim friends that he meets in town. He said that the Muslims on the island are in some form of conflict with the Hindus, but that it is "dormant". Muslims, he says, are "hot headed", and one doesn't argue with them.

13. Critical of Sino-Mauritians: after his experience working in a Chinese owned car dealership. He believes them to be selfish because he didn't get any commission whilst he worked at the garage, but he got his own back by borrowing a new car every day and saying that he was going to meet a client ('a fictitious client'), and actually used the cars to pick up his wife. But his local shopkeeper is a Chinese woman and he trusts and likes her very much. She reciprocates by extending him a line of credit. He can talk about anything with her and appreciates both her advice and company.

14. A Brahmin, thinking of himself as 'hard-done-by', and maintaining that (Mauritian) Indians are 2nd or 3rd class citizens in their own country - and Brahmins are especially under severe pressure: whether they be high-profile heads of educational institutions or at the more grass-roots level.

15. Well connected: Dev knows lots of people, many of whom are related, but others are just friends. They comprise doctors, barristers, college teachers and others, also 'I have a lot of poor relatives, you know, ordinary people, [but] my uncle who died last month was a Commissioner of Police'. He prefers the ordinary people, because they will extend enormous generosity to you even though they have little, whereas rich people will give you a glass of Black Label (the most expensive) whisky one day, and nothing to eat - and nothing to eat or drink at all the next day. 'I can give you only what I have', he said, 'nothing more, nothing less'. He couldn't and wouldn't buy expensive whiskies or foods for guests: guests became part of the family and therefore shared whatever the family had.

16. A grateful person: glad to have had a good education, to have travelled, glad to have good children, a good wife (although the first died) and 'good limbs'; i.e. it is better to be poor and unparalysed than rich and paralysed, like the son of very rich parents that he knows, who has to be humiliatingly fed with a spoon. Money is not a priority for Dev as long as one has enough to live.

17. Caring for the local community: Dev helped an old Creole man living nearby. The old man came to the door wanting some cigarettes. Dev invited him in for some food as well, but the man would only stay near the door, and refused to join Dev and his wife and eat at the table. Dev gave him clothes (the man slept on a bare concrete floor in an empty house); cigarettes, food, etc.. A few nights later, the man came back and broke almost all of the windows in Dev's house; 'he is a psycho,' he observed ruefully. The Police took the man away and Dev later visited him in the cells. He gave him a cigarette - to the policeman's disgust - and refused to press charges. 'But they all knew that the man was ill, and that locking

127 I later explore a line of argument which states that it is the sharp practice or bad management which is most significant in such critiques, rather than the fact that those critiqued happen to be members of a different ethnic or religious group.
him up would do no good,' said Dev, and so he gave him some money and left. The policeman was so disgusted that he said that they wouldn’t respond the next time Dev called for help. The community has changed, Dev says, in the past when people moved into a house - like the one at the top of his lane - they would come and introduce themselves and they would interact quite frequently. On Divali night, when one gives sweets to friends, relatives and neighbours, it was the first time in a year that some new neighbours had spoken to him.

18. A wry observer of the world, saying, for example, when I drove his car ‘We’ve got a white driver today’, enjoying the fact that I, as a white man, sometimes drove him around, in his car, and well aware of the entertaining reversal of usual practice in Mauritius, although he was rather uneasy whenever I carried an umbrella for him when we went shopping.

19. A learner: ‘I’ve always learnt more from young people than from the old’ was one of Dev’s frequent observations. He enjoyed the company of younger people just as much as that of those of his generation.

20. Bitter about his betrayal by others. For example, that his daughter-in-law has, as he sees it, messed up her marriage with his son and then, on returning to Mauritius, has managed to get her hands on one of the family’s houses in London which was meant to be kept. Instead, it had to be sold and the monies given to her. She has now spent most of it on setting up a ridiculous beauty salon and is living with another man. ‘I raised her from nothing, paid for her education [in London]’ and married her to his son, Dev says, and ‘see what thanks I get’.

Commentary

Although this treatment of individual identity is not intended to be - because it cannot be - exhaustive; it does, I believe, evoke the impression of a rounded character, of a distinctive individual who has led an idiosyncratic life and of someone who is more than a mere sum of simple parts (i.e. male + Brahmin + Mauritian). This expands the level of analysis with which previous ethnographers have been content: Dev’s identity is shown to be complex, sometimes confusing and even contradictory (i.e. he professes suspicion about Muslims, but counts some Muslims as being amongst his closest friends). The strands of Dev’s identity which I have listed give the reader a privileged insight into the world-views of a person instead of a mere Hindu or Brahmin Hindu or Indo-Mauritian. This is a sketch outline of someone that I came to know exceptionally well and who I am proud to call a friend, indeed we are part of each other’s family.

We are assured by discourses of governmentality that Mauritius comprises a plural population; many people identify themselves as Hindus, Muslims, Brahmins, Creoles, Sino-Mauritians and so forth: but these facts have no place in the interaction between, for example, Dev and the Creole man. Dev helps him not
because the tramp is a Creole, but because he is in the neighbourhood, down on his luck and Dev can help him.

I believe that the pictures of individuals which this form of analysis reveals is both interesting for those, like me, who are fascinated by the lives of individuals rather than the nameless and formless members of blocs such as 'Hindu' and as a counter to those who would promote the notion of ethnicity as context-independent.

Individual 2: Mrs. Shanti.

The second individual is a Hindu woman (Mrs. Shanti) in her late 40s or early fifties who works in the educational sector (i.e. as a Civil Servant). Being a working mother, she demonstrated, through some of her discourses a little tension with more traditional values. I helped Mrs. Shanti with some of her work, reading through drafts of letters and other papers and checking the grammar and spelling. I got to know her fairly well, and often lunched with her and some mutual friends in the on-site canteen. She would tell me all of the rumours and stories that were circulating about politics, both national and institutional.

I found Mrs. Shanti to be:

1. **Disliking Indians**, from her experiences studying in, visiting India and from meeting Indians who come and work temporarily with her, she can state categorically that Indians (i.e. Indian nationals) are greedy and so ‘I hate these people’. She feels that they don’t do things the way that Hindu Mauritians do them, they don’t value the same things - even though they all originally come from the same country. Mrs. Shanti keeps in touch with Indian affairs by reading *India Today* and other current affairs magazines, and the occasional holiday, but otherwise links are weak, and she definitely thinks of herself as Mauritian rather than Indian.

2. **A Mauritian aware of the right and wrong ways of doing things.** For example, concerning beggars, she was recently in the Orchard Shopping Centre in Quatre Bornes, and a drunk man asked her for money. She only had 50 cents on her, so gave it. He looked at it and asked for Rs. 10 - so she said, give me back my money - and got it back: ‘You know, I knew that he would go and buy drink’. A beggar has to be grateful, and if she only had 50 cents with her, he should accept that.129

3. **Wanting to be able to ‘talk freely’.** Mrs. Shanti highly values being able to trust the people that she is talking with. One afternoon she said: ‘Mrs Teeluck looks a bit quiet now, don’t you think? Perhaps after she crashed the car. Now, when

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128 Hence, after Sarup: 'I've noticed that being old for Asians is not associated with becoming more conservative, as it is in the West, but with being more understanding' (1996: xvi-xv).

129 Mrs. Shanti and others also insisted that I should behave as they did. Thus, when I was once asked for money by a beggar and gave, as do most Mauritians, Rs. 10, and then the woman wanted more, I took my Rs. 10 back and explained my motivation (in Kreol): Mrs. Shanti approvingly supported me.
she comes to lunch, it's always with her husband, so we can't talk freely like we did before'. The term 'freely' refers to a working or recreational context where one is assured that what is said will remain between those present, and is linked to her dislike of gossips, which are those people who do not maintain this 'security' rule and even generate rumours and stories. Mrs. Shanti later came to find out, to her dismay, that even when Mrs. Teeluck's husband did not come to lunch, Mrs. Teeluck was passing information said in the confidence of friends back to Mrs. Shanti's boss.

4. A dutiful and respectable wife: Mrs. Shanti says that when she goes to a Restaurant in Port Louis on Saturday - for a 'Rotary' Club do, I will only drink if my husband is sitting next to me and serves me'. Otherwise, she will say to her neighbour at the table 'No, I don't take wine or alcohol' and only drink fruit juice. She is, however, independent as well. She has lunches and soirées with women friends at restaurants and drives herself around in a new car which she has paid for.

5. A dutiful mother, she looks after daughter and indulges her even though 'she is so lazy, you know'. She has to make her daughter breakfast and lunch, and then drive her to the school where she works, and then drive to her own place of work. On her daughter's days off, she may have to drive her to and from the cinema during her own lunch break. But she is capable of critique, so that when the daughter complained about the regularity of the appearance of one dish on the table, she said that if she didn't like it she could make her own: 'and then she was quiet and just ate her meall'

6. An enthusiastic believer in Hinduism, Mrs. Shanti insists that prayers are conducted when she buys a new car, for example. She bought one when I was in Mauritius, and performed prayers to protect it whilst it was still at the car dealership. After she had taken it home, she took it to a Temple for further protective prayers some weeks later. She told me that that she should have consulted the Priest before even driving it home; to check that it wasn't an unlucky day.

7. A recogniser of caste but, simultaneously, she has little truck with it now. 'My husband wrote to our son [working in Europe] and told him that he should return and marry a girl of the Hindu faith [insistent tone] we don't worry about caste, you know, as long as she is a Hindu. My son wrote [she laughs indulgently] back with all these questions about what he meant by religion and faith, what do you mean by a wife with Hindu faith - that she will cook for me? My daughter, who is 18, is in love, but too young, wait five or six years. She can't marry a Creole or a Chinese - but a Tamil or Telegu, because they are Hindu.'

8. As an enthusiastic enjoyer of food and drink - she looks forward to certain meals, and relishes her husband getting hold of certain speciality foods as a result of his frequent trips abroad.

9. Inferior to her boss; but as superior to a typist or secretary and shares her boss's impatience with the lack of competence of their manager.

Commentary

I don't think the term has to relate solely to an all-female group, because when I was there she and our friends could talk freely - it is just that male/female mixing in the workplace is quite limited. Hence, in my presence - even as sole male - everyone could talk freely; I was only around for a finite time, and was not allied with certain other power groupings in the work-place.
Mrs. Shanti is a relatively rich, one might say middle-class, Hindu. She pursues her own career, has her own money to spend on clothes and a good, new car, but does retain some attachments to more traditional practices, such that she wants her son and daughter to marry Hindus. She does not, though, worry about the caste of prospective suitors.

My treatment of some of Mrs. Shanti's sources of identity also reveals that she has certain things in common with Dev (above) such as being a keen consumer of food and drink, she enjoys preparing certain dishes, and as knowing the right and wrong way of doing things in Mauritius (e.g. vis-à-vis beggars). In terms of social values, for example, Mrs. Shanti finds that it is more important that she is able to 'talk freely' no matter what the ethnic - or other - identity of her interlocutors. It is more significant that she knows that she is speaking in confidence than that those whom she is talking to come from different ethnic or caste groups. Mrs. Shanti reveals that even for those who are enthusiastic and deeply committed to their religion in Mauritius, that it would still be analytically unwise to presume too much based on that knowledge. She is an enthusiastic, practising Hindu, but has no sense of loyalty to India; she does not judge people on ethnic, religious or racial grounds first-and-foremost, if, indeed, she does mention these factors. From my snap-shot portrait above, it can be seen that Mrs. Shanti might well judge an interlocutor more on the basis of whether they can keep a confidence rather than that they be Hindu, Muslim, Creole, etc..

Individual 3: Mrs. Bogum.

Mrs. Bogum is in her early to mid 70s, and is recently widowed. She has always been a housewife, although for a long period (when she was younger and because her husband gave her no money) she made children's clothes at home, which she then sold through a shop. I became friendly with Mrs. Bogum, my neighbour, and, as the year progressed, helped her by, for example, sweeping her yard or making sure that an eye was always kept on her house, as she was concerned at the possibility of burglary when she left the house and its courtyard.

I found Mrs. Bogum to be:

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131 A very expensive proposition in Mauritius. Most of my informants had second-hand cars, and many keep vehicles which were in excess of 20 years old.
1. A Hindu woman recently widowed, and hence correctly sad and self-restricting of what she does and, in some ways and at some times, tired of life. This is in spite of the encouragement of her family to cheer her up and come to terms with her situation. \(^{132}\)

2. A traditionalist and strongly observant Hindu. Mrs. Bogum insists that she light lamps in the family temple every evening. She prays for family and friends frequently and gains a lot of strength from this.

3. An old person, who has seen a lot of changes but has also coped with change, and hence is happy and relaxed travelling to London or the US by ‘plane. She has managed many changes - she left school early, barely able to read or write and a monolingual Kreol-speaker: now she speaks fluent English and reads and writes with no problems at all.

4. A dissatisfied person, especially because she is disappointed with some of her family, for example her daughter and son-in-law, who live in the house above hers. They expect her to be a permanent ‘on-call’ baby-sitter, most mornings. And ‘I can’t say anything’ because then she is afraid that they will make sure that she never gets to look after her grand-daughters ever again. She is expected to help them a lot - but they never help her or the rest of the family (e.g. with sweeping after a cyclone).

5. A mother and grandmother - she cares deeply for all of her children and relatives scattered around the world, and especially for her grandchildren.

6. Caring for the local community - a neighbour of Mrs. Bogum is an alcoholic and she persuaded other members of her family to get him a job if he promised to stop drinking. He managed to do this for a while, but in the end he left the job and became an alcoholic again. Even now Mrs. Bogum ensures that this neighbour gets food and water if he knocks on the door (as he continues to do every so often).

7. An ill person, who suffers every so often from angina ('my heart pains'), when she tries to brush up all of the leaves in the courtyard brought down by a cyclone, or the annual crop of fruit. Simultaneously, she accepts this as part of her life.

Commentary

Mrs. Bogum is a very surprising woman. She had been brought up in a very large family home, the family has traditionally been wealthy, which was headed by very strong patriarchs, her grand-father and father. Consequently, she was expected to give up (and acceded to giving up) her education at an earlier age than her male siblings. She left this male-dominated household only to marry, and immediately entered into another patriarchal relationship. Although her husband was also wealthy, he forced his wife to work to provide money for the buying of essential supplies both for the house and, later, their children. She sewed children’s clothing and sold them through a village shop. Her husband also insisted that she cook all of

\(^{132}\) They wanted her, for example, to stop cooking as though she were feeding both herself and a hungry husband.
the foods and dishes that he liked, even though she detested some of them. For myself, however, (i.e. someone who hadn't been bound up into the total social network which characterises such an upbringing and marriage), it was difficult to share Mrs. Bogum's grief. Her husband appeared to have been very much an ogre.

In spite of having been forced to quit the educational system at a young age, Mrs. Bogum spoke and wrote English very well. She started to learn English when her son returned from England with the woman that he intended to marry. Her future daughter-in-law was keen to learn Kreol, and now speaks it with total proficiency, but Mrs. Bogum wanted to make her new daughter-in-law feel really welcome (they were to share the same house for a substantial length of time, before a house could be constructed for the son and new daughter-in-law). Mrs. Bogum has coped with and mastered extraordinary change both within her family and in Mauritian society more generally. Her family is now scattered all over the world, and she flies out to see them as often as she feels she can. Her family is also increasingly international, as brothers and more distant relatives travelled abroad for education and jobs, they met their partners and became established with them abroad. Nevertheless, both Mrs. Bogum and her relatives have maintained their Hindu religiosity, although she represents a more observant form of Hinduism than most (e.g. lighting temple lamps each night). Mrs. Bogum here represents an older generation of Mauritians, and especially Hindus, but again demonstrates the adaptation to change which characterises many Mauritians.

Again, any attempt to gain an understanding of the practices of Mrs. Bogum based on emphasising the primacy of ethnic, religious, racial and cultural division would be pointless.

Individual 4: Roshun

I came to meet Roshun because a friend of mine had been chatting about his conversations with me and Laura, and Roshun decided to invite us to visit him and his wife for a meal and a chat. Laura and I were much closer in both age and interests to Roshun than many of my other informants and we all met up as frequently as possible. Roshun is in his early 30s, married with two children (a young daughter and a baby boy less than a year old). He works as a policeman and is also the secretary of his local Telegu temple.

I found Roshun to be:
1. A responsible policeman and workplace team player, who likes working with the people that he works with and doing the work that he does.

2. A helper of people, both locals like him and those that he encounters through his work as a policeman and who are worse off than himself: for example with very poor people (Ilois - from the island dependencies of Mauritius) to whom he gives clothes, etc., as a result of once having seen children, of the same age as his daughter, having only a shirt to wear. He also does a lot of 'social work' connected with his Temple, which takes up the majority of his free time and means that he doesn't have as much time as he would like to devote to DIY jobs around the house; completing the construction of a small shrine in the garden and being with his wife and children.

3. A Telegu and as the secretary of the local Telegu Temple which gives him a certain standing in the local community, but also has a heavy burden of responsibility. He is an elected secretary and finds that to do the job properly (including writing to Ministers to persuade them to give permission for Indian workers to come and sculpt statues for the Temple extension) that he has to spend a lot of time and energy, almost every day, so that his constituency don't think that he is slacking.

4. A hard worker, where 'la vie - pas facile' - life isn't easy. This is informed by his everyday experience - with the prices of food always rising, for example, although he is also aware that in some ways Mauritius is a better place to live than, for example, La Réunion (the neighbouring island).

5. Fond and loving of his friends and relatives, and proud of, for example, the fact that the family clubbed together to pay for [private] clinic care for his elderly grandmother, even though it meant that much of their savings were exhausted. For the family it was inconceivable that they wouldn't have taken this action.

6. A concerned father and keen on education and being willing to provide all and everything to facilitate his childrens' education. He knows the right way to bring up his children, but this is tinged with a stern moral line that if, for example, when she is older, his daughter 'goes against him' and what he stands for, then he will declare that she is not his daughter.

7. Enlightened, being able to talk openly about technological advances in, for example, contraception and medicine.

8. Against Muslims - 'the only group I don't like', informed both by experience in Mauritius and media reporting from elsewhere in the world. For example, one of his Muslim colleagues talked about conquering Mauritian politics through sheer weight of numbers, by having lots of children, whereas Roshun and his wife are behaving responsibly in being determined to have only 2 children.

9. Slightly apprehensive about modernity, for example as knowing what makes a 'man' and a 'woman' - you can't tell men and women apart these days; men should ideally have short hair and women long. Roshun is a little suspicious of some features of contemporary Mauritius. For example, his family generally state that there are now more beggars in Mauritius than ever before, especially in the capital Port Louis. However, whilst Roshun's father, an HGV driver, states that he can never refuse money to someone who asks for it, Roshun is more guarded. He remembers the case some years ago of a beggar in Port Louis who, having been arrested, was found to have several houses in his possession - and used

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133 I should add that this is an increase on a low incidence; there are some licensed beggars who spend most of their time at the bus station. As the buses fill up with passengers, they wander along the aisle displaying a certificate from the Municipality guaranteeing that the certificate-holder is collecting on behalf of, for example, his or her sick child, or because the holder is an unemployed bus driver. There are no teams of beggars clustering around bank cash machines, and in comparison with most British towns and cities the level of begging is negligible.
begging solely as an alternative to wage-labour.\textsuperscript{134} It is interesting to note the comparison between the elder generation, which has known more hardship and yet is generous, and the younger generation which, arguably, has had an easier time, but is less generous.

**Commentary**

Roshun is a serious and dedicated policeman, father, husband and community notable. As Secretary of the local Telegu Temple (and democratically elected to that position), he feels a great weight of responsibility to fulfilling that office properly. Hence he dedicates a great deal of time and energy to supervising the present restoration and extension of the Temple, and to dealing with the inevitable paperwork and accruing of political connections to speed, for example, applying for planning permission, borrowing of bull-dozers and persuading local businesses to donate blocks, tiles and so on for the new Temple. This takes a great deal of time, and Roshun is aware that he needs to carefully balance the time spent on Temple business and that spent with his wife and two young children.

Roshun likes to keep abreast of developments both in Mauritius and wider afield, and avidly watches as many documentaries and new reports as he can. He seems to enjoy comparing Mauritius with the rest of the world, and frequently observes that life isn’t easy in contemporary Mauritius - with prices only ever increasing, but recognises that his generation is better off than that of his father. His father is very proud of the fact that Roshun is a policeman, as he himself left school at a very early age and had to be retaught some basic literacy to enable him to pass his commercial driver’s (HGV) examination. Consequently, Roshun is very keen on his children getting the best possible education so that they have as many opportunities in life as possible. This is accompanied by a knowledge that the children must not be spoiled, hence, and in common with most (if not all) Mauritian homes, there is a *vitrine* (glass fronted cabinet) in the front room which contains all of the special toys that the children have been given, but are not (or rarely) taken out and played with.\textsuperscript{135}

Although generally relaxed and positive about change, such as being in favour of the availability of reliable contraception, Roshun does demonstrate some

\textsuperscript{134} The family also gave another example of a beggar in India who was found to have lots of gold sovereigns sewn into his clothing - he converted all of his alms into gold - and was an incredibly wealthy man.

\textsuperscript{135} These cabinets also contain the precious things of the adults - e.g. certificates of qualification, souvenirs.
qualms. For example, his ideal is that women should have long, and men short, hair. This ideal is under some pressure in Mauritius, where younger men and women are more interested in being fashionable. Roshun shares with Dev and Mrs. Bogum a sense of responsibility for others. Dev and Mrs. Bogum help neighbours who are in need, and Roshun helps both neighbours and those further afield that he meets through his Police work. Clearly, at times, Roshun's ethnic identity is relevant to him (as Secretary to the Temple), but at others a more secular view of his identity and motivations would be appropriate (helping the Ilois).

Individual 5: Huri.

Huri is in his early to mid 50s, and now works as a caretaker at his two brothers’ seaside complex of 3 holiday bungalows. Laura and I met him because he is related to a friend who negotiated our rent. Huri, more than any of the other informants introduced in this section, meets foreigners most frequently. He enjoys their company and takes the opportunity to tell them as much about Mauritius as he can. He used to work elsewhere on the island, but fell prey to a serious gambling addiction. Fortunately, his family stepped in before he completely ruined his and his wife’s finances completely, and he is now the caretaker and guard of a small bungalow complex where he neither has access to money to gamble, nor the opportunity to visit the racetrack in Port Louis. He enjoys his job very much, and takes his responsibilities very seriously. He tends to sleep until early afternoon, but stays awake until just before dawn guarding the bungalow compound, and keenly watches television coverage of horse-racing from Port Louis as well as English football.

I found Huri to be:

1. Critical of current politicians: Huri would sometimes attack the present government, and all governments in Mauritius since the great ‘Sir Dr. Seewoosagur Ramgoolam’, for lining their pockets in office and then ‘fucking off’. He is not involved in active politics today, although he was once a political agent for the Prime Minister. However, he broke with party politics when, having made an appointment to see the Prime Minister, he had to repeatedly pass 4 body-guards and 2 dogs (which he felt was more than unfair).

2. At one time the Number 1 preparer of sea-food \(\textit{fruits de la mer}\) in the south of Mauritius: crabs, lobster, cuttlefish, octopus, etc., and knowing when to go fishing. ‘When the sun is big, there isn’t much crab-meat in the crab - when the sun is small, there is’.

3. Keen on protecting his private property. He told me that ‘you are the boss of your bungalow, you own it, but I am the boss of the compound’. He stays up until 3 a.m. or so protecting it, and often showed me the weapons that he possessed for the
defence of the compound: a belt, a wood stick, an iron bar and, if the worse should come to the worse, a fearsome sugar-cane knife/panang. Many of these are hidden in the flower-beds, disguised as props for plants.

4. **Having only cigarettes, rum and talking as his friends.** 'Huri has a good fork and spoon' for eating he says, and these are the only things that he requires. However, he also likes to help people and has stayed in contact with many of the people who have come from abroad to stay in one of the bungalows. He avidly enjoys rum, cut with orange squash, and cigarettes.

5. **A good gambler:** for example when he was briefly in the UK, betting on a darts game, he won, even though he started with 5 darts against an Englishman's 10 - then he cut his darts to 3, and still won handsomely. The story was punctuated with lots of elaboration about betting, psyching his opponent by smoking and joking before throwing the darts, etc. In one shot he got 50, beating the 22 of his opponent, and he won the equivalent of 9,500 rupees.

6. **Aware of the evils of gambling.** The metaphor he drew on to illustrate the perils are that there are three paths - akin to three ways of getting money. The first takes 15 minutes to travel; the second 20 minutes and the third 25 minutes: 'But the first path [of gambling on horses] has a lion on it, and a lion can eat me. The second path [of playing darts, etc., for money] has a tiger on it, and that too can eat me. But, the third path [saving with a bank] has a mutton on it - and a mutton cannot eat me: it is safe.'

7. **Seeking to pass on information:** when he dies, he cannot take knowledge with him, and so whilst he is on the earth he tries to pass on information and his thinkings to others, so that the information can succeed him.

**Commentary**

Huri is a contented man. When he was younger he travelled around a fair amount, and now people travel to see him. He used to be a fit individual who would think nothing of spending many hours fishing or swimming. However, after an accident a number of years ago, he walks with quite a severe limp, and is unable to go fishing because of the danger that if he fell into the sea, he would be unable to swim to safety. Although I was told by others that Huri was originally less than happy at being corralled at the sea-side where he could have no active participation in gambling, this represented the kind of family action which makes Mauritius distinctive from, say, the UK. His family took responsibility for Huri, ensured that his debts were settled, and then gave him a job. Huri has now come to respect the decisions that were made about him, and is keen on lecturing others on the dangers of gambling, whilst simultaneously maintaining that he was a very good gambler.

Huri is not a particularly religious man, and I never heard him speak about his - or others' - ethnic, racial or other group membership. Again, this challenges those anthropologists, and others, who would claim that as a mere function of Huri having an ethnicity - of his living in a multi-ethnic social context - that he would
thus make use of these potentials for expressing difference and, hence, division - and that they would be significant in his publicly expressed identity. He spoke at length on such a range of subjects that it is almost inconceivable that he would not have made some mention of race/ethnicity if they were consequential to him.

Discussion

The collections of discourse listed above (taken from repeated statements from each individual, representing their interpretations of the social and political world around-about them) function as a kind of potted, but neither inclusive nor limiting, biography. These collections do not amount to the sum total of an individual's identity; instead these lists take for granted peoples' statements as contextually evoked and thus potentially contradictory and inherently limited as a function of the contexts in which I spoke with people and of the subjects about which we conversed. The lists can, though, illustrate an essential human characteristic, that:

[i]n terms of their biographies, contemporary individuals pass a long string of widely divergent social worlds. At any single moment of their life, individuals inhabit simultaneously several such divergent worlds (Sarup 1996: 11).

I have ensured that divergence (situationality, change and conflict) is built into this investigation of identity. These lists form narratives as they have been drawn from narratives. However, I should add that these lists do not, taken together, comprise any 'global' Mauritian identity which transcends individuals. Neither are all of these identities mediated by an overarching or underlying ethnic group membership.

The modelling I have pursued above challenges previous research: no-one here has a 'given' identity; I have demonstrated that just because someone is, for example, a Hindu does not necessarily mean that one can imaginatively extrapolate from that that s/he will hold a certain set of beliefs and opinions. Although, later, I focus on the difference (but sameness) of Mauritian individuals - that some individuals do share opinions, practices and outlooks which, although sometimes different, are recognised as coeval - here I focus more on the differences which lie at the root of individuality. These are differences which are a function of differential life-choices, occupations and family histories - rather than solely those
produced by belonging to a certain ethnic or racial category which is alleged to be all-important. I share Rapport’s drive to ‘have no qualms in writing anthropology to prove a point on behalf of individuality over and against ‘culture’ or ‘society’ (1998: 554).

Those individual expressions of identity outlined above demonstrate, after Shweder, that ‘[a]s interpretative frameworks change, so do perceptions’ (1991: 99). Moving between, or combining, expressions, or interpretative frameworks, (Dev’s 1, 2, 5, 9, etc.), one sees perceptions shift, change, complement or contradict one another. One possible means of analytically conceptualising and unpacking these diverse expressions of identity is given below.

- Ethnicity and Identity

Barth, summarises Banks, holds that ethnicity is an identity ‘which transcends or is at least equivalent to all other identities [...] and as such his position is closer to that usually known as primordialism’ - ethnicity as a permanent and essential condition (Banks 1996: 13, emphasis added). Sarup critiques such attitudes as Barth’s when he observes that ‘[w]riters on identity often focus on the influence of one social dynamic at a time. Class, or ‘race’ or nationality, for example; this denies the multiplicity of factors that may influence human subjects in the construction of their identity’ (1996: 39). The treatment of individual identity which I have (above) pursued aims at avoiding the reduction of identity to sole factors (class, race, nationality) so as to emphasise my belief that Mauritian identity is more complex than has hitherto been suggested; ethnicity is not the ‘superordinate identity’ and thus the pre-eminent constituent of identity.

I claim that in maintaining this treatment, my style of anthropology is once again classifiable as post-colonial, because I have not presumed that my informants will be predominantly motivated by ethnic, religious or racial concerns in all of their interactions. I accept that identity is not only an internalised, individual matter, but is also externally applied or imposed: no matter how much anyone might wish to challenge this. One cannot prevent others from labelling one. But the (post)modern anthropologist can insist that s/he look at the lives of others outwith categorisations derived from Census and previous ethnographies. As the preceding chapter revealed, just because tropes and ideologies are established and accepted as correct, accurate or ‘true’ does not mean that one has to peg one’s analysis to the same parameters. At the same time, I need to accept that whilst, for
the individuals listed above, ethnic, religious or racial belonging was not acontextually important, it could be for others.

I should add, though, that my researches also turned up some individuals who insisted that ethnic, religious or racial identity was never important in their lives (although they did say that it was impossible for them to stop being, say, Muslims in the eyes of some people). Hence, for these self-consciously de-ethnicised, atheistic and de-racialized individuals their superordinate identity is 'atheist' whilst others, not familiar with or not accepting this change, maintain that they remain members of the category of, say, 'Muslims'. Some individuals, especially from families which have traditionally had a leading role in public life, have cast religion and ethnicity aside completely and publicly. For example, one man, a top Judge, born into a Brahmin family, rejected religion when he heard that an uncle, because he joined the Arya Samaj (Hindu reformist movement), was incarcerated in the local asylum by his own brothers. Others, who had not perhaps completely rejected religion/ethnic adherence, were unwilling, even grudging, participants in, say, Hindu religious observances or broke the supposedly fundamental (and supposedly Hindu-defining) ritual observances such as not eating beef. How do these acts fit with the view of ethnicity as superordinate? If the ethnographer listened only to the testimony of those that knew the individuals, s/he would report that they were 'Hindus', whilst if one speaks to the individuals in question, one would learn that they do not want to be known as 'Hindus' because they are no longer Hindus.

I think the best, most sensible and realistic resolution that we can find - and I have dwelt on the quotation of Barth because it is very much the orthodox view of ethnicity both inside the anthropological academy and beyond - is the assuredly unsatisfactory, but equivocal, claim that in certain circumstances - and for some certain people perhaps at all times - ethnicity is superordinate. I do not think that any one of one's selves can necessarily be given pre-eminence over another, because the whole 'system' is contextually- (or situationally-) dependent. A good metaphorical way of capturing this 'sometimes yes, sometimes no' notion is through Rapport's (1993) notion of 'loops' which I shall now explore.

136 Thanks to Nigel Rapport for this important point.
137 For example, a Hindu individual who proclaimed that he did not eat beef or pork, but then revealed that when he was out of the country he loved eating bacon and hamburgers!
• Loops and Strips of Identity

Having conducted his research in the rural English dale of Wanet, Rapport set about writing-up in a manner highly conscious of the problematics of the exercise. Thus, as much as possible, the people of Wanet speak through the text and provide a revealing insight into the constitution of identities 'concealed by a shared vocabulary' ([Ibid.: 116]), ensuring that the reader is not blinded to 'deep' diversity by persuasive surface similarities. Being explicitly grounded in the quotidian discourse and vocabularies of Wanet-folk, Rapport abstracted from conversations 'verbal loop[s] of regularly associated phrases' (1993: 124-5). These loops, being made up of regularly rehearsed phrases and topics, were means by which to think through certain situations or to deal with specific problems, as individually cognized. From his major informants, Rapport isolated some seven 'Sids' and nine 'Dorises'.138 These were not, importantly, the total sum of loops which would technically be isolable from an individual. Rather, they represented those loops which were identifiable in the range of situations and identities in which the researcher would encounter the specific individual (there would be loops such as those of Doris as 'lover', as 'wife', etc., which would not be readily accessible unless one were her lover; husband, etc.139).

The reader will by now be familiar with the lineage of the 'lists' which comprise the first part of this chapter. As in my lists, each Wanet persona is related to a certain individual context, conversation subject and idiosyncratic tendency of speech. Within and between conversational dialogues, these loop-personae/world-views change. In Rapport's treatment of Doris, occupationally a farmer, there would be the switch from Doris talking to another farmer as a farmer, to that of Doris as an aggrieved middle-class person. Similarly, in my treatment of Dev, there is a shift from Dev speaking as a dissatisfied Mauritian to upholding Hindu religious practices, for example. One loop can easily contradict another and this is a powerful means by which Rapport embeds this metaphor in humanism: we humans are not consistent. As Whitman observes 'Do I contradict myself? Very well then ... I contradict myself. I am large ... I contain multitudes' (cited in Wolf 1993: 119).

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138 Most importantly, the use of the term 'isolated' conveys an inappropriate semantic association with separation: these loops were not, of course, wholly separate: they all 'came together', as it were, to complete what it was to be 'Doris'.

139 Rapport cautions me (personal communication 1995) that these titles are mnemonics, not collectively known, assigned or to be confused with notions of 'roles'. Essentially, this kind of theoretical enquiry - adopted by me - meets with Cohen's desiderata that anthropological attention to 'other people's selves, [is] an inquiry which inevitably entails to some extent the use of our own consciousness as a paradigm' (1994: 6).
Rapport, more recently, has described how the constant creating and contradicting of an individual's world-views defines their essential humanity (1997b). Lederman also argues that an individual, like any other multifaceted system:

is comprised not only of parts but of relationships between those parts, or, intrapersonal relationships. The self in interpersonal communication is the *presenting self*, the self from that system of selves that engages with another in interpersonal discourse. The presenting self engages with its other selves and there are relationships between those selves, the intrapersonal connections (1996: 200).

The self or selves that I encountered in those people I researched among in Mauritius were, then, but a selection of the developing totality of selves of which those same persons consisted. I believe the self is a system of selves which interact with both the social and environmental landscape. Lederman states that:

> [f]rom a systems perspective, any individual is viewed as an entity comprised of subsystems, interacting with an processing information/data from its environment. The individual (and/or subsystems thereof) impacts [on] the environment and is impacted by it in a dialectic relationship. It is through this dialectic process that an individual's acts are once as socially constructing and constructed reality (*Ibid*.: 199).

This model of identity also has a strong message for, and belief in, world creation and change by individuals:

> Self and society mutually influence each others' shape and direction at each point along the double helix where they touch. Thus, while individuals are constrained by society, they also influence the future shape and direction of the society that influences them (Giddens cited by Roth 1996: 184).

Thus, in this chapter, I have drawn on examples from Mauritian individuals to indicate

(a) that Mauritians are not best comprehended simply by looking at ethnic, religious, cultural or racial group membership;

(b) to give an original insight into discourses of identity which I isolated from several Mauritians, and

(c) the possibility of thinking of/modelling identity as 'loops' of themed information.

The loops presented above are of phrase, paraphrase and what I impute to be of import from intensive interaction (in a range of contexts) with each individual. Each bundle of moments underlines what the individuals revealed to be important and of value in their lives in Mauritius as compared to other people and places. It is hoped that the reader gained some evocational participation, or insight, into the lives of some individual Mauritians from those above ethnographic 'moments':

The whole point of "evoking" rather than "representing" is that it frees ethnography from *mimesis* and the inappropriate mode of scientific rhetoric that entails "objects," "facts," "descriptions," "inductions," "generalizations," "verification," "experiment," "truth," and like concepts (Tyler 1986: 130).

The above models, echoing one of the major influences upon this Thesis, are Postmodern in the sense that:
The postmodern mood can alternate so quickly between hermeticism and schizophrenia, between the celebration of artifice and nostalgic appeals for the recovery of nature, because the self is now like what quantum physicists call a “world strip,” across which run indifferent rivulets of experience (Kroker and Cook 1988: vii).

An individual’s loops make up a model of a ‘world strip’: a strip of worlds. I want to emphasise, as Devereux puts it, that ‘[a]n individual’s absolute uniqueness is defined by an induplicable accumulation of imprecise determinations’ (1982: 43) - and it is only a flexible model which will permit this. The model is fully compatible with the highly contextual, situational and individual nature of identity - a stance repeatedly drawn upon throughout this Thesis.

This chapter represents a sharp departure from conventional treatments of identity in societies such as Mauritius; i.e. those characterised by high levels of socio-cultural heterogeneity. I have focused on individuals here, and demonstrated that no assumptions can be made about an individual’s identity based solely on knowledge of their ethnic, religious or racial group. I have prepared the way for the next chapter which acknowledges, as have antecedent ethnographers, that Mauritians do indeed employ categorisation and division, but complexifies these operations in ways that have not previously been attempted. This in turn connects to my developing argument, that attention must also be paid to the ways in which Mauritians are united rather than divided, and I have hinted at some of the ways that this unification operates and its basis in individual strategising rather than group membership.
Tout visiteur s'aperçoit très vite de la remarquable diversité de la population [de l'île Maurice]. Les Indiens représentent environ deux tiers de la population qui s'élève à un peu plus d'un million d'habitants. De ceux-là, environ un demi-million sont hindous. Les autres, environ 130 000 âmes sont musulmans; les 'créoles' qui sont de sang mêlé et qui comptent parmi leurs ancêtres des colons blancs, des laboureurs indiens, des commerçants chinois et des descendants d'esclaves africains ou malgaches, représentent 300 000 individus environ. On recense 30 000 chinois et 8 000 blancs, de souche française essentiellement.

- Mauritius Cultures (Air Mauritius pamphlet).140

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140 'All visitors became aware very quickly of the remarkable diversity of the population [of Mauritius]. The Indians represent around two-thirds of the population which has reached a little more than one million inhabitants. Of those, around half a million are Hindus. The others, around 130 000 souls are Muslims; the 'Creoles' who are of mixed blood and who count among their ancestors white colonists, Indian labourers, Chinese traders and the descendants of African or Malgache slaves, represent some 300 000 individuals. One counts 30 000 Chinese and 8 000 whites, mainly of French stock'.
Chapter 3
Individual Mauritian Discourses
of
Categorisation and Division

• Introduction

The information gathered in this chapter is an instance of what Shotter describes as a ‘third kind of knowing’. This is not a decontextualized knowing ‘that,’ or knowing ‘how,’ but a knowing ‘from within’ a situation or circumstance. That is, instead of being concerned with how, as already an individual of a certain kind (here an ethnic, religious, racial group member), one gains theoretical or practical knowledge relevant to acting within the situation one finds oneself in, it is concerned with the kind of knowledge involved in one being a person of this or that kind - and the kind of situation one finds oneself in as a result (Shotter 1993: xiii).

This chapter shows what forms of knowledge, for some individuals, are relevant for being who they are in Mauritius - in defining themselves by opposition to others.

Multiculturalism is often understood to be a powerful and effective protest against cultural hegemony and homogenisation, a movement designed to decentre paradigms; to reconstitute the subject (i.e. the individual) and to deny the ‘notion of a single reality or truth’, amongst other bold claims.141 I am proceeding to prove that, through ideological structures of governmentality, Multiculturalism as an institutional process on Mauritius and in ethnographies about Mauritius does the opposite of its unificatory claims.

‘Unity in Diversity’ relies, as I demonstrated in Chapter 1, on the taken-for-granted existence of ethnic, racial and religious groups at all times. Chapter 2 showed how this assumption was compromised and breached through a fine-grained portrayal of the identities of just some selected individuals. In this chapter, by firmly sticking to individual points-of-view, I now reveal moments when individuals do use ethnicity, religion and nationality to define themselves. However, in a very major way, my opposition to reification (and delight in the diverse and contradictory) - demonstrated in this chapter - owes much to the postmodernist approach:

141 Lecture notes to accompany a presentation by Dr. RS Sharma, at a ‘Workshop on American Studies and International Relations’, held at the University of Mauritius, 22-30 April 1997.
An integral and especially important aspect of postmodernist approaches is a refusal to avoid conflict and irresolvable differences or to synthesize these differences into a unitary, univocal whole (Flax 1990: 4).\footnote{Cited in Roth 1996: 171-2.}

[Postmodern ethnography] seeks, in particular, to avoid grounding itself in the theoretical and commonsense categories of the hegemonic Western tradition (Tyler 1986: 129)

In the first part of this chapter, I recount four ethnographic instances where divisions between people are made, and which cast some light on individuals' notions of their and their nation's place in the world, and some Mauritians' conceptions of alternative futures for the island. However, these 'ascriptional categories' of division, as Mewett would describe them,\footnote{Cited in Roth 1996: 171-2.} are not as uncomplicated as might be expected, and the reader will here discover the benefits of a fine-grained ethnographic treatment. For example, in the recognition that an elite in Mauritius is fully complimented on their work for the island, despite the fact that they continue to treat non-members of this elite badly. The forthcoming vignettes are intended to highlight such social complexity in Mauritius and to give some insight into the ways that some Mauritians identify themselves vis-à-vis others (both locally and internationally) by either drawing parallels with the behaviour of others, or by distancing themselves from them. The vignettes use material gathered from many interactions in different times and places.

The four ethnographic vignettes are followed by a commentary where I outline some of the contrasts between my conclusions and those that precede mine in the ethnographic record.

The second section of this chapter gives several instances where divisions between groups have surprising and original implications which cast doubt on any simplistic rendering of division where it does occur.

**Division 1: Hindu Mauritians v. Hindu Indians**

In the following example of division in Mauritius, a Hindu defines himself vis-à-vis foreigners (in this case Indians); amounting to the simultaneous distancing both of himself and Mauritius from what are seen as backward Indian ways of doing things, and a drawing together of Mauritius and Europe.

Regularly visiting other friends at the office where he worked, I came to know Kishore, a driver, quite well during my stay in Mauritius, and we spoke...
frequently. Many senior employees, especially foreigners on contract, have their own drivers supplied by the company for which they work. In this case, Kishore was a member of a company’s driving pool, and had been assigned to drive for a visiting Indian manager, and in one of my regular chats with him learned of his reaction to the behaviour of Indians visiting Mauritius:

Then we got talking about his work at the moment, he asked me if ‘the fat man’ was upstairs - referring to Dr. Veda, a visiting Indian manager. I said that he was a little bit bizarre. ‘Yes,’ he [Kishore] said. ‘He isn’t like the English or French people’. I said that richer Indians seem to have a certain way of treating their workers; they think that they are ‘pli bas’ [lower] than they are. He agreed. I told him the story I heard from Mrs. Surrun recently about that in India when someone came back from work, and sits in a chair, their servant pulls off their shoes. Kishore said that when in India people asked their domestics to eat something - they have to sit outside. ‘That’s the custom, the tradition’ he added. He asked whether I knew Mrs. Laxmi, another Indian national. I said, ‘oh yes’ and added that she had the same mentality as Veda. He said that he had worked for her as driver for a week or so, and that she had got him to do things - such as fixing her bed. He spoke to his union, and they prepared a dossier on this: ‘because it’s not my job’ and then these extra duties stopped. Kishore said that there was a time, in the past, when this kind of thing was acceptable - but not now: ‘nou tou humain? [we are all human] he said - and the country is ‘bien developé’ [well developed].

This was followed by a rude interruption to our conversation - by Dr. Veda - with ‘Kishore’ said in the imperative register, which kind of under-lined things. Kishore and I shook hands, and I wished him BonjounIec [have a good day].

Mauritians often want to make it clear that Mauritius is neither India nor Africa; it is regarded as being safer, wealthier and more democratic than those ancestral territories. It is through the behaviour of visitors from these countries that Mauritians remind themselves - and express their belief - that they are different.144 I believe that Eriksen (1990) perhaps misses the point of what is important for the majority of individuals when he supportively cites an Indian intellectual who says of the average Indo-Mauritian:

He’s not an Indian, he just looks like it. What could his spiritual life possibly look like, when he spends all his time saving for a video machine! He doesn’t speak like an Indian, nor think like one.

From my key interest with individual experiences of individual identity in social practice, I believe that my Mauritian Hindu friends would, at least, be very hurt to learn that others believe them to be somehow spiritually compromised because, for example, they save to buy consumer goods. Indo-Mauritians do not want to either speak or think like Indians, and would certainly not accept that their spiritual (or other) lives were inferior to Indians’. Further, it is not acceptable in Mauritius to treat workers as Kishore, and others, report that they are treated in India.145 In fact, Hindu Mauritians emphasised to me their superiority to Indian Hindus, both in

143 Mewett 1982: 102-3 especially.
144 Importantly, this does not mean that Mauritians are incapable of recognising that there are exceptions, and some of my friends who had, for example whilst working at the airport, met African merchants (of raffia giraffes and carved wooden statues, etc.) said that they were very generous people who had given them presents, and so on.
being residents of a far less corrupt, less caste-ridden and less divided state and also in terms of religious practice and social behaviour. I once heard a friend state that in India Hindu women would go to shrines wearing jeans and other casual apparel, which 'would never happen here'. One another occasion, an informant told me of his amazement when a visitor from India that he was showing around Port Louis needed to relieve himself. Instead of following my informant's advice and finding the nearest public convenience, he hoisted up his dhoti and performed on the visible edge of a parked car's tyre - to my informant's incredulity.

This sections reveals that although the majority of Mauritians, and of my informants, originally hail from India, this does not therefore mean that they have any special or close attachment to the state of India, as Multiculturalism might have us believe and hence seek to promote (see Chapter 1, Part 2).

Division 2. Mauritian v. Réunionnais and Franco-Mauritians

Many Mauritians express some disquiet at what they perceive to be over-generous social security policies both of the French Government in the sister island La Réunion (a departement of France) and the British government. In the former case, Mauritians were appalled that unemployed Réunionnais were so wealthy - as a result of their famously bountiful social security system - that they could afford to come and holiday in Mauritius; whereas many Mauritians had never been out of the country or, if they had, only briefly, and had found La Réunion very expensive. Lindsey Collen's novel There is a Tide adds a literary perspective to these discussions:

She was talking to a woman who said she worked as a domestic servant, who she met at the bus stop, and just got talking to [in Réunion]. The woman had said 'Mauritian? [I'd] Rather [be] free like you.' In Kreol. She asked about wage rates in Mauritius, which were much lower than in Réunion, but then, as she put it, there wasn't work in Réunion at all so what was the use of comparing wages (1990: 141).

Many Mauritians feel it to be wrong that the unemployed in Réunion get so much help. One Mauritian who had suffered a life of what his cousin called 'malaise' [misery] (born into poverty; living with his parents in a tiny shack, and having spent the past 30 years, since he left school at a very early age, working from 4a.m. everyday as a market vendor) said that although he was in favour of some state support for the unemployed, it should not be as generous as that in Réunion. There should be some support, certainly, but not enough that people could have a

145 Consequently those Indian nationals who do come and work in Mauritius sometimes find that they have a swift turnover in domestic staff who are unwilling to accommodate their petulant and demanding employers.
luxurious life-style. In their criticism of Réunion, my informants agreed with the former Prime Minister of Mauritius, Jugnauth:

"Those who speak about Réunion should know what is the cost of living there compared with that of Mauritius. Ordinary articles cannot be bought in Réunion by the working class people and those Réunionnais who come here find Mauritius a paradise and I know many of them who come here as often as possible in order to buy and not so much to spend their vacation. They come here with a view to getting the opportunity of buying certain things and go back to Réunion. And today we are told that Réunion is better off than Mauritius. Of course, there are certain people who are better off in Réunion, mostly the French who occupy most of the important jobs in Réunion, and, therefore, [...] these people come and tell our public, our working class people that they will have to follow the Réunionnais and make Mauritius another department of some other country (Khedaran et al. 1994: 21).

An informant told me that the Réunionnais hate the Mauritians, and vice versa: we hate them [the Réunionnais] too: they are, he said breaking into his French, 'spoon fed' - they don't work, they don't do anything, the government gives them money, they are dependent on France, 'ils ont spoon fed, tu sais'. We [myself and Jean] then spoke about the racism in Réunion, and he agreed that the white, French (from France, i.e. NOT Réunionnais) had all the top jobs as managers and such like.

The Franco-Mauritian academic Houbert is rather disingenuous when he writes that there are "many affinities between the 'sister islands" of Mauritius and Réunion (1992: 715). He is correct on some levels, such that there are some inter-island contacts and exchanges in terms of sport; youth associations; musicians and a few business-people - but there is a large difference between what Houbert has in mind, as a Franco-Mauritian and thus a member of the élite in both societies, and social reality for the majority of Mauritians. Appiah's theorising on anglophone/francophone states/regions is, I think, proved convincing by the difference between Réunion and Mauritius:

[The] differences between francophone and anglophone states derive, of course, from differences between French and British colonial policy. For, though the picture is a good deal too complex for convenient summary, it is broadly true that the French colonial policy was one of assimilation - of turning 'savage' Africans into 'evolved' black Frenchmen and women - while British colonial policy was a good deal less interested in making ... black Anglo-Saxons (1993: 2).

Britain had a total disengagement from Mauritius with the granting of Independence in 1968. The contrast between the few Britons who stayed on after Independence, as opposed to the tens of thousands of Franco-Mauritians who were permitted to stay in Mauritius and keep their land and wealth intact when Britain cemented the defeat of French forces in Mauritius (in 1810), is striking. Indicating the pragmatic even-handedness of many Mauritians, it was explained to me by one of my close friends that it was actually better that Franco-Mauritians ran many of the large companies on the island (Phoenix Beer; Coca-Cola; chicken production,146 etc.). To evoke a conversation:

146 Important because eaten by all communities.
'Franco-Mauritians have expertise,' says Jay, 'they have foresight, for example investing in chicken production and anthuriums, that 'we' [Indo-Mauritians, or 'we black people' don't have].

'Ah, I say, 'but they've had a lot of practice at it - several centuries'. [...]

'South Africans and other European Whites - especially the French who come to Mauritius - always change,' he continues. 'They come as individuals who are nothing [special] in their own country, but when they meet the Franco-Mauritians, they change'.

I ask Jay if he can guarantee that it will happen.

'Yes. [After contact with the Franco-Mauritians] they won't invite you [an Indo-Mauritian] to their house and even if they do you won't go because you won't feel at ease. When I began this job, an old Franco-Mauritian woman asked me if I was fully qualified - I was and she wasn't - but that question would never have arisen if I was white.

This is a sophisticated and balanced discourse. On several levels, and at other times, Jay accepts that the Franco-Mauritians can be fairly unpleasant people with which to deal, and he has himself suffered some discrimination from them. However, as in the following example, he maintains that these costs are acceptable because of the levels of development and investment that the Franco-Mauritians have brought to Mauritius which have benefited almost everyone.

Another (Tamil) informant told me that of the three most important industries of Mauritius (tourism/sugar/textiles), all are controlled by the Franco-Mauritians, and it is thanks to them that the economy of Mauritius is in relatively good condition. Indians (i.e. Indo-Mauritians) do make a lot of money, he said, but they refuse to either invest or risk it: 'If they want to turn one rupee into fifteen, they have to know 200% that that will definitely happen'. The Franco-Mauritians, meanwhile, are happy to risk their capital. Therefore, he continued, 'Floreal Knitwear is owned by Franco-Mauritians, and is the 2nd largest wool textile manufacturer in the world with shops in several European capitals, like Vienna'.

Admiration for the past and present efficient running of businesses by Franco-Mauritians does not mean, however, that the words of (a) a French school-teacher in Mauritius (taken from my field notes) or (b) a Norwegian anthropologist are correct in summing up a generalised Mauritian view of the past:

(a) Elizabeth (1997) said that it was all very well commemorating the arrival of Indian indentured labourers in Port Louis - but who built those steps that they came up? The French.147

(b) Eriksen 1990: 'If it hadn't been for the French and the British, there would have been no Mauritius - and people know this'.148

147 In the interests of historical accuracy, it should be noted that the French imported stonemasons, especially Tamils, to build such structures.
148 Page number unavailable, document available on Eriksen's WWW page (www.uio.no/~geirthe/index.html). N.B. In an extraordinary 'fieldwork moments', I discovered that 'Elizabeth' used to be a neighbour of Eriksen in Norway and is, she said, rather a good friend of his.
Benedict's caution about the potentially divisive effects of Mauritius' colonial history has not been borne out ('[m]any Indians have not forgotten how their fathers and grandfathers were treated. Many Franco-Mauritians have not conceded that it was unjust. Such attitudes have a continuing effect on the social, political and economic life of the island' (1965: 19)). Indeed, such attitudes would probably have had serious effects on the economic, social and political development of Mauritius, but these attitudes are not present today, and so there are none of these destabilising effects.

This section demonstrates that non-Franco-Mauritians are actually rather relaxed about Franco-Mauritians and their behaviour, and prefer to consider their activities in a positive and generous light. Mauritians do condemn the behaviour of Franco-Mauritians, but also acknowledge their past and future benefits to the island. So: whilst there are differences and distinctions made between Mauritians and Réunionnais/Franco-Mauritians, these are not necessarily maintained or structurated in ways that we might have predicted. Division, even when it is made, is not without complication and consideration.

Division 3. Hindus and Muslims.

In the following exchange, a politically active individual participates in a dialogue with me which reveals how one Hindu Mauritian spoke about Muslims in Mauritius and further afield, and illustrates an attempt on my part to weave a cross-cultural parallel into the exchange.
Fieldnotes

Mr. Gopaul: I will welcome anyone into my home, but not a Muslim. [Emphatic]
Mils: No? [Mild surprise]
Mr. Gopaul: No, because if you visit a Muslim, he will not introduce you to his wife and children - he will just talk to you on the doorstep, and then you go i.e. you will not be invited in and fed 'fer koma laskar' [be like a Muslim]. The Muslims are not like us, they have a different way of thinking, they see things differently. [...] Western education is broad, Islamic education is not. Do you know what they teach? They educate their children, good, but they educate them to hate Hindus - so from an early age [indicates height of child - small] they learn to have hate. Problems in France do not come from the British and the French, they come from the Arabs.

Mils: A few years ago, a right-wing politician, Norman Tebbit, came up with an idea to test whether someone was 'really' British or not, it was called the 'cricket test'. He said that, for example, if the Pakistani cricket team came, and played against Britain, then anyone who did not support the English team was not British. But, I do not agree, because you can still be British and support another cricket team.

Mr. Gopaul: When an Arab team, I think from ... Libya, came to play [football] here - the Muslims all support them, against their own country [Mauritius]. When such a team loses, the next day they write slogans on the walls that 'Islam is under threat'
Mils: One football match is not going to change much.

Mr. Gopaul: [...] India was partitioned to get rid of the Muslim problem, so that there wouldn't be any murder and terrorism, but more Muslims chose to stay in India than go to Pakistan. And now, there are many problems in India because of the Muslims, there may have to be a second partition

Mr. Gopaul: If you go and live in another country, you have to stop thinking of yourself as you used to.
Mils: That is OK for your private life?
Mr. Gopaul: Yes, that is for yourself.
Mr. Gopaul: Take birth control. We have accepted birth-control. But the Muslims have not. Why not, [...] so that they will become the majority, and in a democracy, the majority can [do what they want]

Mr. Gopaul: Hindus are not allowed to convert others.
Mils: No?
Mr. Gopaul: No. When, two years ago, the Ambassador, I think from Libya, was thought to be trying to get people to convert from Hinduism to Islam, for money - the Prime Minister got to hear of it. He made some enquiries, and when he was sure that this was so, he had him out of the country in two hours.
Mils: Two hours!
Mr. Gopaul: He got the policemen to arrest him, and took him straight to the airport.
Mils: Crumbs!
Mr. Gopaul: They got his wife and daughter straight from the school to the airport, and then there was a special charter flight to take them back to Libya.

Commentary

This behaviour is criticised not because it is part and parcel of being a Muslim in Mauritius, but rather because it is at odds with what more widespread Mauritian values espouse. That some Muslims are like this contradicts the fact that there are many who are not, i.e. who have not adopted a more 'Gulf State' version of Islam.

This is my attempt at assaying whether Mr. Gopaul thinks that being Mauritian has anything to do with which sports team an individual supports.

He agrees with Lord Tebbit

For a teacher of history, Mr. Gopaul betrays a rather unsound knowledge of SE Asian geopolitical history.

This is quite a widespread belief amongst Mauritians. Hence their interest in those who visit and enjoy Mauritian life/cuisine, etc., and Mauritians' easy absorption overseas. This is a belief which is fairly common amongst Hindus and Tamils too - but strange to hear it coming from an activist for a political party which has some considerable Muslim support and membership.

149 Laskar = derogatory term for a Muslim.
The dialogue presented above features my conversation with an educated and well-travelled individual. Mr. Gopaul is in his early fifties and is an active supporter of the Leader of the Opposition, Paul Bérenger and his party the Mouvement Militant Mauricien (MMM). In fact, he spends a good deal of the time that he ought to be working in his office on political campaigning and spin-doctoring over the telephone instead. Incidentally, the support of Mr. Gopaul for the MMM is in direct contradiction of previous ethnographies, such as Eriksen (1990), which suggest that the MMM is an anti-Hindu party, representative of the numerous (non-Hindu and low-caste Hindu) minorities. Mr. Gopaul is, by contrast, a Hindu and a member of the most numerous caste in Mauritius, the Vaish.

From the conversation presented above, I am most interested in the fact that Mr. Gopaul locates Mauritius in the West when he assembles a disjunction between the educating of Muslim and Hindu children in Mauritius. I discussed this positioning of Mauritius in the West above, and I suggest that the relatively frequent mention of the adoption of contraceptive methods by Hindus also fits into this strand of discourse. Mauritius is a small island, the pressure on the environment is fairly heavy and rates of morbidity have fallen considerably over the past few decades. Hindu Mauritians (i.e. including Tamils, Telegus, etc.) are content because they have modernised their social practices as Mauritian society has changed. However, some Hindus express disquiet at what is, from their point-of-view, the seemingly backward behaviour of some Muslims.

In another instance, for example, I met up with Dev (see Chapter 2) and he told me that he had spoken to a Muslim lady, who lived in the same street, that morning. She informed him that there would be only one religion in the world soon. ‘Yes,’ he agreed ‘humanity’. Unfortunately, the Muslim lady actually meant Islam, and went on to say that events in Saudi Arabia [mass deaths during fires at Haj tented cities] and Saddam Hussein’s actions in the Gulf were written in the Koran. This kind of public claim to the future dominance of one religion is not common in Mauritius, and criticism of it links back to Mr. Gopaul’s condemnation of the Libyan diplomatic mission allegedly sponsoring religious conversion: most Mauritians are not in favour of missionizing. Religious practice or adherence is very much a personal affair and it is not really the done thing to attempt to convert others. If an individual converts through free choice then there is no problem. Indeed, many families, although they are composed of members of only one ethnic group, have, for example, Christian converts. This does not, however, contradict
attendance at, nor belief in, say, traditional religious ceremonies (e.g. Christian Tamils taking part in Cavadee, see Chapter 5, ‘Ethnographic Moment 2’).  

Muslims are sometimes described, by non-Muslims, as being ‘fundamentalists’ or ‘fanatics’. The perceived growth of Muslim fundamentalism is reported as having had the side-effect of inspiring or forcing, for example, the Tamils to start a ‘Tamil Tigers’ council; the Marathis a ‘Marathi League’ and the Telegus a ‘Telugu League’, all of which are sectarian. It should also be noted that the term ‘fanatic’ is itself disputed, both by Muslims who regard themselves as following the Islamic faith rather than being part of a fundamentalist mentality, and some Hindus who are also accused of fanaticism. For example, Dev, a Brahmin, complained: ‘I will tell you what is a fanatic. I eat chappatties with my hands, they call me a fanatic; I go to Grand Bassin [to do prayers], they call me a fanatic’. A liberal perspective was also expressed by many Hindus about Muslims, drawing a distinction between the kind of Islam embraced by Mauritian Muslims and that promoted by, for example, Saudi Arabia. Raj told me that Muslims could never unite across the world with Mauritian Muslims, because, like him, they are ‘No. 1 Mauritians, before everything else’. Hence this Hindu ate beef, pork, etc., even though he declared ‘I am a Brahmin’, and should have strictly avoided these foods. Similarly, when Raj was in London, he met many Muslims who (he estimated eighty per cent) ate pork. Thus Mauritian Muslims are thought to be more fanatical than members of other communities, but less fanatical (and will never be as fanatical) as some Muslims elsewhere in the world (e.g. the Gulf Arab states). Again, what appears at first sight to be a simple, sectarian and solidary division is actually highly stratified and complex.

My Hindu friends told me that those few fights which do occur between Hindus and Muslims only arise over elopements, and they claimed that whereas if a Hindu girl goes off with a Muslim boy, Hindus do nothing (‘they are laissez-faire’); if a Hindu boy elopes with a Muslim girl, they maintained that the girl’s family will try and kidnap her back, and even try to kill the boy. Generally, though, there is no physical conflict between Hindus and Muslims on the island, one close informant

150 See also Appendix p. 1.

151 Muslims are not unaware of this belief, and sometimes discuss it very light-heartedly. The late John Edoo, introducing Laura and I to his mother, said that ‘she dresses like a fundamentalist, but she’s not!’ In fact, the wearing of a head-covering by a Muslim woman is no guide as to the fanaticism, or otherwise, of the wearer. For example, when visiting a Muslim family, belonging to the Ahmaddia (liberal) arm of Islam, our female friend put on her headdress only when she left the house and garden surrounding it for the road - the headdress is only worn when she is in the public domain - i.e. with people she doesn’t know.

152 Again, note the difference between Mauritius and India, where, for example, in India the (Hindu) Shiv Sena sectarian party operates, with both a militant fascism and communalistic ideology.
told me that he thought of the conflict as ‘dormant’, although in terms of the reality of many people’s daily life, such conflicts are practically extinct:

Mosques, churches and Hindu temples can be found within a stone’s throw of each other in many parts of Mauritius. Thankfully, no one has been throwing stones (Lonely Planet 1993: 53).

It is part of the wider social standards of Mauritius which decree that stones are not an appropriate tool of political action. However, one informant told me that

in the past if there had been a football match in Curepipe that the Muslim team (the Scouts) had lost - then all the buses carrying supporters of the other team [for example, and especially, Hindus] would be stoned as they came through Phoenix, where a large proportion of the population are Muslim.

When I enquired as to whether this still happened, I was told that because the George V football stadium in Curepipe had been shut for some time, it wasn’t known. Whilst I was in Mauritius, though, following matches involving the [Muslim] Scouts club (after the aforementioned stadium was re-opened), there was only light damage caused to vehicles and other property. One Hindu man told me that whereas “in the UK there is football hooliganism because it is people’s only day out - here, the Scouts’ supporters are proud to say that ‘if we win we cause havoc, and if we lose we cause havoc’ ”. This is both rather charitable to football ‘hooligans’ in the UK and a bit hyperbolic regarding the Scouts’ fans, where havoc refers in the main only to a few broken windows on buses.

The fear of attack or ‘trouble’ does mean that there are occasions when ethnicity, or religion, erupts into otherwise secular moments. For example, when the internationally famous (exiled) Algerian Rai singer Khaled came to give a concert in Mauritius, there was a great shortfall between the number of tickets made available and those bought. The director of the company promoting the concert (Immedia) told the media ‘que les Mauriciens soient racistes: people were not buying the tickets because (a) Khaled was a Muslim and (b) some of the songs he sang were in Arabic. The director noted the fact that Khaled was a tireless campaigner against intolerance and racism and proceeded to place adverts in daily newspapers, featuring a photograph of a distinctly multi-ethnic audience and asking ‘On the 4th of May, we’re going to see Khaled and his musicians ... and what about you?’ (see plate below). In fact, although some few of those non-Muslims that I spoke to stayed away from the concert because they feared that if the

153 In the past, all of the football teams had ‘ethnic’ labels: such as the Muslim Scouts; Tamil Sunrise, Hindu Cadets and so on. As mentioned earlier, the Government made such ethnic labels illegal (see page 7).
154 This is not to say, though, that comparatively this is not ‘havoc’. For Mauritius, this is certainly a serious event, but in terms of the UK it is rather less serious; and it was my informant who engaged the comparative parallel.
155 Especially in France.
156 ‘That because the Mauricians are racists’.
audience were mainly Muslim there might be some rowdiness: most did not go because of the cost of the tickets or, if they were students, because it was on a weekday when they had homework to complete.

This again underlines the importance of individual-centred field research; it is more analytically relevant in assaying why people did not go to this concert that it took place on a weekday (therefore schoolday) evening than that it featured an internationally famous artist who happened to be a Muslim. A constant to this Thesis is that merely because a certain interpretation is accepted, in the press, academe or elsewhere, this does not mean that more mundane explanations are not possible.

Most importantly, Muslims are seen by the vast majority of Hindus as fellow Mauritians: what I label as and example of intersubjective comprehension. Although differences between individuals and groups are recognised and commented upon, essential, human similarity and coevalness is taken for granted. Following a lengthy discussion with a group of Hindu men, the common view was that problems in Mauritius can be overcome peaceably: everyone has to live close together in Mauritius, hence Muslims and others are ‘like brother and sister’, as one friend put it.158 Tensions and differences can be worked through. This contradicts

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157 Rama Poonoosamy quoted in L’Express, 3 mai 1997.
158 This does not mean, however, that there aren’t significant differences between Hindus and Muslims. For example, many (by no means all) Muslims buy certain products, many (by no means all) Hindus others. Thus, a Muslim company imports Toyotas, so Hindus buy Hindu-imported Protons - not because they are necessarily good cars (the opposite was sometimes observed) - but because they are imported by a Hindu company. The same goes for Pepsi - made here by a Muslim franchise, and Hindus thus only drink Coca Cola (with many exceptions!), and in rural areas Pepsi is not even sold. In urban Plaine Verte (in Port Louis) - a predominantly Muslim area, Coca Cola is not sold. I hope to gather further data on this area in the future.
many of those academic theories elaborated earlier in this Thesis (cf. Chapter 1) which suggest that due to the small size/density and diversity of the population of Mauritius, conflicts are more likely, and claims from rather excitable colonial - and later - anthropologists who doubt the abilities of Mauritians of varying groups to co-exist. Certainly, coexistence might not be perfect (i.e. does not correspond neatly to a ‘Unity in Diversity'/Multiculturalist model), there may be breakdowns in communication between individuals, but these are, arguably, characteristic of human group activity anyway. There is no appetite, I suggest, for xenophobic and fascistic movements such as the Shiv Sena of India which actively agitates Hindus against other religious and ethnic communities, or of Gulf State Islam.

From an additional brief case study, I want now to include a wholly new and surprising version of ethnically, or religiously, based critique. Whether the allegations made are ‘true’ or not, the condemnation by a Hindu friend of some Muslims acquaintances’ misbehaviour is based on unexpected factors; namely that the Hindu criticiser knows what - according to the Koran - Muslims ought to do but which these individuals are not doing. Ram told me that:

these Muslims are big drug dealers but [lowering voice] I can't say it out loud [i.e. in public]. They go off to Mecca, but before they can EVER [emphasis] go, they are meant to make sure that all of their neighbours, of any religion, are all right. Neighbours in front, behind and to both sides. They go to Mecca, come back and build a three storey house, they must bring back drugs or cheap gold.

Ram knows a good deal about Islamic practice, and knows that the Koran instructs Muslims to take care of their neighbours as a priority before going on the Haj. Ram criticises these individuals for breaking this stricture, and then explains the good fortune that these post-Haj Muslims gain by claiming that they smuggle either drugs or gold from Saudi Arabia. In terms of intersubjective understanding, from my field experiences of Mauritius I would claim that many Mauritians - of all ethnic, religious and other groups - share a set of values which stresses care for those living in one’s locality and a belief that those practices which are conventionally part of ‘neighbourliness’ should be pursued. In this case, even though those being criticised belong to a different religion, my Hindu informant criticises them from within an understanding of what they ought to do (i.e. the other’s rules), and hence their behaviour is judged to be mercenary. The Muslims who are alleged to have behaved badly are believed by Ram to have broken both their own rules and those of Mauritian social living, which makes them - in his eyes - both bad Muslims and bad neighbours/citizens of Mauritius.

Intersubjectivity is here a handy means of deepening the ethnographic understanding of this case study because it holds that each individual takes for granted the assumption that ‘others are basically persons like himself, endowed with
consciousness and will, desires and emotions' (Schutz 1970: 319). Hence, many Mauritians would agree that although Muslims and Hindus, to pick just two groups, are different - they are also, in some ways, the same. Each has its own distinct practices of religious observance, of dress, of cuisine and of fast - but each is also somehow similar in this respect.\textsuperscript{159} Frequently, an individual would indulge in the unequivocal criticism both of their own group and others: so that, for example, a Hindu might say, ‘yes, Franco-Mauritians were arrogant and do not care about their neighbours, but neither do many of us Muslims or Hindus’. Their critique would be one of modernity rather than of ethnicity: social and economic change had made people less caring, for example.\textsuperscript{160} I will investigate the role of same-but-different practices and shared understandings and values in a later chapter (5).

Division 4: Creole v. Franco-Mauritians and the Government

In my final individual instance in this chapter of divisions, I want to mention a discourse made by an elderly Creole man, Danny. In an interview which he made for the Mahatma Gandhi Institute’s ongoing archives of personal life-history, he critiques both his treatment by Franco-Mauritian employees and successive Hindu-dominated governments.\textsuperscript{161} Danny spoke at some length about the domination that he had suffered at the hands of the local Franco-Mauritian land-owner (Alain Garbinier).\textsuperscript{162} From my field notes of the interview (conducted by Pavi Ramhota), Danny said that he had had a lot of jobs through his life (he is now in his late sixties). Danny had suffered domination when he had been a fisherman, because the Franco-Mauritian fishmonger would only pay him 5 sous (cents) per pound of octopus. He had to have his seine net out in the bay all night long, and was required

\textsuperscript{159} The invocation that, for example, events (like one’s fate) are ‘written’ for example. I will dwell on these issues in more depth below.

\textsuperscript{160} One instance would be that some families are beginning to abandon their elderly parents whilst for example, Hindus and Muslims have traditionally taken care of them. Few elderly parents would be completely abandoned, but several informants told me that they would be left alone in one room or in a corridor, basically waiting to die: when it was often the hard work of the parents which had paid for the house and the standard of living that their children were enjoying. This is by no means widespread, but for many Mauritians is probably too common already.

\textsuperscript{161} Thanks to Suchita Ramdin and Pavi Ramhota of the Department of Folklore, Mahatma Gandhi Institute for inviting me to sit in on this interview.

\textsuperscript{162} This is ironic, because the land in question is Le Morne: a metaphor for slave-suffering in Mauritius. ‘Le Morne’ means ‘the mournful one’, and refers to a mountain which rises from the sea on the eastern coast of Mauritius. Here, following the abolition of slavery, lived a community of escaped slaves. When they saw a group of British soldiers marching towards them, the slaves, not knowing that slavery was now abolished and that the soldiers were not intending to chase them, assumed that they were to be captured, and so threw themselves to their deaths from the top of Le Morne.
to stand guard over it until morning. Were he to leave the net, a problem might develop with it and all of the fish would be lost. Hence he would construct a small shelter from twigs and leaves, and remain there even if he got wet through, and then horribly cold. The fishmonger would come by with his van later, and buy the fish at a pittance. Sometimes the fishmonger would drive out to his fisherman clients' villages and give out boxes of cheap wine as fee. Similarly, when Danny was a *gardien boeuf* (cow-herd) for M. Garbinier, he would sometimes be paid 7 rupees, sometimes 12, sometimes 5 - it was 'domination' because he had to accept these sums which varied for no reason.

Danny also criticises Hindu-dominated governments in Mauritius, *'gouvernment-là pas don nou travai'*¹⁶³ and so he and his children have very little to do. He spends his time walking up and down the street, going to the *boutik* (local shop) and there he passes the day *'assiz-assiz'* (sitting down), and has measures of *'grog'* (rum).

Danny has had a tough life, like many of the Mauritians that I met. Being resident in what is even now quite a rural part of Mauritius means that much of the development and modernisation that is commonplace elsewhere on the island is only now making an impact in villages such as Le Morne. For example, it was only in 1997 that the first properly engineered septic tanks were installed. Being remote, residents of these villages have been severely limited in terms of their access to jobs other than manual labouring on farms or construction sites. Some people have managed to get employment in hotels as waiters/waitresses, and some women have entered the informal prostitution industry (at hotels and elsewhere). Access to primary and secondary education has only relatively recently become available in the same manner as in more urban areas.¹⁶⁴

Danny does critique his treatment by Franco-Mauritians and his perception of the abandonment of his village by successive governments, but does not seem to deepen this displeasure into statements of bitterness or revenge. Danny seems to have come to an understanding that the treatments meted out to him, although unjust, are in the past and now bears no grudges against those descendants of his dominators. This is a possibility that Benedict, amongst other ethnographers of Mauritius, has not considered: that of forgiveness, of the acceptance by the wronged

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¹⁶³ *'The government doesn't give us any work'.

¹⁶⁴ The problems which have affect the Creole sections of the Mauritian population may be solely a function of demographic-structural changes resulting from plantation slavery which drove Creoles and others to the uninhabited, marginal parts of Mauritius than from any inherent racist government policies. For example, those villages near Le Morne which are composed mainly of Hindus (especially Marathis) are also poor.
that the past is the past. Again, it might be suggested that this widespread and pragmatic world-view/philosophy is a source of stability/unity to Mauritius.
Commentary: (relating individual discourses of categorisation and division to antecedent ethnographies).

The four divisions presented above have a cumulative effect on my argument. They point up the fact that the simplistic bloc divisions of the Mauritian population - which both social scientific researchers and successive administrations continue to impose - are in fact considerably more complex. This recognition of complexity is, as I stated at the commencement of the chapter, shown through contextualized knowing, a knowing from 'within' situations and circumstances. In this example, I contrasted, and gently contested, the claims to explication made by Eriksen with my informed knowledge of Mauritian Hindu individual identity. According to an informant of the anthropologist Eriksen, ethnic peace in Mauritius is ensured simply by not discussing matters such as ethnic politics or religion:

[a] fellow expatriate, who had lived in the island for more than a decade, told me, resignedly, that "we walk on eggs all the time". In this, the informant meant that it is difficult not to go beyond the common denominator, into controversy that is, in casual intercourse' (1993: 86-7).

This does not sound like 'Unity in Diversity' if, as de Souza noted above, it means that there are avoidances of talking about certain topics, and this could be expected to be a particularly prickly context for the field researcher to operate in. However, this is not the impression I had of Mauritian conversations. In very many conversations at which I was present, political matters of both national and local significance, which are usually inseparable from matters of what Eriksen labels 'ethnic politics', were spoken of. As the preceding individual discourses have revealed, people readily entered into talking about controversial matters in an atmosphere of safety: one would really only need to employ the metaphor of "walking on eggs" if one were, as an outsider, to ask intrusive questions into certain sensitive topics too quickly or addressed them to the wrong people (wrong in the sense of, say, not knowing the questioned individual well enough to enquire into these areas).165

I did not find people guarded in what they would say about the activities of other ethnic groups in Mauritius, nor to members of other groups,166 often my informants would be both very frank and reflexive and, as the second vignette above reveals (in discussing Franco-Mauritians), pragmatic and even-handed. The portrait of Mauritian society which emerges from my research is fascinating and

165 I have discussed in full detail my field techniques elsewhere in this Thesis.
166 Indeed, light-hearted banter between members of different ethnic or religious groups is far from rare and might, perhaps, be interpreted as a healthy sign of intersubjective understanding and tolerance.
challenges both the ethnographic and governmental ideal-views of Mauritius. Divisions are certainly made and recognised by Mauritian individuals but, even then, are not necessarily the predominant element of an individual’s assessment of another ethnic/racial/religious category.

I agree with Eriksen when he cites individual Mauritians as blaming politicians for many of the problems which occasionally blight, for example, inter-ethnic relations in Mauritius (e.g. ‘it is the politicians who make all the problems and differences in Mauritius’). However, Eriksen dismissed such comments concerning politicians out of hand as

a standard reply to questions about ethnicity is that ethnic conflicts are 'created by the politicians'. This is wrong. Ethnicity not only plays an important part in non-political social fields in both societies, it is more fundamental outside the realm of institutional politics (1992: 36).

I disagree with this treatment of a respondent’s explanation, on two grounds:

1. Methodologically (and ethically), if someone believes that ethnic problems are created by politicians, it is not sufficient or acceptable merely to efface them as being ‘wrong’: because, flowing from that belief, may be certain patterns of action - so this will be treated as truth by those individuals even though, to Eriksen, it isn’t. In fact, the category of truth isn’t really appropriate - whether the analyst thinks that something is true or not is neither relevant nor important.

2. There have been some suggestions that the current Leader of the Opposition in Mauritius (Paul Bérenger) is operating a form of ‘scientific communalism’ in an attempt to bring down the present Government and become Prime Minister. Certainly my experiences with some of his grassroots workers have tended to support this view. The role of one of the largest and most powerful Hindu organisations on the island (Hindu House) also has to be brought into question. Hence, the individuals who blame politicians may be absolutely right; they may know more than Eriksen suspects!

Many of the Mauritian individuals that I spoke to agreed that there certainly was an ethnic dimension to politics, such that they would select what party they voted for on the basis of the ethnicity or caste of its leader. However, they were also self-critical about this situation and one declared that ‘we Mauritians are stupid in electoral terms’ because votes always go to the same types of people, no matter what party is returned, he argued that it is ‘the same wine in different bottles’.

It is by no means possible to conclude that everyone votes along ethnic lines, there may be tendencies but there are no clear cut lines, and the importance of charisma and family political history in electoral choice have to be acknowledged.
It may even be that these are more significant than any ethnic dimensions, although later in this Thesis I present an interpretation of a proverb which examines the connection between politicians and the groups that they represent (see Chapter 4).

• From Difference to Similarity

The second section of this chapter deals with ethnographic instances where I encountered discourses which further challenge accepted ideas of Mauritian diversity. Two vignettes provide surprising evidence of cross-cutting recognitions of similarity between the actions of members of different ethnic groups. Combined with the previous four vignettes presented earlier in this chapter, these ethnographic instances further complexify Mauritian diversity but - significantly - begin to form the basis for a developing argument which will propound the thesis that it is from similarities, which take different forms, that a realistic form of inter-communal (inter-subjective) understanding grows.

Ethnographic Instance 1 - racism as a desirable attribute.

Just before Christmas 1996, my partner and I went to deliver some Christmas presents to a family which we had come to know well. Whilst there, we received an invitation to accompany them to an evening party of family and close friends. After heading home to change into slightly smarter attire, we were picked up and taken to the household of a Vaish Hindu Family (the Teelucks) in one of the posher districts of Curepipe. The Teeluck family is a large and quite wealthy one, and the house where they had arranged to meet up was full. Many of the rooms and the otherwise fairly plainly decorated walls of the concrete house are dominated by the heads of deer that the elder Mr. Teeluck had shot. We were introduced to the family and close friends gathered together, many of whom we had previously met, and escorted through the main living room where the majority of women and all of the children sat, and the men, drinking and eating, in a garage at the rear of the house. Here, around a large round table sat all of the menfolk, young and old, presided over by Mr. Teeluck, who physically dominated the scene: both because of his large stature and that due to medical problems with his legs, he remains standing. Laura speedily
departed to the women in the main living room as the men introduced each other, Black Label whisky flowed, and salty snacks were served.

There was quite a bit of interest in my work, and the young future son-in-law of Mr. Teeluck said something which I found really interesting. He declared that 'everyone in Mauritius is a racist' and that if people aren't racists, then they lose their culture. There was general assent from the group at this point. An executive of Mauritius Telecom picked up on the point, perhaps having travelled widely in the West and realising the possibility of negative implications of this statement for a visitor to Mauritius, and qualified this statement by adding that 'everyone respects each other'. This was underlined by the fact that a frequent repetitive strand to the interactions around the table was the humorous chiding of a Muslim lad for drinking alcohol. Mr. Teeluck, very much in character, had a story which rounded off this conversational segment. Once, he reported, he had been in a social gathering and had declared that he was not a racist. Then a friend had pointed out a Creole man in the same room 'with the big lips, and the hair and all that', and the friend had asked 'what if he asked to marry your daughter?', so Mr. Teeluck replied, 'OK, then I am a racist'.

Mr. Teeluck and the group as a whole were, characteristically for many of the Mauritians that I met, being perspicaciously honest and self-aware. There is a recognition of ethnic or cultural difference and a value statement (that Mr. Teeluck would never want his daughter to marry a Creole man), but the fact that Mr. Teeluck would not wish his daughter to marry a Creole man does not imply that he wants to deport all Creole men and women from Mauritius, far from it. This group equates a certain degree of racism exercised by this and any other groups with a positive value, otherwise, it is argued, each group would lose its distinctive 'culture'. A particle of racism is therefore regarded as being both desirable and appropriate. This is in spite of the fact that every family in Mauritius contains a certain amount of diversity: of caste (at least), and quite likely of religion or ethnic origin as well (e.g. convertees to Christianity or Baha'i, Europeans or, less commonly, Muslims who had married into the family167). However, this group at least seem to be saying that there is a dividing line between some kind of internal (intra-group) diversity and external, larger diversities rooted in the fact that Creoles are sometimes, and only by some people, said to have qualities which Hindus (or Indo-Mauritians more generally) see as antithetical.168 As the above extract reveals, my informants did not

167 This is especially the case with families with a high level (i.e. degree) of education.
168 Although this is contradicted by those non-Creole individuals/families who have Creole friends/relatives.
at any time express 'hatred' of Creoles, or others. Intuiting from my notes of the scene, i.e. of the way that things were verbally and contextually framed and my knowledge of general patterns of this and similar families' behaviour, my informants did not speak in a hateful or poisonous way. Illustrating the contradictoriness inherent in everyday life, these and similar statements coexist with the fact that in their working lives and residential patterns these notions of racism did not operate. People happily interacted in the workplace, purchased things or hired services from one another seemingly with little or no regard to which ethnic or racial group each of the interlocutors belonged to. Ethnicity, race and religion are domestic, marital and political matters (although in varying degrees dependent on the individual(s) involved).

To adopt the usage of Herzfeld, among most of the Mauritians I met, there was a lack of 'indifference', that is 'the rejection of common humanity [...] the denial of identity, of selfhood' (1992: 1). If members of one group didn't like members of another (e.g. Hindus/Muslims), this wasn't usually a denial by one group of the others' identity, of their humanness, of their worth, of their right to be as they were. What is significant about the fragment of discourse presented above is that Mr. Teeluck had spent many years studying and then working in the United Kingdom and had himself been the subject of several violent racist attacks (although on every occasion the attackers left in a far worse state than him\textsuperscript{169}). A clear distinction has, I suggest, to be made between (a) 'racism' - defined as protecting one's culture - and (b) 'racism' - defined as hateful statements; the promotion of enforced division.

The second ethnographic instant highlights how the positive comprehension of a certain form of racism was expressed. I was generally interested in how non-Franco-Mauritians thought about Franco-Mauritians, and when I enquired as to whether they were regarded as being racist in the way they tend to keep themselves to themselves, insisting on having servants and making their drivers push the trolley in the supermarket (and so on), the answer was rather similar to the justification of racism presented above. In the ethnographic instance presented below, I reveal that there is no sense of inferiority, hatred or envy directed towards Franco-Mauritians, and this underlines again some of the notions that I have drawn out from Mr. Teeluck's statements.

Ethnographic Instance 2: preserving cultural heritage and racism manifested.

Having been invited to the home of a young Policeman (Ash), his wife and sister, we got talking about the sister island of Mauritius, La Réunion. We agreed that the white French nationals working on contracts in Réunion had all the top jobs, at managerial level, and rarely mixed with non-whites. I asked Ash whether he thought that the Franco-Mauritians were racist in the same way. ‘No,’ he said, ‘I don’t think so. They just keep themselves apart, separate: they want to preserve their traditions and their customs’. This was given the interpretation that this was actually a laudable thing to do: that it was both natural and desirable to want to preserve one’s heritage, although he then added and tempered this with the fact that he thought that as the Franco-Mauritians’ ancestors used to be the owners of many slaves, they thought they could still treat people in a domineering way, like striding up to the front of queues in shops and rudely demanding things. At other moments, I was told that even French visitors to Mauritius were appalled by the behaviour of Franco-Mauritians, many of whom have dual nationality (Mauritius/France).

170 This is, to some degree, a generalisation, but is informed by a year’s residence of mine on La Réunion some years ago.
Commentary

From the ethnographic instances which I have detailed above, I suspect that the terms ‘racist,’ ‘racism’ and ‘racisme’ are being used differently in Mauritius than in (my knowledge of) the UK, Europe and North America. I think this usage is more akin to some kind of (generally) non-sectarian cultural pride rather than a hate-filled perjorativeness, although to confuse the issue a Hindu woman who had a fraught encounter with an English woman working for Barclays Bank in Mauritius stated that the latter’s dress, pearls, hair, etc., ‘all communicated racism’. Clearly, in the way that the English woman behaved and presented herself in her encounter with my informant (a shop-keeper) she had over-stepped some kind of line:

Anne, in spite of her name a Brahmin Hindu, worked in a small craft-shop, much frequented by tourists, in the capital Port Louis. One afternoon, as I stood and chatted with her, in a mixture of French and Kreol, an English woman entered the shop and began to browse through the assortment of goods for sale: T-shirts, tea-towels, small paintings and other objets d’art. Eventually, she came to the sales table to pay for her purchases. For the first time, said Anne, a customer complained that pictures of Mauritius had ‘Mauritius’ painted on them. Anne has been working in tourist shops for a long time, and knew that there was no point challenging her English customer about this issue. The bill for the English woman’s goods was totted up, and then Anne was embarrassed because she did not have enough change to allow her to accept the customer’s large-denomination note. This provoked a tirade of criticism from the customer that small shops never had any change. Anne accepted the amount of cash which was counted out so far, i.e. apologising for her lack of change with a discount. However, the customer continued to count out the exact change to the sum of the original bill - despite Anne’s increasingly unhappy protestations.

Racism (+) is seeking to protect one’s heritage and traditions, racism (-) is not treating someone as an equal. In terms of theoretically exploring this instance of ‘racism’, I believe that it is worth considering Wieviorka’s suggestion. Wieviorka argues that the primary task of the social sciences is to attack common-sense categories (and the reader will already have encountered a number of instances of that programme in this Thesis), and one of these is, of course, ‘racism’. Further, I concur with his level caution that racism is associated with the subjectivity of the actors, and if the latter refer uniquely to nation, religion, traditions and, more generally, to culture, with no references to nature, biology, genetic heritage or blood, it is preferable not to speak of racism (Wieviorka 1997: 142).

Of course, there is something of an ethical problem here, in that I am inviting the reader to distance her or himself from the actual discourse employed by my expatriate worker. The customer in this vignette had been resident in Mauritius for a little longer than me at that moment (4 months), and yet made a number of crucial mistakes in her interaction with Anne - which culminated in Anne being left with a negative image of English people as racist and domineering. Certainly, in her interaction with Anne, the woman had invested much more in terms of eye-contact and speech with the anthropologist than with the shop-keeper - which perhaps encouraged Anne to state that everything about the expatriate had communicated racism, but a racism which was qualitatively different from the culture-preserving employment of it (above).

171 This vignette also reminds the reader of the difference between the anthropologist and the expatriate worker. The customer in this vignette had been resident in Mauritius for a little longer than me at that moment (4 months), and yet made a number of crucial mistakes in her interaction with Anne - which culminated in Anne being left with a negative image of English people as racist and domineering. Certainly, in her interaction with Anne, the woman had invested much more in terms of eye-contact and speech with the anthropologist than with the shop-keeper - which perhaps encouraged Anne to state that everything about the expatriate had communicated racism, but a racism which was qualitatively different from the culture-preserving employment of it (above).
informants. However, what I am really saying is not so extreme, just that when my informants refer to their ‘racism’ (above), they do not mean racism in the way that we might be habituated to define it (i.e. inside the academy): it is not the same racism. Hence, as I noted earlier, there is - generally speaking - no hate expressed between individuals, speaking as representatives of one group (e.g. Hindus) vis-à-vis other individuals and groups.

Chapter Conclusion

Mauritians do, of course, draw divisions between themselves (Hindus, Muslims, Creoles, Franco-Mauritians), and vis-à-vis non-Mauritians (Indians, Réunionais). At times, they speak of being racist, and I tentatively claim that some Mauritians are using the term ‘racism’ to speak about cultural identity, in an attempt to explain to outsiders, for example, why the majority of people still tend to marry endogamously. They might be wanting to emphasise a common history of origin, supported by community memory: ‘Un peuple qui perd sa mémoire perd son identité’ (François Mitterand).\(^\text{172}\) The kind of sentiments promoting the protection of ones culture is echoed in, for instance, the support that a family gives to its members. One Hindu informant said that a poor brother of his had had a good wedding because everyone in the family helped out buying things: ‘it was not as big as it could have been, but it was what we might call respectable’. The family pooled resources to ensure that one of its members has a wedding which is more than just the acceptable minimum: ensuring that the family’s ethnic and religious heritage continues. Many Mauritians, I suggest, believe that one loses something if ones cultural heritage is forgotten.

This chapter has presented some diverse discourses concerning ‘others’ made by individual Mauritians. These are not representative of anything more than my impressions of the individuals whom I heard speak. Mauritius is not a utopian social paradise and individuals’ statements presented here highlight that. Individuals are not necessarily as humanistic, tolerant or liberal as one might expect or that some might want. But, equally, neither are they as obsessively chauvinistic and fissive as previous researchers have painted Mauritians. The fragments of dialogue submitted above have shown Mauritians not to be perfect Multiculturalists, but this, I argue, is no ground from which to draw negative images of Mauritians.

\(^{172}\) ‘A people that loses its memory loses its identity’.

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Rather, although somewhat uncomfortable compared to the simplistic and - I have claimed - divisive aims of the official policies of ‘Unity in Diversity’, and the sociological categorisation of governmentality generally, I am in a position to suggest that these statements are harmless in terms of social consequences and, in fact, in the eyes of the stranger such as myself contrast with daily social behaviour which generally pays little attention to interlocutors’ ethnic, religious or racial group. In later sections of this Thesis, I will present a wealth of examples where it is abundantly clear that the group membership of an interlocutor is irrelevant to either the informant or the interpreter. No matter what one individual says about another individual (a member of a different religious, ethnic or racial group) - Mauritians of all diversities daily mix; share enjoyment of the same food, talk the same language. This, then, is a pragmatic, grass-roots, and effective form of intersubjective comprehension.

I have also hinted that a good deal of the balance, or ‘toleration’ which pertains between the diverse socio-cultural groupings of Mauritius can be usefully interpreted through the application of notions of intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity is a humanising and liberal discourse and, from my point of view, successfully captures an unsaid given among most of those Mauritians that I met with: that each individual sees other individuals as being like him or herself. Not everyone has full knowledge of the practices and rites of their own group, let alone of others’, but, as Schutz puts it,

The system of knowledge thus acquired [as one grows up in a society] - incoherent, inconsistent, and only partially clear, as it is - takes on for the members of the in-group the appearance of a sufficient coherence, clarity, and consistency to give anybody a reasonable chance of understanding and of being understood (1970: 80-1).

Hence, Franco-Mauritians and their behaviour are explicable to a Hindu because they both intersubjectively, says the Hindu, want merely to preserve their heritage. Caste endogamy among Hindus is explicable to a Muslim because they too want their children to marry within a certain circle. Christian Tamils participating in Cavadee are acceptable to other Tamils because it is recognised that everyone wants solutions to their problems. Despite sometimes saying the contrary, most of the Mauritians that I met either enjoyed the company of individuals who were not of the same ethnic or religious group, or took it for granted. ‘This is Mauritius’ as one informant put it.

Overall, in attempting to write a realistic account of my experiences in Mauritius, my analysis here of ‘associational categories’ (divisions drawn up between individuals/groups) ‘discusses the social placement of people in a locally
relevant system of relationships' (Mewett 1982: 102). This Thesis shares the motivation expressed by Berger and Kellner that social scientists should concern themselves with a microsociology of 'the many little workshops in which living individuals keep hammering away' at the construction and maintenance of social reality.\(^{174}\) This chapter has begun to impart a further sense of the diversity and complexity of Mauritius, through an exploration of some of its divisions which are, from the beginning, shown to be more complicated and unpredictable than previous ethnographies have presumed. The governmental Multiculturalist trope of 'Unity in Diversity' is demonstrably less than adequate as a tool by which to come to a comprehension of the social lives of those Mauritians that I met. There are diversities, there are kinds of unities - but neither are as simplistic as the ideological package of 'Unity in Diversity' predicts.

This Thesis now continues its task of presenting a picture of Mauritius which appeals to my remembering of those moments when I felt - in a sense, a mood, a sentence, an exchange, a meal, a moment - 'This is Mauritius'. These are moments which I knew I wanted to include as fundamental to the resultant Thesis. The next chapter discusses the use of divisions based in ethnicity and caste in certain strategic ways, also strategies which did not use them and those which blended ethnic or caste membership with non-ethnic/non-caste membership; and the reasons why the use of these divisions were or were not the appropriate means by which to achieve an ambition.

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\(^{173}\) For example, I chatted to a Telegu girl one day who could not remember the name for the day after a Telegu wedding, but did know the Tamil name for it.\(^{174}\) Cited in Hannerz 1996: 99.
Chapter 4
Politics, Strategy, Support, Absence and Critique:
The Pragmatic and Situational Deployment of Ethnicity and Caste

One wants to look at ethnic identity in ways that are meaningful to those who use ethnicity or are confronted with it in their daily lives as well as to the students of ethnic identity, to whom it is a phenomenon that characterises the contemporary world

- Royce 1982: 1
This chapter investigates the pragmatic employment of ethnicity and caste. The reader will by now be familiar with my condemnation of previous ethnographies as, amongst other criticisms, presenting over-simplified portrayals of the operation and pre-emience of ethnicity. I now begin to re-write the study of ethnicity and caste in Mauritius. The previous chapter outlined some of the bases of categorisation and division utilised by Mauritians, simultaneously emphasising the complexity and inconsistency of these manoeuvres. Continuing this theme, I now turn to the contextual deployment of ethnicity and caste and argue that these bases of association:

(a) are significant in Mauritius, but
(b) only in certain cases and then
(c) not in a necessarily predictable manner.

Ethnicity and caste are not permanently, a-contextually functioning sources of identity or action, and when they are drawn upon their success is far from guaranteed.

The chapter first presents my ethnographic evocations of some events where ethnicity or caste might be thought to be appropriate tools for analysis. Events featured include political organisation and uses - and non-uses - of ethnicity to redress work-place problems. I complexify the role of ethnicity and caste, draw out some of the potential drawbacks to their deployment by individuals, and then present social situations where an analytical focus on the ethnicity/caste of actors would be inappropriate.

Secondly, I counterpose these evocations with antecedent ethnographies of Eriksen, Nirsimloo-Anenden and others, before demonstrably concluding that the use of ‘ethnicity’ or ‘caste’ as poly-situational instruments of interpretation for the analyst or government is insufficient and, if pursued, distorting.
Many Mauritians are party-political animals, highly interested in every twist and turn of the political process, eagerly reading the entrails of every event, speech or rumour. There is a widespread recognition of the ethnic, or communal, dimension to politics. This is not said - necessarily - to be a good thing, but is, rather, the reality in which individuals live and have to make the most of. Hence, it may, on occasion, be necessary to invoke ethnic group membership, or simple friendship which may be trans-ethnic/caste, to gain an audience with a civil servant, M.P. or Minister to persuade him or her to, for example, attempt to find one a job. This is not how all jobs are gained, but probably accounts for a significant number of posts in the gift of civil servants, M.P.s and Ministers. Similarly, friends will agitate on behalf of friends to find jobs and, as many people would approach relatives (i.e. usually of the same ethnic group/caste) first, ethnic group membership could be said to be significant here too.

It would be quite wrong, however, to ignore or diminish the individual dimension of attempts to, for example, gain promotion or merely solve a problem. In Mauritius, as a friend puts it, 'connections are everything'. If you have a friend in a Government Ministry or a business, you can be fairly sure that s/he will be able to help you, and at some unspecified time in the future this assistance will probably be repaid (although this is not necessarily expected). But, if you are an antisocial person who cannot be trusted and behaves badly, it is unlikely that you will have friendly contacts to draw upon, and any success that you may have will be compromised by reduced levels of social esteem.

In the academic analysis of intersections between ethnicity, race and other such variables with the party political arena, conclusions have followed well-worn routes. For example, Eriksen (1990) argues that the Kreol proverb 'Sak zako bizin protez so montayn' ('each monkey must protect its mountain') is a defence of the existence of communalism in politics. However, one of my informants offered a contrasting interpretation of this saying.

Beginning by stating 'First of all, montayn means Mauritius and it is compared to communities. Get it right', my informant then proceeded to sketch a diagram explaining the proverb:

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175 The author found himself torn between the recognition that this form of organisation benefited those who took the trouble to become friends with people, and the (probably misplaced) guilt that one had an unfair advantage by 'knowing someone in...'. In some ways, doing favours for friends and then them doing them for you, or friends helping you just because they were friends is immensely refreshing - and I think I tend to tilt towards this conclusion overall.
'Now,' he continued,

for example, the Ministry of Employment is under the leadership of a Muslim (Mohamed), and lots of Muslims will get the preference of being employed. [...] The monkey - zako - is the Minister belonging to the Muslim community, and will protect the mountain - montayn - who are the Muslim people living in Mauritius. Another way of explaining it is that if a Hindu wants something and is very close to Ramgoolam [the present (Hindu) Prime Minister], therefore he is protected and looked after first. Let me tell you that if the Prime Minister is a Hindu he will try to push-up the Hindu community [...]. This applies to a seat at the University of Mauritius as well as any other places. But, nowadays trade unions, [socio-cultural] Associations and the Opposition is trying to cut down this kind of attitude.

It is apparent from the final sentence that the speaker, a Muslim, implicitly recognises the problematics of this form of political organisation, he is also aware that as long as it persists, he, and everyone else, needs to play along with the system. It can, and should, be changed - but presently he has to function along with it. It is only the very rich or brave who can afford to ignore this informal system.

Eriksen presents just one reading of this proverb: as a verbal structure justifying communal (ethnic/caste) organisation in politics. In contrast, I argue that, based on an informant's competing explanation, an alternative and deeper interpretation is possible. This example of a Mauritian's competing interpretation of a proverb cited by Eriksen further demonstrates that members of ethnic groups are not cultural dupes who are bound to defend communalism because it benefits them. This proverb doesn't necessarily defend communalism, as Eriksen suggests. Indeed, for my informant it both explains and critiques the behaviour of politicians and this is concomitant with the fact that many politicians are viewed with suspicion, even when they are recognised as representing one's own ethnic group.

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176 It might also be suspected that the labelling of politicians as monkeys is something of an inherent critique of politicians who, although sometimes inspiring great loyalty and love, are often thought of much as Westerners regard politicians (i.e. as scheming, self-promoting crooks).
Having established a general mood of critiquing previous ethnographic work, in the following case-study I demonstrate a context where the strategic appeal to a politician along ethnic grounds was successful, and then move on to discuss other social contexts where ethnicity is either less relevant, or even absent, as a frame of reference or analysis for the individual Mauritians involved and, hence, for the anthropologist.

Instance 1: The strategic employment of ethnicity and caste

Lutchmun is a short, rather corpulent Indo-Mauritian in his mid-fifties. Working from his own office in a large public sector establishment, Lutchmun was described by one of his colleagues as 'the king, the real king of this place'. The institution that he worked in is based in a modern building in the suburbs of a large town in the centre of Mauritius. Sometimes Lutchmun spends the majority of the day in his office, but as he is also a small-planter of sugar cane he needs to spend a fair amount of time overseeing his crops. An informant revealed that whereas Lutchmun had more diplomas and certificates than any of the other staff in this workplace, he could actually hardly read or write. It is in the gaining both of his office job and land that individual strategy related to ethnicity / caste comes into play, as my informant details below:

Lutchmun got his land not from the ex-P.M. Jugnauth, but from the 'father of the nation' Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam (SSR, the first post-independence Prime Minister). Lutchmun had had problems finding a wife, so SSR gave him one of his mistresses. Lutchmun begged (went down on his knees and cried to) him to act as his father for the wedding ceremony (his own father was dead). For a quiet life, SSR acquiesced ... Now he sees the present PM (Navin Ramgoolam - son of SSR) as his brother. Lutchmun had made himself very visible at all rallies and political events that SSR held by wearing bright red clothes. He then worked his way into a position from where he could gain appointments with the then Prime Minister (field notes).

Lutchmun and SSR are of the same caste and, once having 'received' a wife from SSR, Lutchmun then required some means of providing for them both; and so he returned to the Prime Minister. Another informant told me that Lutchmun had gone to great lengths to belittle himself in front of SSR, and had even prostrated himself in front of him (perhaps in the manner in which visitors do at a very efficacious Hindu temple, as the ultimate expression of subservience). SSR was moved to telephone a

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177 Depending on the time of year, this could be assisting and supervising the harvest; planting, weeding, fertilising or guarding the cane from marauding monkeys.

178 He is known to be a philanderer extraordinaire. Many of my informants delighted in telling me snippets about SSR's multitude of mistresses, property in London, etc.

179 I do not add 'allegedly' because SSR is dead.
Lutchmun and SSR were from the same caste and allied with the fact that SSR had helped Lutchmun, Lutchmun was now regarded - and regarded himself - as having strong political backing. This meant, in turn, that locally he was a relatively important man. Lutchmun, for example, had a small coterie in his workplace who would, to his face at least, state that he was the local ‘king’ - but the coterie in turn were criticised by non-members for their fawning attitude. Lutchmun was not immune from condemnation and ridicule by others, though. He was frequently criticised as being very dirty, as eating horribly with both hands\(^{180}\) and as being very stingy. These are important factors in how Hindu and Tamil (and perhaps other) Mauritians assess an individuals’ value. Lutchmun was, although clearly now (potentially) rather powerful, looked down upon for a number of unwelcome traits. He was also regarded as breaking acceptable rules of behaviour at other times by exposing himself to, and groping, female colleagues, and pursuing other forms of sexual harassment.

\(^{180}\) Whereas he should have used the right hand only.
Commentary

Colleagues of Lutchmun were dismissive of his gains. It was thought to be shameful that someone should behave in such a way to get a job and land. Hence, although Lutchmun had *materially* profited from his strategic grovelling and manoeuvring, *socially* his stock was, unrecoverably, at rock bottom. He had secured a job not through the simple use of connections of ethnicity, caste or friendship which, as one friend put it, ‘are everything’ in Mauritius, but through unseemly and shameful begging and grovelling. The coterie of supporters that he had are similarly looked down upon for being attendant upon Lutchmun solely for any crumbs of influence that he lets fall. Lutchmun has used ethnic and caste ties to achieve ambitions, in the manner that we might expect from a familiarity with previous ethnographies of Mauritius which have emphasised the associational possibilities of ethnic/caste division, but this is a rare example of great benefit accruing from such contacts and Lutchmun is almost uniformly reviled for his actions. He may have succeeded, but in terms of many people’s valuing of him, he has lost social prestige or equivalence. He is looked down upon for his shameless, and shameful, operations. He has, it might be suggested, broken unspoken rules of the degree to which one should draw upon ethnic and caste connections, and the depths to which one should reduce oneself in order to gain material possessions. Again, these reactions are not ones which we might expect from a society which is, seemingly, simplistically divided along communal lines (cf. Chapter 1, Part 1, Sections 1 and 2).

Instance 2: The strategic employment of ethnic and non-ethnic support

In the second instance, Krishnamurti, a Teacher of Tamil (and a Tamil herself), pursues a twin-track approach, of drawing both on her ethnic contacts, as well as contacting a secular individual (the President). What is surprising about this case-study is that those contacts were required to conclude a disagreement with members of her own ethnic group. I learnt about this episode by talking with a friend of Krishnamurti who had been advising her on her actions.

Krishnamurti worked as a teacher of Tamil in a large secondary school on the outskirts of Port Louis. The Department of Tamil is quite a large one, with some seven teaching staff. The background to this event was that, for the first time in her career, Krishnamurti was alleged to have made some tiny mistakes in the marking of
four students’ homework. Their parents came to be aware of this and were very unhappy that such a situation should transpire because, after all, in the fiercely competitive Mauritian educational system, marks are vital as they govern the access of pupils to scholarships or a seat at the University of Mauritius. The parents exerted some pressure on the school, made their complaints known to the Head of the School, and to his boss in turn. The latter called in Krishnamurti and she was reduced to tears by the lack of support that her bosses offered. Not least this lack of support was because, my informant reported, like few other teachers, she used to be a typist but funded herself through 3 years of B.A. education in India and then began teaching at this school.\footnote{This is a rare path. Not that many people, especially typists, self-fund their way through a foreign education; it represents enormous strength of character for an (at that time) single woman. A more usual path would be for parents to pay for the education or for political backing to enable one to receive a government scholarship - otherwise there are very few opportunities.}

The issue seems to have been that the kids did get things wrong, but only by one ‘stroke’ on particular words in Tamil script which, according to Mrs. Bunjun (my informant), ‘alters the whole meaning’ of the sentence. Instead of the Director of the school (or Krishnamurti’s immediate boss, the Headmaster) being decisive and not having any truck with the complaints - which had no substance - the teacher had to write to the Minister of Health, because he was Tamil - like her - and to the President of the Republic (who isn’t, but is regarded as a champion of ‘fair play’\footnote{A phrase sometimes heard in relation to sport, or less frequently politics, in Mauritius.}) and others to get some political support for her position, and to avoid being sacked over an insignificant incident. Mrs. Bunjun, a Hindu, believes that ‘these people’ (Tamils) are always like this, and want ‘their own people’ in the Tamil Department. Here, though, there was a disjunction between ethnicity and Departmental politics: even though Krishnamurti is a Tamil, she isn’t one of the ‘in-crowd’ who comprise the majority in the Tamil Department, perhaps because of the idiosyncratic and determined way of achieving her qualification, for which others outside the Department admire her.

Commentary

This case-study adds further to my aim of complexifying the role of ethnicity in contemporary Mauritian life. At some moments (in appealing to a Tamil Minister), Krishnamurti played what one could label the ‘shared ethnicity’ card; at another moment she did not couch her appeals in ethnic terms at all (in writing to the
President), and ethnicity was not an available card at all in terms of dealing with the Department, because all members of it were from the same ethnic group. In the Tamil Department, we could say, the matter was personal rather than ethnic, and Krishnamurti found herself to be in an ‘out-group’. There is clearly an analytical danger in always searching for ethnicity to be, en bloc, at the root of disagreements and as being at the root of solutions. In this case-study, I have demonstrated that within the confines of the same incident, ethnicity can be alternately switched on and off as a means of remedy.

This ethnographic instance reveals several things. Firstly, that there is no *a priori* homogeneity within a recognised ethnic group. Just because the teacher was a Tamil certainly did not mean that she could count on the other members of the Tamil Department for support. For some reason, she was not one of the ‘in-group’ which dominated that Department, and I have reported the suggestion that this may be because of the idiosyncratic manner in which she has pursued her desire to become a teacher. Power relations cross-cut ethnic ones.

Secondly, the pupils’ parents could, presumably, call upon their own ethnic and political connections to try and get the teacher reprimanded or dismissed. At the same time, the teacher could also call on politically powerful peers, but as she did not have good personal connections with them, she also had to use a certain amount of initiative too, and use ‘cold call’ letters to try to mobilise support from both members of her own ethnic group and from the President of the Republic (a Muslim). From this combination of manoeuvres she was finally successful.

Instance 3: secular techniques employed to resolve a work-place problem

In this case, a female employee of a large parastatal body, Miss Luchoomun, was severely, unfairly and rudely criticised, in public, by a male superior (Mr. Gobin). The two protagonists worked, as government employees, in an office which oversees the provision and maintenance of certain educational standards. Mr. Gobin is a senior civil servant, whilst Miss Luchoomun was a junior employee (a messenger). One morning, Mr. Gobin asked Miss Luchoomun to do some work which was not contained in her job description. She challenged his right to ask her to do this task, and the aggressive manner in which he then spoke to Miss Luchoomun easily amounted to sexual harassment. Miss Luchoomun, understandably upset,
decided that she was no longer willing to accept this kind of treatment (that Mr. Gobin was infamous for). Mr. Gobin expected everyone, and especially female staff, to engage with him in a very obsequious and over-respectful way, even if he were to verbally abuse his interlocutor. Miss Luchoomun, for whatever reason, did not, on this occasion, accede to this unspoken rule, and challenged Mr. Gobin on his behaviour and hectoring verbal tone. A row blew up between the two very rapidly, and their enraged engagement was heard by many others in the open-plan office where they worked.183

Following her run-in with Mr. Gobin, Miss Luchoomun canvassed some opinions from sympathetic male staff, and others, as to what her next course of action should be. Having discussed the matter she almost immediately contacted the local Police post who quickly sent a couple of officers to the office complex and delivered a stern verbal caution to the harasser, to his ultimate embarrassment. At the same time, Miss Luchoomun, with some assistance from others, wrote to the Minister for Women (who had recently declared her willingness and determination to raise the profile and power of women in Mauritian society and advertised her openness to assist women who were being discriminated against (or worse)). Severely embarrassed and surprised by Miss. Luchoomun’s actions, Mr. Gobin attempted to confuse matters by consulting a solicitor and announcing that he intended suing Miss. Luchoomun for making false and damaging accusations, and bragged that he would serve writs on everyone in the office complex so that they would all have to be witnesses in Court.184

Commentary

Miss Luchoomun, by adopting secular185 techniques to respond to verbal abuse amounting to sexual harassment, won, and in the context of the workplace she has famously triumphed, because she stood up to a hectoring and unpleasant individual to whom others have simply kow-towed.186 Miss Luchoomun is a much more junior member of staff than Mr. Gobin, but in contacting the local Police and with it

183 As in Britain, this is not the kind of behaviour which is expected in the workplace; colleagues are expected to value one another and treat them as equals.
184 To date, however, the case brought by the (alleged) harasser has not materialised, and is not expected to.
185 I.e. by not using ethnic, religious or cultural contacts/strategies.
186 Note that I was told that if the woman was married there would have been a very different outcome, because her husband would have entered the work place and taken a very direct revenge on the harasser.
being known that she had written to the Ministry of Women, a relatively lowly employee has ensured that her grievance is indubitably - because publicly - resolved. Rather than attempting to contact, say, members of the Government who are of the same ethnic/caste group as herself (which she could easily have done via colleagues at work), she took matters into her own hands, and found a solution through entirely secular means.

Mr. Gobin, meanwhile, is left wallowing incompetently in the wake of this strategy, reduced to bluster about writs when he has been humiliated by receiving a Police caution in his own office in front of, or within earshot of, his friends. The fact of the matter is that Miss. Luchoomun has played a strategy which it is impossible for Mr. Gobin to counter: he cannot, in turn, call in the Police and complain about Miss Luchoomun, and drawing on any of his ethnic or caste contacts would be pointless because it is rather widely known that he is a somewhat unpleasant person, and any contacts would not be able to do anything about the fact that he had already received an official Police caution (no small matter).

This instance is perhaps indicative of some of the changes which have taken place in Mauritian society over the last decade, and more. Here, for example, a single woman uses non-ethnic, wholly secular channels to reach her goal. Miss Luchoomun pulls on the positive benefits to women that modernisation has brought (the opportunity of education, a career, proffered support from the Ministry of Women). However, she needed to be brave to select the route which she did, but the reward has been that all of her colleagues are impressed by her actions and know, because most of them witnessed the initial event and have previously experienced Mr. Gobin and his ways, that she was in the right. This is a fascinating ethnographic moment where a divide between an older, wholly male-dominated generation in the workplace (which demands respect even though personal behaviour undermines legitimate claims for it (e.g. Mr. Gobin)) and the younger (more equitable) generation (where there are single women prepared to stand up to machismo and bluster) is starkly illuminated.

187 By this I do not intend it to be understood that, therefore, those antecedent ethnographies which this Thesis is arguing against used to be correct and only as a result of socio-economic change has their analytical and insightful currency is devalued. It could easily be that people in the past would have employed secular means to achieve ends as well; in fact some of my informants (mentioned elsewhere in this Thesis) claimed that it was in the past, especially under British rule, that ethnic and caste ties were less important than today. In those times, presumably, it could be putatively suggested that the secular redress of grievance was the norm.

188 It is from such instances that I draw my belief that the future for Mauritius is rosy: adaptation to more egalitarian processes and structures will take place. Thus it is that I find myself passionately railing against previous ethnographies of Mauritius which, although painting it as a much simpler society than it actually is, do not focus on the abilities of individuals (even relatively, on the face of it, powerless ones) to decide their own futures. I am reminded of a citation from Collett which I drew
Instance 4: Individual ethnicity as less important than personal qualities.

A poet from Mauritius casts a wholly different light on ethnicity for the analyst when he writes of the death, in 1996, of one of the country's most popular political figures, Sir Gaetan Duval - a man of mixed race, electorally popular with Creoles and others:

More than the Creole hero that he was;
More than the lawyer, leader, lover and liver of life;
More: he gave hope and inspiration to those who turned
To him. And more than that besides

(Gautier in Butlin 1997: 79).

The following discourse, which represents many Mauritians' opinion of Duval, is taken from notes of an interview I conducted with a Civil Servant. Having been introduced to him by some mutual friends, I was invited to meet with him at his office, and over time I had become very friendly with him, and we often at some length during his lunch breaks. He was rather unhappy in his present job. He had been a high-ranking employee at a Ministry in Port Louis, but was now out of favour and found himself dumped in a small office far from the centre of power. Trained as a teacher, and still working in the evenings as a private tutor, we often spoke about education and knowledge [see footnote at the end of the forthcoming extract from my fieldnotes]. Over one of our lunchtime chats, he told me the following:

There was a lawyer, Gaetan Duval, and people like labourers would come and see him and say, we have a problem, and explain it all, but we don't have any money to pay you. He would read the details and say 'but this other man is guilty' - and said 'you must fight this case, because you will win', and did the case, and won. And then the labourers would kiss him, like this, and still they wouldn't have any money, so Gaetan would give them 50 rupees. When he died, thousands of people came. The gates of the cemetery are shut at 6p.m. for the common man, for Gaetan, they stayed open. He was cremated at 8 - even when he was dead, he still broke the rules. Now, when you drive past the cemetery at St. Jean, you will see the PMSD flags flying over his tomb, just like it is his office!

One day, as he was leaving the office in the morning, his secretary said, 'hold on, I haven't got any money'. Gaetan said, 'don't worry about that, we don't need money'. He set off down the street and saw some lovely apples on a fruit-seller's stall. He turned to his secretary and said 'ou ena çaisse are ou? - do you have any money with you - And the secretary said, 'No, you stopped me going back for some'. 'No problem,' said Gaetan. He went up to the fruit seller and said 'do you know who I am?' and the

upon earlier: [post-colonialism is] 'about becoming self-determining. In terms of both community and self, post-colonialism is about choosing, selecting - deliberately, consciously examining the past, the present and deciding a course for the future. [...] Post-colonialism is about creating and asserting identity at the same time that it seeks to undermine the generality of stereotype - most often the stereotype nurtured by colonialism' (1997:19).

189 He was the leader of the right of centre Parti Mauricien Social Democratique (PMSD).
190 There is no sense of implied threat here. The question was posed because literally everyone would trust Sir Gaetan to come back and repay his debt. It is not a case of someone pulling rank on a lowly market trader, I believe that such behaviour would backfire in a very major way in Mauritius.
fruit-seller said - [reverential tone] 'Sir Gaetan', and Gaetan said 'I left the office without any money, but I like the look of those sweet apples, could I have a kg?' "Take ten kg" said the fruit seller. Anyway, the fruit-seller weighed out a kg or two. Later, when Gaetan was going home, he paid the man his money.\(^{191}\)

Duval was a political leader, not least of the Creole community, who was not white (being of mixed race), but is said to have incarnated certain Mauritian values. Thus Duval's ethnicity was, and is, not really an issue; the fact that he was an excellent lawyer, a flamboyant playboy, an honourable politician and a generous man who, for example, was active in his local community and that he would lend his generator to ensure that a Tamil wedding could take place after a cyclone, was far more important. Indeed, when people did speak of Duval, and his political legacy is considerable so he is frequently mentioned both by politicians and others, his ethnicity is very rarely mentioned, but his political prowess, generosity and legal abilities are focused upon and praised.

**Commentary**

Duval was, then, an example of someone whose ethnicity was known and recognised, but who was known and recognised (publicly acclaimed) for something else; i.e. his good works in the local and wider community. Duval is and was spoken of as an 'ideal' figure in public life. Indeed, his legacy was such that at his funeral, and at the annual memorial services which have followed his death, few politicians, of any party, can afford to be absent. There is an almost sacerdotal power of association with the name of Duval. That Duval was a generous, good and honest man and politician was more significant and worthy of comment than, for example, that he was ethnically of mixed race, by sexual orientation bisexual and a known drug-user.\(^{192}\) In fact, I never heard a Mauritian mention any of the last three facets of Duval's biography.\(^{193}\) Indeed, Mauritians do not seem to talk about race, colour, religion, ethnicity, or caste as much as one might expect. This is one of the key problems with those ethnographies that have already been published; they make Mauritius appear as though the island is - and has always been - a seething

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191 He also added that not sharing knowledge [like Duval doing his free legal work] is like a tree that is covered with fruit, but all the fruit are rotten, eaten by insects. In the same way, he continued, I should pass on the knowledge that I have come to learn of Mauritius to my students in the future - it is the teacher's duty to pass on knowledge.

192 Again, three facets which might otherwise be expected to undermine an individual's claims to leadership.
tinderbox of competing ethnicities, castes and races. I hope that this Thesis is presenting a more sober, and therefore realistic, picture.

Progressively, as Raman puts it, the politics of the late Sir Gaetan Duval was aimed at 'the young people of the island, and he was educating them to get rid of the communal ideas and attitudes fostered on them by their parents, and to think politically as Mauritians' (1991: 295), rather than as, say, Hindus and/or Brahmins. Eriksen takes a different approach and suggests that 'it is evident that agents genuinely believe that members of their own ethnic categories (or related ones) serve their interests better than others' (1992: 20). I take issue with this, on two counts. Firstly, as the reader will already have found in this Thesis, some people do indeed state that they believe that members of their own ethnic/religious/caste groups 'serve their interests better than others'. However, it would be both wrong and misleading to build from these individual comments general rules, because there are as many voices in this Thesis alone which contradict such beliefs. Secondly, I believe that the situation may be more complex than Eriksen has allowed for. Perhaps, for instance, many Mauritians vote for parties because they thought that the leader or the party as a whole was (simply) the best available. Eriksen also claims that 'blacks', amongst other people of colour, vote for the white politician Paul Bérenger because they 'generally acknowledge whites as their legitimate leaders' (Ibid). However, I believe that this conclusion is far from justified on the basis of my researches. In my experience, younger Mauritians have voted for Bérenger and his party (the Mouvement Militant Mauricien) because they liked and trusted him. Some older people, in contrast, told me that they would not vote for him because he was a Franco-Mauritian - which jars with Eriksen's perspective. People can be more than their ethnicity, a reality that Eriksen sometimes seems disinclined to consider. In 1992 he wrote that '[i]f my greengrocer happens to be an immigrant from Pakistan, a series of inter-ethnic situations is bound to occur during our brief, sporadic interaction' (1992: 15, emphasis added); consequently, social relations between any two individuals of differing ethnic heritage are bound to be replete with 'inter-ethnic situations'.

193 Source of these details = Lonely Planet, Mauritius, Réunion and Seychelles, 1993. I should add that Mauritians are not slow to mention people's character defects and salacious behaviour if and when an individual is discredited in their job (e.g. the present Prime Minister).

194 In 1992 he wrote that '[i]f my greengrocer happens to be an immigrant from Pakistan, a series of inter-ethnic situations is bound to occur during our brief, sporadic interaction' (1992: 15, emphasis added); consequently, social relations between any two individuals of differing ethnic heritage are bound to be replete with 'inter-ethnic situations'.
Instance 5: where ethnicity has no role

I want to present two further cases where ethnicity, in very specific instances, has no place at all, in the analysis of social action:

1. Dev told me about the power of contacts: ‘My friend beat someone up, and he left this man bleeding. A Police report was made, and my friend gave a statement. I passed by the Police station later that day and asked the Superintending Officer if he could have that page taken out, and a new statement introduced. Because I know this Officer, because I have helped his children, this was done - and in the end, the fellow who got beaten had to spend a week in jail.’

2. During the school holidays, both Raj and his wife had to go to work. Because, on one rare occasion, Raj’s parents - who lived with them - had gone abroad, there was no-one available to look after the two children when their parents went out to work. Raj and his wife decided that they should get a Sick Note, for her, from a doctor, which would enable her to get more time off from her government job. On the way home from work one afternoon, Raj visited a doctor, who was a friend-of-a-friend, introduced himself and requested a Sick Note from him. The Doctor drew up the Sick Note for Raj’s wife which stated that she needed two weeks leave. Raj had brought four hundred rupees to pay the Doctor, but the doctor simply declared that ‘now we are friends’, and refused any payment.

Commentary

These two cases demonstrate that even when it comes to very significant actions, ethnicity need not be the means by which individuals manipulate their futures, help their friends and aid their families. In these two cases, the contacts which Dev and Raj had established were entirely grounded in amity. Because Dev had helped the Police officer’s children with their work, the latter was able to help him out when he needed, in turn, to do what he could to aid a friend. In the second case, Raj came to know that the Doctor would supply him and his wife with the Sick Note that they required if he told the Doctor that they had a mutual friend. These are contacts which lead to corrupt practices occurring which benefit those with powerful friends: but these are not contacts which are rooted, other than by chance, in ethnicity or caste. Hence, neither are means by which the analyst can come to

195 I should note that this is far from being an usual occurrence, in my experience.
understand them; analysis must rest with the acceptance that action can be grounded in friendship, rather than through ordered, segmentary ethnic actions. It should also be observed that this therefore makes impossible the governmentalist discourses of ‘Unity in Diversity’ in making people who are divided one from another cohere. Further, any attempts by the state to grub out corruption is revealed to be considerably more difficult, because a simple investigation into communalist (ethnic, caste, religious) based corruption would fail to reveal such instances as these. Again, I invite the reader to consider these instances against the background of my ethnographic peers who have intimated that it is ethnic, and other, divisions which lie at the heart of Mauritian society. I am currently demonstrating that ethnic divisions are by no means the limit of the ethnographic picture; there are several other fields of interpretation possible. Later I will begin to demonstrate that there are notable unities which transcend presumed division. For now, I would like to point out that the importance of connections is something which, arguably, cuts across ethnic, and other, groupings.

Instance 6: Caste in Marriage and Politics

That I have collected the information that I have on caste seems to justify my distinctive fieldwork approach. Simmons, for example, argued that ‘caste is an extremely sensitive subject in Mauritius, and a non-Indian, non-Mauritian finds it virtually impossible to obtain information’ (1982: 45). In contrast, I did not find this to be the case; indeed, among those individuals whom I came to know well, caste was openly discussed. However, in more public discourse, the terms ‘ethnicity’ or ‘community’ are also employed as a disguised means of talking about caste. Caste, in fact, is not much spoken about in public, although that people are aware of it is indicated by, for example, contextually employed gestures by which people of high(er) caste might indicate that someone they are talking to, or about, is of lower or higher caste. The historian, and author of several works on the history of indentured Indian Labourers in Mauritius, Marina Carter told me that many people talk about caste in the third person, but ‘when asked about them they will say that they have forgotten and that there is no caste in Mauritius’. I did not find this to be

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196 This being the holding up a hand with all fingers clenched except the little finger. Somewhat confusingly, on another occasion the same sign was made to indicate that someone was going off to urinate. So, when I was asked ‘do you know what this means?’, and I said ‘yes’ - I was furiously trying to work out why the ‘low caste’ sign had been made completely out-of-context! The high caste sign is with the thumb instead of the little finger.
the case either. Many people were very keen to mention both their own and other peoples' caste and, in fact, nobody told me that there was no caste in Mauritius, although people did make the qualification that there weren't the huge divisions of caste that one finds in India (i.e. with 'Untouchables', etc.).197 Writing as far back as 1965, the anthropologist Benedict recognised that caste was far less pervasive and divisive in Mauritius than in India.

Castes are not corporate groups in Mauritius. There are no caste panchayats or councils, such as are found in India. Caste has no relevance to occupation except in the field of ritual where among Sanatanis the priests are Brahmins. [...] Caste persists chiefly as an endogamous category, particularly among Northern Hindus (1965: 37).

However, Benedict goes too far when he states that caste 'has no relevance to occupation'. I argue that caste CAN BE relevant and important in occupation, politics, and is still fairly prevalent in marriage.198 The following sections detail cases of the social enactment of caste in present-day Mauritius.

(a) Lower caste marriage into a Brahmin (higher caste) family

One of the core issues with which previous ethnographies, universally, do not deal is the fact that societies are always in a state of change: that is the normal phase of social process, stasis is abnormal (if not impossible - outside of text). Banks reminds us that Barth tried to introduce notions of fluidity and change into his conceptualisation of the ethnic group:

Above all, Barth tried to show that ethnic groups are socially constructed (subject to environmental constraints) and that the content of the group - in terms of both 'culture' and personnel - has no a priori existence or stability. That is to say, it is not so much the group which endures as the idea of the group. Moreover, he claimed that the physical and ideological contents of the group should not be investigated in isolation - this would give a misleading impression and tend to confirm notions of stability and internal, bounded coherence. Instead, attention should be focused on the boundaries of the group (1996: 12).

This conceptualisation of ethnicity is also applicable to caste in Mauritius. It is well known in Mauritius that a significant number of Hindus seek to change their caste (what Royce labels as 'passing' (1982: 6)).199 They might do this by, for instance, marrying into the family of a higher caste and then simply behaving as if they were members of that caste. Thus an orthodox Brahmin family - that of Dev (cf. Chapter 2) - which I knew well had had a member of the (next lower) Vaish caste marry in.

197 Note my earlier condemnation of Mukonoweshuro's (1991) error in stating that there are 'untouchables' in Mauritius.
198 An interesting way of heading off criticism of endo-caste marriages is to cite the examples of how many people of different social classes get married in the West.
199 This has historical validity. Researchers who have analysed the records of indentured labourers both before and after they arrived in Mauritius found that many people 'changed caste' during their voyage. Royce states that 'passing' is undertaken 'when individuals or groups who feel that they are in an inferior position seek to improve their situation' (Ibid)
Although at some moments individual relatives of the brother-in-law, of the Vaish caste, would be, said a close friend, regarded as being 'one of the family'; and included in family events (e.g. children's birthday parties; attendance at a pilgrimage or pooja,\textsuperscript{200} gossip and so on), in other situations, where the brother-in-law and his spouse and children were absent, he and his side of the family were derided for being non-Brahmin. There were also certain (unspecified to me) things which could only be comfortably discussed in a group comprised solely of Brahmins. Consequently, the brother-in-law and his family were excluded from some religious events and social moments.\textsuperscript{201} As my friend noted:

Dev: We had a pooja at the house yesterday, when some people came to read the Ramayana, [...] and they started at 9 in the morning and carried on until 11 o'clock at night on Sunday, for 24 hours. They sang the Ramayanas and explained it to you. The Brahmins are a minorité here. They all know each other, in fact [conspiratorially] they are all related to each other. When we meet, like last night, we were all Brahmins, and we can talk whatever we like on whatever subject and [lowering voice, speaking out of corner of mouth] it is only my wife's sister who has married out to a non-Brahmin, so we cannot talk in the same way.

Mils: That changes things.

Dev: Yes, that changes things.

Here, then, Dev claims that all Brahmins in Mauritius belong to one family, but the picture is further complexified by the fact that sometimes the brother-in-law was criticised not for being a non-Brahmin, but rather for being an unpleasant human being. For instance, the Brahmin side of the family suggested that he beat his wife and children. Clearly, ethnicity (caste) was not an appropriate way to condemn this kind of behaviour and so it retreated (from, if you will, Goffman's 'foreground' (1971b)), to be replaced by arguments based on the understanding that this kind of thing 'was not on', and that marital disagreements are not conducted through physical violence no matter what caste or ethnic group one is a member of.

**Commentary**

Caste, class and ethnicity are ways in which anthropologists conventionally analyse societies such as Mauritius' where there are substantial numbers of Indian diaspora. Cohn's study of British policy in India reveals that it was felt that 'caste and religion were the sociological keys to understanding the Indian people'. He continues, 'the conquest of India was a conquest of knowledge ... The vast social world that was India had to be classified, categorised and bounded before it could be hierarchized'

\textsuperscript{200} Hindu prayer.

\textsuperscript{201} I should add that I was told things which the brother-in-law couldn't be told; this may give an indication to the reader of the level of acceptance that I achieved in this particular family.
(in Thomas 1994: 38-39). It was, of course, the same with Mauritius. Caste and ethnicity have also been alleged to correlate with what we might describe as social class (wealth) and typically so in post-colonial societies (cf. Kenya and the dominance of the Kikuyu). Mauritius, however, seems to confound these suppositions. For example, relating back to the Vaish marriage into a Brahmin family detailed above, the Brahmins who met up for the pooja are relatively poor, whereas in other areas of the world their high ritual status remains commensurate with high economic status. In Mauritius, many Brahmins seem to have adequate connections to politicians and others so that they can, for example, arrange for a child to be admitted to one of the best schools in the area, although they do not have much disposable income or property. This was not the situation one generation back, where the father of my informant had been very wealthy, but was swindled out of a great deal of land and so now times were relatively hard for his children. The Vaish individual who had married into this family, on the other hand, was related to a fairly wealthy family with members in both government and opposition, as well as the judiciary, utilities and so on. However, the connectedness of the Vaish man was not relevant to the Brahmin side of the family. Disjunctions between wealth, social class, even political patronage did not invalidate the reflexively superior position of Brahmins. By this I mean that although the Brahmin side of the family lacked correlative wealth, they did not feel inferior to, nor threatened by, the richer Vaish they were now related to. Dev would make statements such as that ‘we were born naked and we will die naked’, consequently it doesn’t matter how much material wealth is accumulated on earth, because ‘you cannot take it with you’. In contrast, being a Brahmin is not something which can be bought. My friend accused his Vaish brother-in-law of wanting to become a Brahmin because he had married into a Brahmin family; held elaborate pooja prayer ceremonies and so on: but the Vaish could never become Brahmin no matter how hard he tried, nor how rich his relatives.

(b) Politics

Members of the Vaish caste are the most numerous in Mauritius, and consequently politicians try to woo as many members of the Vaish caste as possible, something akin to the necessity of contemporary British governments to harness the votes of the ‘Middle England’ constituency. As a result, Ministers or M.P.’s from the Vaish
caste or who are reliant upon this caste's votes in their constituency, try to ensure their political survival by allocating jobs to individuals from this caste in the civil service, a pattern which probably happens in some of the private sector as well. Brahmins do not have much political power because they are in a substantial minority and hence have nothing, as it were, to deliver to politicians. Some Brahmin families maintain some power (e.g. as heads of institutions and parastatal bodies in the educational sector) because their parents were instrumental in the gaining of Mauritius' independence. As Uttam (an informant) explained to me:

the politicians need the [votes of the] lower castes, because they are more numerous, and thus it is impossible for the high caste people to maintain their position solely on the basis of their caste identity. In my election ward, there were two candidates of low caste because no-one [of the Hindus who were in the majority in this rural village] would vote for a high caste candidate'.

Consequently, Brahmins are unable to rely on any vestigial, traditional claims to authority and if they wish to be prominent in political life, they now need to appeal to the masses like any other politician. However, some Hindu informants stated that they would vote for a Hindu of any caste in preference to a Muslim.

Commentary

Realistically, politicians have to be pragmatic and recognise that, in order to assure their electoral success, they must appeal to the majority in their constituency. If there is an issue which brings the majority together, then the prospective M.P. must aim to take advantage of that issue and use it to gain power. The same logic applies to the recognition that if one's constituency are mainly - or significantly - comprised of one caste (or class), then it is to the members of that caste (class) that one must hedge one's electoral appeal. This is not really a case of 'communalism' being present in Mauritian politics, rather a realisation that democratic politics is a numbers game and a simple majority has to be gained. There are, I acknowledge, some instances where an ethnic interpretation of party politics is appropriate, and that would be the case where an informant declared that they would always vote for the only Hindu on an electoral ticket, even if the Hindu was representing a party which the informant did not habitually vote for.

It could be argued that the social structure of Hindu Mauritians which has developed is an inversion of that which we might expect to find in India. Hence, the conventional notion of the caste system, where we find the Brahmins at the peak of the pyramid (being by definition the least numerical of all castes) and the other castes arranged in every more substantial numbers as one descended the pyramid,
may be seen as having been inverted. In Mauritius, then, some of those politicians that have the most power come from the most numerous caste (the Vaish), whilst the Brahmins only remain in control of certain institutions of the Civil Service as a result of their parents having been crucial to the development of Mauritius just before and after Independence. Hence Dev now declares that Brahmins are 'second-class citizens', and added 'we are oppressed - especially if one is high caste. I am not saying that all Brahmins are clever, some are bastards, but in the past they were all Heads of Department'. During the time of indentured labour, it has been suggested that

high-caste Hindus were often selected to be sirdars [overseers] simply because they could more easily discipline the gangs. Since it was the sirdars who acquired money to buy land, this advantage served the interests of the high-caste Indians (Simmons 1982: 45-6).

As Mauritius has developed, and private ownership of land spread outwith the control of sirdars, and their descendants, so the authority of the Brahmins has been diminished.

In concluding this section, I think that a phrase used by one of my friends best sums up the situation of caste in Mauritius: that it 'does and doesn’t exist'. Like ethnicity, it is significant for some of those individuals that I met on some occasions, and not at all relevant on others (i.e. the majority of the time). There are inter-caste marriages, the majority of them uneventful but some of which remain the subject of debate and discussion amongst the family. In the first case (above), the authority and homogeneity of the family that the Brahmins assumed would be immutable is challenged by the marrying-in of a Vaish, who is keen to establish his credentials as a person who is just as religiously observant as someone who is born a Brahmin (holding elaborate prayers, etc.). This change has occasioned some controversy within Dev's family, and there are also some suggestions that the brother-in-law is violent towards both his wife and their two children. This latter behaviour, though, is not adjudged by the application of criticism based in the fact that the brother-in-law is not a Brahmin. Rather, his behaviour is wrong per se: no matter what his caste or ethnic affiliation or that he comes from a wealthy family.
Chapter Conclusion

I began this chapter with a quotation taken from Royce, indicating that I wanted to look at ethnicity in ways which are meaningful to those who employ it (1982: 1). All of the ethnographic instances that I have introduced and commented upon contrast starkly with analyses which attempt to reduce Mauritian politics, at either the national, work-place and wider social level, as being predictably located in ethnicity. The reader will by now surely be aware that there is very little about the operations of ethnicity and caste in Mauritius which is predictable or able to be simply rendered (cf. all previous ethnographies of Mauritius).

There are moments, which I have described, where the conclusions of the Mauritian anthropologist Nirsimloo-Anenden that ethnicity plays a role both as 'a resource and as a tool' (1990: 1) are borne out, but equally there are other, contesting, moments where ethnicity is drawn upon, as a resource and tool, alongside secular strategies, or there are those moments where the latter wholly replace the former. Nirsimloo-Anenden is rehearsing, again, the notion of ethnicity as somehow superordinate, following the trail blazed by Barth et al. in general theoretical terms, and in relation to Mauritius, those conclusions of Eriksen et al. Later, to reuse a citation cited on page 92, Nirsimloo-Anenden adds that the more she studied ethnic identity

the more one felt that the nature of the study was more archaeological than anthropological - the patient brushing of surface-layers to reveal hidden ones, underneath which were yet further layers of meaning systems and symbols (Ibid: 4).

Although I would disagree with Nirsimloo-Anenden on her assertion that ethnicity is somehow 'deep', deep-rooted or mysteriously inherent in all social interactions (hints here, again, of Beattie's caution that if one looks too hard, one is in danger of finding what one is looking for), I have a second angle of critique as well. In her recent (1997) book The Archaeology of Ethnicity, Siân Jones casts some doubt on the hitherto presumed transparent operations of archaeologist's investigation of ethnicity. I share Jones' concern with the problematics involved in what she describes as the 'construction' of cultures through archaeological theorising, and would suggest that this is what Nirsimloo-Anenden does here. In thinking in terms of brushing away layers to reveal hidden structures, at these 'deeper' levels, I suggest that Nirsimloo-Anenden creates, like those that Jones critiques, a certain idea of what ethnicity is in Mauritius, and this may well not have very much relevance to interactions of Mauritians as I have witnessed them.

In contrast to Nirsimloo-Anenden's approach, my focus on individuals reveals more contextually grounded, pragmatic and realistic (non-)operations of
ethnicity. If one were to have unquestioningly adopted the statements of antecedent ethnographers and the discourses of governmentality (that Mauritius is comprised of ethnic groups), then one would, understandably, be both unable and unwilling to consider the possibility of the existence of situations where either a blend of ethnic and non-ethnic strategies may be employed, or where the former may be wholly absent. This is a reminder of my earlier (Chapter 1) caution that the parameters of study are set in advance of fieldwork, and the adoption of previous analytical frameworks can blind one to the existence of other positions from which to view the social world.

Whereas other researchers have found Mauritians to be reticent about discussing ethnicity and caste, I found them extremely open to conversing about them. My informants were equally open when it came to revealing the ways that they achieved their ambitions, and in detailing changes or adaptations that they had made in their ethnic, or other, practices. I found that, by the completion of my time in Mauritius, my conclusions about ethnicity in Mauritius were far more complex than how the 'local' anthropologist would put it:

[1] began to see the extent and complexity of its [ethnicity's] ramifications, its all-pervasive nature; its secrecy, and, paradoxically, its fairly visible presence. [However ...] The sheer elasticity of one of the most important phenomena of the society, one that took with disconcerting rapidity, a different face, and a strange substance (Nirsimloo-Anenden 1992: 3).

Ethnicity for Nirsimloo-Anenden is both everywhere (visible) and nowhere (invisible) all at the same time, which rather confirms Cohen's scepticism that 'it may be that 'ethnicity' is so vague, and so variously used a term that its definition can only be stipulative and arguments against its definition only sterile' (1985: 107). I believe that I have 'bitten the bullet' rather more firmly than any previous ethnographers of Mauritius: I have acknowledged the 'sometimes' presence of ethnicity as a resource and tool in social interaction (in this chapter) and as a way of articulating divisive us and them statements\(^2\) (Chapter 2), and I have also pointed out the vital importance of not assuming that ethnicity is always employed, and hence analytically justifiable; and argument that could be summed up as 'sometimes yes, sometimes no'.

I follow the example of Banton who - although accepting that, in his case, Malaya is a socio-culturally heterogeneous society, comprised of many different ethnic groups - claimed that whilst the residents of pluri-cultural Petalingjaya went shopping, they did not theorise about the various groups of Malaya (cf. Billig 1997: 63). Unlike Banton and myself, however (but like Eriksen and others), Kim is keen to emphasise the assumption of problematics in interactions between individuals
who happen to be ‘ethnically’ different (but who may, she neglects to note, be best friends, relatives, political allies, and so on):

What is notable about the experience of intercultural (as compared to intracultural) interaction and communication experiences is [that] they are inherently challenging and stressful although in varying degrees (Kim, 1991). Communicating across cultural identity boundaries presents a multitude of difficulties, some of which may provoke one's taken-for-granted assumptions. Those who are seriously engaged in direct, face-to-face encounters with people of differing identities are likely to be challenged to change at least some of their internalized cultural assumptions and practices in thinking, feeling, and acting (Kim 1996: 355).

From my researches in Mauritius, I did not find that people necessarily (although they might sometimes) judge or speak to others on the basis of ethnic difference, as they did not necessarily use ethnicity in the strategic manipulations of their contacts. Further, I did not find that Mauritians behaved or said that they generally had ‘challenging’ or ‘stressful’ ‘interaction and communication experiences’ in ‘interethnic’ or ‘intercultural’ encounters. There were conversations about certain shopkeepers cutting corners by, for example, adding small stones to rice so that a measure weighed more but contained less rice. But the fact that, in this case, the shopkeepers in question were Chinese is perhaps not as significant as might at first be thought, simply because a large number of shopkeepers happen to be Sino-Mauritians. If one measures ‘significance’ in terms of the change of behaviour, there is no move away from patronising these shops, the discourse is more one against the sharp practice of capitalists who happen to be Chinese, than against Sino-Mauritians per se (see Hills 1998). On other occasions, as I discuss below, I heard Muslim and Hindu merchants just as vehemently condemned for the quality or price of their produce, or shopkeepers or hosts of another ethnic group praised for their goods or welcome.

This chapter has claimed, through illustration, that the use of ethnicity or caste cannot be expected a priori merely because the analyst accepts, commonsensically, that, at certain times, Mauritians define themselves ethnically, racially or in caste terms. This is an instance where the acceptance of a social fact at one moment, in one context, does not necessarily entail the predictability of social behaviour at another moment, in another context. I have highlighted the existence of other, non-ethnic, means by which individuals seek redress for their grievances or ensure that their, or their friends’, interests are assured. This chapter has further contributed to the slow, accumulative build-up towards the following revolutionary chapter, which reveals that unities and interconnections amongst Mauritians of differing ethnic (and other) identity are as worthy of investigation, and perhaps more emically relevant than divisions.

202 Ibid.
Mauritians are very conscious of problems related to ethnic differences. Their society is made up of groups originating from three continents and four major religions; there is no clear majority, and yet the Mauritian nation-state has hitherto avoided systematic inter-ethnic violence (the one notable exception to this being the series of minor riots around independence in 1967-8). Yet Mauritians are, regardless of ethnic membership, concerned to retain their ethnic distinctiveness. Rituals celebrating particular religions are widely attended.

Eriksen 1990: 58

we are all one family here, if my neighbour is a Muslim, or if he is a Christian or if he is a Hindu, it does not matter.

Begum.

It seems necessary ... in a discussion of ethnicity, to start from a theoretical position that regards some form of conflict as a normal or chronic condition in a pluralistic society.

De Vos 1975: 56.203

The feeling is of space and sociability, among a people greatly variegated. Has anywhere else on earth such racial harmony: where people celebrate and respect each other’s religious festivals, eat each other’s foods [...]? It gives the visitor a charge of optimism about what’s humanly possible.

Michael Gray.204

203 Cited in Royce 1982: 43.
204 Travel review article in The Sunday Times, no further details available.
Chapter 5
Transenn tou bann divisyon
Transcending all those divisions

A Definition of Terms:

By 'transcending' in this chapter, I understand individuals both being and achieving more than discourses of governmentality (previous ethnographies and state rhetorics of 'Unity in Diversity') have indicated. In a major way, individuals are transcending divisions which have been set up in the analyst's mind by previous research, underscoring the fact that I was and remain part of an ongoing ethnographic discursive arena, into which I am attempting to introduce revision. Transcendence here does not necessarily refer to an individual's conscious awareness that, for example, s/he was crossing boundaries between Christianity and Hinduism, instead it is a term which I deploy (explicitly and politically) against governmentality. It is the tool with which I again alter and refine the reader's conception of Mauritius' diversity.

The events, ethnographic moments and discourses presented in this chapter are selected because they deliver original insight into events which have hitherto been assessed as being restricted in terms of their membership. For instance, Eriksen records that

Mauritians are, regardless of ethnic membership, concerned to retain their ethnic distinctiveness. Rituals celebrating particular religions are widely attended, there is little intermarriage between groups (1992: 58).

Here Eriksen means that ethnic boundaries are maintained by the general attendance of members of each ethnic group attending their own rituals. My argument will be rather different to this; that there may not be anything ethnically (or, even, religiously) distinctive about certain religious rituals; that anyone is welcome and members of many different ethnic and religious groups do indeed attend.

I begin, however, with a more mundane setting: that of the Typing Pool in a major private sector corporation, and will go on to demonstrate that the relaxed attitude daily adopted towards ethnicity, race and religion in the Typing Pool is mirrored on less mundane, more ritualised, more religious/ethnic occasions.
Ethnographic Moment 1: The Typing Pool

Located in a modern, if ugly, building on the corner of a large industrial estate, is the corporation in which the Typing Pool is based (in the centre of Mauritius). This concrete office block, built on two storeys, deals with the various masses of paperwork generated by an adjacent factory. The Typing Pool is reached by entering through the office block's main entrance, passing the reception desk and its various guardians, and ascending to the upper storey by a central staircase. Turning left at the head of the stairs, with the management offices (their superiors) to the right, the Typing Pool lies at the end of the corridor.

The Typing Pool itself is basically a large square room, filled to capacity with tables covered with computers and other secretarial paraphernalia to the left, right and forward centre. High windows have blinds to keep the bright sunlight from glaring off of the computer screens. At the back of the room is a further set of tables pushed together where there are no computers. At the head of this set of tables sits the Head of the Typing Pool who assigns work to each individual typist. In front of her seat work three or four women who prepare material for word-processing, photocopying or filing. There are at least 30 computers and workers in the room. There is only one employee, at present, who is not a woman, although several men spend a lot of time during the day chatting or working with some of the typists.

Each typist has their own computer, and many people have personalised their little workspace. Several computers have small stickers or plastic figurines of Hindu gods or Christ attached to the base units and some of the computers have also had their screensavers personalised to show 'Om Shiva, Om Shanti' or 'There is no God but Allah ...', etc.. There is a broad range of ethnic (religious and racial) groups represented in the room: several forms of Hinduism and Islam and some Christians (Chinese, Creole, and Indo-Mauritians). Indeed, women from many different ethnic and religious backgrounds worked side-by-side and, as they worked, they conversed about developments in their lives, in that institution and elsewhere in the country and world. At lunch-times, groups of them would set off together, either to the Canteen or a little restaurant in a nearby village. Every so often they would organise lunches where each person, or group of friends, would bring along a dish and everyone would have a pleasant lunch-hour together. Some men were welcome, and I was fortunate enough to be among this number. The sense of permitted licence, which I want to bring attention to, meant that there could be jokes about
In this social situation, about someone being mad, about alleged affairs elsewhere in the institution, to pretend that they were involved in affairs, about sex and sexuality, about husbands, and it was even possible for one of the messengers and his girl-friend to hold hands in the Typing Pool.

The Typing Pool was a place where anyone could come and have fun, let off steam, joke and verbally play - as long as they subscribed to the rules of its occupants: and those that didn’t were left in no doubt that they weren’t welcome. If you visited the Typing Pool and gave some gifts (verbal or material), you were assured of a pleasant time - but if one were to have treated them as their senior staff did, the reception would have been distinctly frosty. The Typing Pool also represented a space where - as well as saying anything about caste, religion (jokes with Muslims about Islam), etc. - criticism of the management of the corporation was permitted. There was a substantial bifurcation between the workers and the managers. Managers and other superiors did not have over-cordial relations with non-managers, and some of them refused to sit and chat with secretarial staff either in the Common Room or at work parties. Indeed, they insisted on sitting together elsewhere, even if that meant that they were visually very marginalised. Consequently, the Typing Pool was a highly contrastive and safe arena where employees could get a kind of oral, cathartic revenge on their work-place superiors: because the managers never entered the Typing Pool.

Commentary

I want to use this example of a location where class, caste, religion, ethnicity, colour, gender, marital status and age are immaterial, to suggest that, after Shotter, a shared sense arises among a social group who already share a set of circumstances - and it is against the background of such feelings as these that any conceptualization of what we take our human nature to be can be judged for its adequacy (1993: xii-xivi).

All of the workers in the Typing Pool share a workplace set of circumstances, and so are also bound together by this common experience. However, the members of, and visitors to, the Typing Pool share more than the same workplace. There is a certain kind of ethos and sense of licence which pervades the Typing Pool. Although all of the individuals in the Typing Pool have their own beliefs (religious, ethnic and

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205 In the security that, as they were among friends, there was no chance of information leaking back to parents and others - which might have had disastrous consequences for the couple who had not
other), as one friend told me, 'we in the Typing Pool, we respect each other and never criticise anyone. We live and pray in our [own] way, but we do share our knowledge and compare our way of living and praying, but never criticise'. I suggest that just as I have previously discussed in relation to individuals who displayed a willingness to speak about a wide range of topics which one might imagine would not be spoken of by someone who was a strongly committed member of an ethnic/religious group (e.g. contraception), that the Typing Pool is likely to be representative of a broader set of social locations. The Typing Pool employees have decided not to fragment, so that all of the Hindu, Chinese, Creole, Muslim, Christians, men, women sit and socialise together. The Typing Pool, and other such social locations, are places where ethnicity, caste, religion, gender (and so on) are not problematic grounds of division, but rather are mere factors and facets of an individual's character which are not necessarily the most important or significant at all times, and certainly not in the workplace. This does not mean, however, that these Hindus, Chinese, Creoles, Muslims are de-ethnicised or de-religionised: indeed, as I have mentioned above, they still demonstrate their religious identity (with screensavers, icons, etc.). The Typing Pool is a functional and friendly social space where people who are clearly ethnically and religiously different cooperate and enjoy each others company (unlike the managers who choose to divide themselves from the staff of the Typing Pool). The members of the Typing Pool have not compromised anything in the way that governmentalist discourses such as 'Unity in Diversity' would demand, or that ethnographers such as Eriksen would argue. Everyone is permitted to differentiate themselves, but they are not necessarily divided.

This case study strongly supports my advocational ambition to prove that individuals are more than their group memberships, and sets the scene for the further disquisition of assumptions concerning social division in Mauritius. The Typing Pool may not be an 'oasis' of social licence but, rather, more of a norm than we might expect.\footnote{In earlier drafts of this Chapter, I described the Typing Pool as an 'oasis of licence'. However, I only meant this to refer to the fact that it was an oasis of licence vis-à-vis previous ethnographies, not vis-à-vis other social contexts and moments in Mauritius.}

Moving from an institutional-centred context where work- and amicable-relationships negate governmentality rooted in searching for division (ethnic, caste,
religious), in the next set of moments I will focus on individuals and individual ethnographic moments. These moments build up, from the first which features an individual who transcends divisions that the ethnographer might expect to find, and moves on to discuss larger social situations.

I should add that these individuals and instances are only singled out for attention for the purposes of my argumentation, and that there are many other people and events (on macro- and micro-social levels) where such transcending of academically-expected behaviour takes place as a mundane, quotidian practice. In fact, it is unfortunate that my writing elevates these moments into 'specialness', because they are really only part of most Mauritians' daily lives and not, being everyday, of great significance to them.

Ethnographic Moment 2. Jerome.

One Mauritian family that I came to know well provides a context where an individual transcends many divisions that the analyst might impose: i.e. of religion, ethnicity, race or gender.

The Edoo family are orthodox Brahmin Hindus, and consist of two brothers and three sisters (all in their thirties and forties) living together in a large house in a rural village. This is a fairly wealthy family; the father died over a year ago and he had clearly had considerable acumen in amassing money. None of the brothers or sisters exhibited much interest in marrying and leaving the family home. Both brothers worked, the elder (and eldest of the household) as a prison guard in the police force, and the younger brother as the commission-earning broker between, for example, the seller of a house or car and a purchaser. The eldest sister did not work outside of the home, although she did some piece-work sewing. She had been given only a brief period to live by a doctor some years ago. The next eldest sister worked in a Government Ministry in Port Louis, had recently passed her driving test and was the sibling thought the most likely to marry, although she was now in her late 30s. The youngest sister was also rumoured to be secretly interested in marriage but, again, did not seem to be that concerned.

207 Diagnosed with a large goitre, I was told. In the year preceding my arrival, she had only eaten 4 meals in total, apparently, and survived on coffee and biscuits. The family now had little faith in doctors, and revelled in telling stories about people condemned by doctors as being terminally ill who are still alive and kicking.

208 Rather old for first marriage.

209 I was, confidentially, told that the sisters themselves attributed their lack of luck in the marriage stakes to be down to witchcraft performed by their neighbour's wife (also a relative).
During my time in Mauritius, an extension was added to this house, providing a shelter for a car-port on the ground floor and several new rooms and a balcony above. It was in connection with this construction that I came to meet someone that I wish to label as a transcendent individual: Jerome.210

Jerome was a Creole man (i.e. of Mro-Malagasy descent). The men of the Edoo family spoke in high praise of him because he was, as they put it, 'a jack of all trades'. He could turn his hand, with stunning proficiency, from making wooden furniture (elaborately decorated tables and chairs), to plumbing, electrics, constructing with concrete, tiling and some first aid.211 A strong and well-built man, but of few words, Jerome was more than just a builder and handy-man. Indeed, he was more than a friend to the family, as a close relative of the family declared: 'Even though he is a Creole, he is one of us'. The women liked him because he, living alone, did things which they wished their brothers could do (i.e. cook food and do washing-up). To the rest of the family, Jerome was an undemanding individual, quite happy to sit, listen to and watch what everyone else was doing and yet when, as it were, he spoke through his actions (making the table and set of chairs), everyone was impressed, and as a craftsman/builder Jerome was much in demand. He always had several jobs running at once, and would spend a few days per week working at them in different parts of the island. It was recognised that he was being a bit cavalier in the ways in which he would string out work to last as long as possible, and that if it rained he would be unlikely to work - but when he did, the work was of top quality.

Jerome, I want to suggest - following both intuition and observation - was indeed more than a friend to the family; he was certainly more than a (mere) worker, involved in a cash, client-based relationship. He was practically one of the family. There was a lack of boundary between the sisters' treatment of their brothers and of him - although they may well have preferred Jerome's quiet and undemanding nature. They enjoyed it when, having drunk some beer (which he was not in the habit of doing), he dropped his glass and with some shame covered his face with his hands, and they enjoyed his embarrassment. There was no recrimination or condemnation, nor simple (almost surly) and dutiful clearing up, as would be the case if one of their brothers had dropped a glass. The moment was

210 See my cautionary definition of 'transcendent' at the beginning of this Chapter.
211 Involving either herbs or ingredients derived from a car engine.
to be savoured and re-lived with relish at later dates. Jerome was more than a guest, because his treatment contrasted with their treatment of me.\textsuperscript{212}

He was also admired by all because, although he was a Christian, he fasted for all of the major Hindu festivals. He had also accompanied family parties walking to major Hindu pilgrimage sites (e.g. Maha Shivaratri, see below). He was always present for family religious events as well, such as the prayer (\textit{pooja}) held to mark the official end to the mourning period for his friends' late father. There was one particular occasion which usefully points out Jerome's transcendent ability (and of the abilities of individuals in general to step outside of their ostensibly fixed ethnic identities), and this is in stark contrast to the usual things that Hindu, and other Mauritians, say about Creole people, especially men.\textsuperscript{213}

In mid 1997, Jerome organised the final touches to be applied to the roof of the extension. This required the active participation of the youngest brother and a large-ish group of men (friends and family) from the village.\textsuperscript{214} In exchange for food and drink (and reciprocal assistance for their houses in the future), they all joined Jerome on the roof and, as he directed procedures, mixed concrete and then added it to the existing structures, held in place by shuttering, to build up side walls and to finish a slanted roof. There was no mistaking the fact that Jerome was in charge, and that he worked hardest and longest. There was an accepting and non-grudging deferral of authority to Jerome - he was recognised as an expert and his ethnicity/race/religion(s) were therefore irrelevant. He knew what to do properly and everyone knew that.

\textsuperscript{212} Although that changed throughout the year as well - as I became more proficient with Mauritian Kreol - the two sisters who did not work outside of the home and the younger brother were practically monoglot Kreol speakers; the elder brother was almost incomprehensible in any language: Kreol, French or English.

\textsuperscript{213} I.e. that they spend all of their money on drink (which Jerome did not do, although he certainly enjoyed his drink when he did have some, like all 'good' Mauritian men); that they are lazy (Jerome was, they thought, tolerably lazy - as any builder or employee is) and so on.

\textsuperscript{214} The constituency of the group was interesting as well, as it comprised both Hindus (caste(s) unknown) and several Muslim men, with their distinctive furry, black and white 'fez' style hats.
Commentary

Whilst the focus here has been on the activities of an individual who transcended several sorts of boundaries, it has also been demonstrated that Jerome’s activities would not have been possible if, for example, Hindu prayer ceremonies were not open to all, or if the Edoo’s neighbours refused to acknowledge the possibility of a Creole man knowing more about building (for example) than they did. Consequently, a comment has been suggested on wider Mauritian values and flexibilities, elsewhere in this chapter I shall comment on the degree to which this wider coherence of values can be analytically explained.

Jerome is valued, and his friendship enjoyed, not just because he is a skilled craftsman, not just because his skills are in demand (which entails a suspension of ethnic and familial boundaries). No: there is a real admiration of Jerome’s personal qualities as well as his craft abilities. He was treated much as I came to be treated - as one of the family, as someone who would enjoy whatever food was provided, as someone who would be happy to accompany others to the local restaurant for snacks and rum, as someone who was included in intra-family - and even intra-
215 These are not the kind of images of ordinary, daily life that previous ethnographers have noted, nor governmentality taken account of. This is, in a very real way, a more perfect form of Multiculturalism than the trope of 'Unity in Diversity' and governmental policies can create. This is very much a grassroots form of Multiculturalism which does not involve, for example, the accommodation of one individual or group to the standards or values of another individual or group. I remind the reader of Moore's earlier note that:

In this case, there has been no 'accommodation' at all. Jerome is clearly someone whose mind is open to a syncretic form of religious observance; and the family are interested and supportive both of his attendance at Hindu religious events and his continuing adherence to Christianity.

215 There are certainly possibilities for discussing my role in several context in Mauritius as transcendent: I was transnational (not local), and hence could be told secret information about Mauritius because I was a reliable and discreet person who, not having political connections, could not do any damage if I did reveal these secret data. At other times I transcended my gender and age groups.
The second ethnographic moment that I wish to draw upon is that of *Cavadee*. This is a characteristic ritual of the Tamil community of Mauritius. The word ‘Cavadee’ is Tamil for ‘burden’ and refers both to the cumbersome decorated wooden structure that many participants carry from a meeting place to a Tamil temple (see plate 2, above), as well as to the rigours of the day itself (e.g. being pierced by long needles and hooks, not talking and carrying the cavadee on a circuitous route, culminating at a Temple).

The Cavadee in which I was most involved was that which departed from the Botanical Gardens of Curepipe, and concluded at a Tamil Temple on the outskirts of the town, in early 1997, and I was guided around by a friend who was the Secretary of another Tamil Temple. The ritual begins with a period of fasting (on this occasion it lasted from the 13th to the 24th of the month) during which neither meat nor alcohol could be consumed. Food had to be eaten off either clean, new plates or, more traditionally, disposable banana leaves. The fast (*Karem*) is broken (*kass Karem*) on the morning of the 24th with the consumption of (ideally, fresh) fish. The duration of the fast is marked by the raising and lowering of a special flag at Tamil Temples, accompanied by religious rituals.
In the early morning of the day of Cavadee itself, as opposed to the days of *karem*, devotees who are taking part go to a river close to where the Cavadee procession starts; ritually cleanse themselves and prepare for their forthcoming piercing. They only eat a little fruit for their breakfast, and that lasts them until the end of the procession when they will be able to eat a full meal, although they probably wait until they return home. During the procession, accompanying friends or relatives may assist the devotee to drink some water. From purification, devotees dress in pink/purple clothes (see plate 3), and compose themselves.

As the morning wears on, ritual specialists move among the devotees at the meeting place and, if the devotee wishes, transpierce the tongue with a long skewer/needle. The tongue then turns sideways, and another skewer is passed horizontally through the cheeks. This is designed to make speaking impossible, I was told, and hence to reinforce and maintain the focus on the solemnity and specialness of the occasion. If someone (male or female, although most often female) decided not to have their tongue pierced, then their mouth would be bound with material of the same colour as their robes: to ensure, as my informant put it, that they did not just chat all of the way around the procession circuit. Cavadee is a
special time, and it was not appropriate for participants just to use it as an opportunity to socialise.\textsuperscript{216}

The Cavadee itself is a wooden frame richly decorated with a multitude of colourful flowers and trimmed and shaped leaves (coconut, banana, etc.), see plate 2, above. Some individuals are especially skilled at constructing these Cavadees in particular forms. The friend who invited me along to the Cavadee, and explained the significance of each stage of the ritual, is one of the few Tamils in Mauritius who is skilled enough to make the peacock Cavadee. This was significant because the peacock is the vehicle by which the god to which Cavadee appeals (Lord Muururga) makes himself known on this earth.

All Cavadees are heavy and cumbersome: they are designed to be difficult to carry, especially through narrow streets or streets narrowed by the quantity of devotees and their attendants. As well as facial piercing, many devotees (especially

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{plate4.jpg}
\caption{Plate 4, devotee with Cavadee and piercings.\textsuperscript{217}}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{216} Spectators and those walking with devotees could socialise, however. I am not in a position to speculate on the causes of the assumption that devotees would talk if they were not prevented. I think, realistically, that the binding/tongue-piercing is merely a message for consumption by the devotee him/herself, to indicate to him/her that they were taking the ritual seriously.

\textsuperscript{217} Note also nail-shoes.
men) are pierced on their torso and legs, with either thin, long pins or with hooks\textsuperscript{218} to which small lemons are attached, again see plate 4 (above). Hanging from the Cavadee are two covered pots of milk. The covering is only of thin material, like muslin. These pots have to be full to the brim on arrival at the Temple - as they were at the beginning of the day - and the milk must not have clotted no matter how hot the day (and in midsummer January it can be so hot that the skin of devotees' feet sticks to the tarmac and is ripped off, in spite of the Central Water Authority's tanker spraying liberal quantities of cooling water). It is regarded as a miracle that the pots are always full on arrival at the Temple, no matter that they have spilled en route. However, were one's milk to have curdled, then that indicates that one has not observed the fast properly, and (although very rare) entails being struck by the Temple priests: a serious event.

There are many reasons why people perform Cavadee. A couple could be seeking respite from infertility; a worker looking for promotion; a student requesting success in exams; a patient wanting cure from an ailment, etc.. Many Mauritians return every year, from the UK or France, to take part. If help is required for a very serious problem, such as reversing a terminal diagnosis for oneself or a relative/friend, then rather than merely carrying a Cavadee, they pull a metal barrow - similarly decorated - by hooks passed through the flesh of their back and shoulders. This, my informant told me, often works.

**Commentary and Elaboration**

ANYONE can participate in Cavadee. This is not just the rhetoric of the arguably empty slogan posted outside, for example, Churches in the United Kingdom: 'All Welcome'. This is made evident because anyone does take part. My informant, the secretary of a Tamil Temple, told me that members of all ethnic groups take part - although the majority are Tamils. I was told by others that even Muslims, who are not usually thought to believe in this kind of activity, are known to take part.\textsuperscript{219} I keep emphasising the pragmatic nature of Mauritian social behaviour, and I shall return to it again now. Tamils may well attend Cavadee because, as Eriksen noted above, 'Mauritians are, regardless of ethnic membership, concerned to retain their ethnic distinctiveness. Rituals celebrating particular religions are widely attended'

\textsuperscript{218} Like small banana/meat hooks.
Tamils may want, need, or even have to reaffirm their ethnicity, their 'Tamilness', and this applies no matter whether someone is, by religious adherence, Christian (as in plate 4, above) or Tamil. But how to explain the participation of non-Tamils? What do they have to gain by participating? The answer is not provided by any recourse to economic rationality, it is not likely that a non-Tamil will make useful business contacts during such an event. Instead, non-Tamils take part simply - and, to me, understandably - because they believe that their participation will/may bring efficacious results. Hence, if an individual or his/her relation had, for example, received a serious, say terminal, medical diagnosis, then they might take part in Cavadee, hoping that Lord Muururga will intercede on behalf of the afflicted. Even the sceptical reader will empathise with such ambitions, and I certainly found it more than understandable.

Cavadee is also both class-less and status-less; everyone participates on an equal footing. At another major Cavadee later in the same year, one of the first devotees to get to the Temple (i.e. to complete his procession with the Cavadee) was the then Minister of Health - Kadress Pillay (a Tamil). However, to the hundreds of observers this was not significant. He was not first because he was a Minister, my friends told me, but rather because he was the first in the queue; the first to reserve, or have reserved for him, his place in the preparatory street. If anyone had got there before him, or his representative, then they would have occupied the first spot. Further, Pillay completed his Cavadee without the usual two or three bodyguards (who are ever-present with Mauritian politicians): because this is one event at which it was known that he would be safe.

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219 See also my treatment of the Maha Shivaratree pilgrimage below - where my contact told me that 'you won't know it', but there are Muslims there - and said that the attendance of Muslims was a good thing.

220 There are many convincing stories which circulate concerning the efficacy of Cavadee.

221 Rapport (pers. comm.) is correct to note the possibility that this could be a rationalisation, because I have no evidence of Cavadees where 'elite personages' were NOT at or near the head of the procession. I should add, though, that everyone aims to be near the head of the Cavadee procession because otherwise your pace is far more determined by the fact that there are hundreds of slow moving devotees ahead of you. Also, at other religious/cultural events, 'elite personages' did indeed turn up about half way through, or appeared discreetly. For example, at a Holi Mela in Quatre Bornes in 1997, the Prime Minister appeared well after the beginning of celebrations and, although his entrance (surrounded by bodyguards) was not discreet, he was part of the crowd, whereas he could easily have made a safer entrance directly onto the stage - more-or-less out of reach of the ebullient crowd. As it was, his bodyguards were unable to assure his protection, and despite their protestations that the crowd should not coat the Prime Minister with colour (Holi Mela is the festival of colours, participants smear each other with coloured powders) - he was unable to escape!
At the same Cavadee, my attention was drawn to the progress of an *étranger* (foreigner) carrying a Cavadee (see plate 5, left). The sight of a non-Mauritian man, whom my friends believed to be French, did not inspire more than a passing ripple of interest in the watching crowds. Non-Tamils regularly take part, and even more regularly watch and make offerings to Priests. At the Head of the Cavadee procession is a metal barrow from which several priests operate - receiving offerings from local people (Hindus and others) who stand at the side of the road, and clearing evil spirits from the path of the cavadee procession. Offerings from members of the public of any religion or ethnicity (of bananas and a coconut) are accepted by the Priests, the coconut broken and the presenter and his/her family given a *tikka* mark (between the eyes) of ash, and some of the fruit returned. A Creole couple who had come to the Botanic gardens and stood under a tree together rhythmically banging a drum were also engaging, in their idiosyncratic and licensed way, with the ceremony. Almost anything goes - individual reactions are unremarked upon. Tourists and visitors gazing at the spectacle are not unwelcome, indeed they are likely to be greeted and chatted to and have gifts of fruit and drink passed to them. Cavadee is genuinely inclusive and (although this is characteristic of Hinduism as a whole) this is more than an instance of the syncretism which has made contemporary Hinduism: this is individual and optional welcoming. The theory of intersubjectivity
seems applicable here: as all of my Tamil informants recognised that if a member of another religious community wanted to participate, because they believed that Cavadee could bring efficacious results, and as long as these people prepared for the event properly (i.e. observed the fast, and so on,\textsuperscript{222}) this was to be respected and admired. They recognised that problems requiring divine assistance are not restricted to Tamils, and as Tamil religious solutions are efficacious - then anyone is welcome to share in their restorative rituals. I discuss this in a little more depth in the discussion which deals with this entire section of the chapter.

In my next instance of transcendency, of the cross-cutting nature of an event, I want to illustrate once more the sense of inclusiveness characteristic of such moments and also broaden my exposition by drawing on my observation of the tolerance of tourists in Mauritius.

Ethnographic Moment 4: Maha Shivaratree

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Plate_6_Grand_Bassin}\caption{Plate 6, Grand Bassin.\textsuperscript{223}}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{222} Clearly, the individual would have to have received guidance from Tamils: again underlining the openness that individuals, in this case Tamils, extend to non-members of an ethnic group. The participation of non-Tamils would, probably, be completely impossible and unthinkable without the willing assistance of Tamils, whereas at other events (such as Maha Shivaratree, see below) substantially less guidance would be required.

\textsuperscript{223} Not at the time of Maha Shivaratree.
One of the largest religious events to take place in Mauritius is the annual pilgrimage to Ganga Talao (the sacred lake otherwise known as Grand Bassin, see plate 6) for the festival of Maha Shivaratree. The vast majority of Hindus and Tamils walk (ideally) or travel by bus or car to the lake (as do some members of other religious/ethnic groups and a few tourists). Before devotees perform Maha Shivaratree, they fast (abstain from meat and alcohol). Setting off before dawn, having observed the fast, Laura and I headed off through drizzle and then pouring rain the 15 miles or so to the lake in early 1997 (see also plate 7).

4.45 a.m. Head off from home up to Manhattan Spar to meet Jay and Vrishni (his daughter) to walk to Grand Bassin for the Hindu festival of Maha Shivaratree. [...] The walk was nice, the weather wasn't too bad - a few bits of rain as dawn broke, and Jay and Vrishni put on their coats - made out of bin-bags - and we all had a lot of laughs. It is about 15 miles to the Grand Bassin, through really nice landscapes and forests, but on an amazingly good road - wide enough in many places and with such an excellent surface that they could conceivably run a Grand Prix on it. It took four hours to get to Grand Bassin, picking up some bags of food and drinks on the way - all free. There was also assistance available from the Special Mobile Force if one needed medical care, etc. Needless to say there was a constant patrol of police motorbikes too, zooming up and down. There were lots of pilgrims mainly dressed in white or light colours (like us). Our presence was more noted this time [it is virtually unknown for white people (Mauritians or otherwise) to walk to Maha Shivaratree], with lots of people looking out from the windows of the special bus services and from the other side of the roads, often cheering and yelling with laughter 'Hare Krisna'. We met up with Devraj, his wife Vasanti, her brother Radha and grand-daughter Deya, as well as Jay's wife Nalini and their child, in the car park at Grand Bassin, and then we went off to do our prayers at the water's edge. Mrs. Shanti had given me instructions on what to take: a coconut, some bananas, some camphor, some incense [agarbathi], a steel tray and a steel cup for pouring water back into the Bassin during prayers. We threaded our way through the masses of pilgrims, along stone and concrete steps leading down to the water's edge where concrete ledges have been made into the water. There are also concrete tables for assembling all of one's prayer material. Foot wear (flip-flops or sandals - no leather) were left by the table, and one goes into the water - only about ankle or upper ankle depth. One puts on a stone, a few bananas, the coconut and puts some flowers and the camphor on a leaf. Then takes some of the lake's water into the steel beaker, and pours it back into the water - praying for something whilst looking towards the sun: Devraj suggested praying for peace - so I thought of concentration camps and Rwanda/Burundi. Then we turned around and cracked the coconut on the rock, and then the camphor and the incense was set alight, and then we assembled the rest of our offerings. These were then carried around, and we visited five or so temples to different deities, they were all very busy - but we did not seem to raise any comment at all: which is the most incredible thing, I think. We also went up the hill to the main temple - a tiled modern construction with a deity or couple of deities in each corner - and the main shrine to Shiva in the centre - with a team of priests who take pilgrims' offerings and crack the coconut and so on at an incredible pace.

In terms of including the ethnographer and his partner in the prayers of Maha Shivaratree, we were made very welcome. Everyone knew that we had been observing the fast, and we had made a special effort to find out what supplies we needed to do our prayers. Guided by our friends, we took part in the prayers, both at the water's edge and at the numerous small temples and shrines that are sited near the water, and at the large main temple which dominates the hillside above the lake.
There were relatively few tourists present at the lake, but far more than at any of the other religious events that I attended during my time in Mauritius. It was odd seeing tourists turning up to such a religious event dressed in standard beachwear of shorts and micro-mini-skirts (see plate 8); but it was of no consequence to pilgrims, who just continued their activities as before. I asked a close friend when there would be too many tourists: 'There can never be too many' was his reply. 'What, even if they were to outnumber Mauritians?' I enquired. 'No,' was the answer. There could never be a saturation point.

This tolerance of tourism is not because the tourist is 'god'; that because of, say, Mauritius' historical heritage of slavery and then indentured labour, that they feel that they have to accept the behaviour of tourists because they are both (largely) white and vital to the country's economy. Far from it; in fact, tourism is only the third largest source of revenue to Mauritius, the vast majority of people do not depend on this industry for their livelihood and there is no sense of subservience to tourists or foreigners in Mauritius. Instead, Mauritians seem to accept that outsiders have different ways of doing things and that although they wouldn't personally wear such risqué clothing, they have no objection to others doing so. This contrasts

224 Paramilitary police.
with tourist destinations such as Sri Lanka where Crick reports that at the Temple of the Tooth in Kandy:

Occasionally tourists entered the Temple dressed in an unacceptable manner - men in very short shorts, women in revealing blouses and skirts. There was a strong sense among some locals that foreigners who did not dress appropriately should simply be refused entry because they did not respect Sri Lankan culture. Instead of an outright ban, however, the Temple authorities chose instead to hire out lengths of cloth to foreigners to wrap around their bodies to cover up the offending parts (1994: 103).

These kinds of reactions do not translate from Sri Lanka to Mauritius. There seems to be something tolerant, easy-going or flexible at the heart of many Mauritians' reaction to things. This is not to say that there aren't some people who object to tourism and the behaviour of tourists - but it certainly isn't the norm even though, and this is crucial, most Mauritians are religiously observant and some are orthodox.

Plate 8, tourists at Maha Shivaratree.
There was a distinctly moral angle to Mauritian tolerance. My friends would tell me that it was quite wrong for market traders and shopkeepers to exploit foreign tourists who did not, of course, know the accepted (local) prices for things so that there were stories in the newspaper of tourists paying vast sums of money for tawdry trinkets or cheap T-shirts. No, my friends said, this was wrong: these tourists had worked hard in their home countries, and had saved to come on holiday, and hence they deserved to be treated fairly and honestly: key Mauritian qualities. Mauritians tend to treat people as they would like to be treated if they were tourists.225

Commentary

The sense of inclusivity, of licence, of ‘easy-goingness’ at Maha Shivaratree (as well as at Cavadee, in the Typing Pool, with Jerome, etc.) which is so difficult to describe, is problematic because it relates simultaneously and unevenly to the levels of the individual and that of the wider sense of ‘Mauritian-ness’. Individuals, through their actions, through their participation and openness vis-à-vis the religious and cultural events which I describe, are united. This goes some way towards stating something on a larger plane of action and belief: this is what one could gloss as ‘Mauritianism’. Whereas I did not set out to find anything universal to Mauritius - in the same way that I am uncomfortable to say anything universal about BRITISH people - I am nonetheless forced to the conclusion that among the majority of the Mauritians that I met, there are certain common threads, which I touch on in the following discussion and debate in some depth later in the chapter (cf. ‘unifying and shared practices’).

Ethnographic Moment 5: A Village Fishing Competition

The following vignette illustrates how I came to participate in a special event, defined both because such an event has not previously been described in the

225 Hence, I heard many sad stories of Mauritians coming to the UK for a holiday or to study, and being surprised at the frosty welcome they got when, for example, they said a friendly ‘hello’ to the Immigration officials at Heathrow airport.
ethnographic literature and because I was the first white person, Mauritian or otherwise, to attend this rural village's fishing competition.

I was invited along on the fishing competition by a couple of local councillors [that I had been introduced to], and they were surprised that I took them up on their invitation. I set off on the bus to the village where one of the councillors lived. I persuaded the bus conductor that I did mean to get off where I said I did and made my way to Roshan's house. Roshan was with his fellow councillor and friend Krishna, and we greeted each other. We all began preparing food for that evening. Krishna had killed a couple of chickens earlier that afternoon, and now they had been dismembered into a neat pile of bits. We each had a bottle of beer to drink, and set about cooking the chicken in a large wok. When the chicken was cooked through, vegetables added to its sauce and macaroni made as an accompaniment, we let the dishes cool. Then we made our way out to the bus stop, and nipped into the village store for a cool beer as we waited. The bus arrived, we climbed on and found three places free at the back. I set next to Vishnu and Roshun sat in front of us. After a few moments Roshun furtively revealed another bottle of beer, which we began to drink. ‘We have to be careful,’ he said, ‘we are councillors and we mustn’t be seen to be drinking in public’. The bus stopped a few times before Roshun and Vishnu said that the next stop was ours, and we got off at a small bus terminal. We crossed the station to the taxi rank, and travelled the mile or so to the village rendezvous, from where the fishing trip would set out. I sat down on a small bench in a side-street whilst Roshun and Vishnu searched around for other fishing competitors. Roshun returned after a while, and said that he was a bit hungry. I said that I was as well, and so we crossed the road to a halim stall. Halim is a spicy Muslim soup made with mutton and served with some chopped herbs sprinkled on its surface. The stall was about six foot tall, with a flip-down serving ledge. Inside, the halim maker divided his time between tending a large urn of halim and greeting everyone who passed by. He was doing a roaring trade as men returned from a day out at the races (in Port Louis) or just fancied a snack before tea. Roshun bought me a bowl, and we sat down to enjoy it. The halim seller asked me if I was enjoying it, and I said that it was lovely halim. Numerous locals turned to look at me and Roshun relishing our soup with some surprise.

When we finished our soup, we set off to a nearby shop, and I bought a bottle of rum as a contribution to the night’s festivities. I had come prepared with a bottle of Coke to cut the rum with and assorted nibbles and sweets. We joined a crowd of men waiting on the pavement, and before long a big bus, specially chartered for the occasion, drew up. Everyone climbed aboard in high spirits. Calling out to one another, yelling at pedestrians that we passed by, and waving and smiling at me. The bus stopped at numerous village hamlets, before leaving the main road towards the reservoir which was our destination. The bus careered along the steep road and almost switch-back corners before reaching the base of the hill. The bus pulled up on a grass verge just in front of a concrete sluice which noisily controlled water flowing into the reservoir from a nearby river, the sound of deep rushing water filled the air. The reservoir is very large, and surrounded by forest. As I looked across the gleaming water, towards the rapidly setting sun, fruitbats could be seen lazily flapping across the sky. Vishnu came up to me and said that although traditionally the fishing competition had been limited to men, of all ages, next year they wanted to widen the constituency to include women.

Everyone made their way down to the water's edge, full of the noise of croaking frogs. To the left, small family groups had set up picnic spots by the water and a few people had fishing lines set. Plastic cups and plates emerged, I opened my bottle of rum and everyone began eating gajack (snacks) and drinking. I was introduced to the distinctive fishing style, done without the use of rods. They buy reels of fishing line, attach one end to a plastic bottle or empty aerosol can. The other end has a weight, a hook and some bait added. There was a large jar of worms put down near me, and we all did our best to thread their slippery and unwilling bodies onto the hook. More line is slackened off of the bottle or can into a neat pile by the fisherman's feet, and then the weighted and baited hook is swung around the head at high speed for a couple of times, before being released to fly a surprisingly long way out into the reservoir.

Darkness fell, a gas lamp was produced to help illuminate our fishing base, and my torch, another lucky forethought, was used to help people navigate either back to the bus, towards other fishing bases or under the concrete bridge to the right to relieve themselves. I told Vishnu that everyone was being very friendly to me and that I appreciated this. Vishnu said that everybody thought that I was a secret agent, but had been happy to reassure them that I wasn't! The evening continued in great spirits, with sharing of meals, much rum drinking and chatting in a variety of languages. After a
couple of hours, I shakily headed off under the bridge to relieve myself. As I did, I felt myself catch on one of the fishing lines which had been raised up with a small stick so that it could clearly be seen if a fish had snatched at the bait. I lifted my foot free, and thought nothing more about this trip, I had hardly dragged the line any distance at all. Coming back to the base, one of the fishermen was in a bad temper, and melting the line to get rid of a huge knot. He called me, in English, a 'naughty boy' for having done this as the line had cost him 75 rupees. I was really annoyed at this. Plenty of other people had gone past the lines in the same way and I had seen them catch their feet in the lines - and yet he had concluded that I was definitely the culprit. Also, if the line had cost 75 rupees, why was he melting the line instead of trying to untangle the knot which, whilst large, wasn't that tightly bound up. We were all drunk, anyway, so it seemed a but unfair to single me out, consequently I did not offer to pay for the line. There wasn't any malice in his condemnation anyway, and after a few minutes the whole event was forgotten and the group re-established its amicability.

Some little while afterwards, Vishnu came down to see me and said that the village leader wanted to see me. I followed him up to the bus and climbed on board. I was introduced to the village leader and, in the gloom of the bus lit only by two tiny interior lights, he and a couple of his lieutenants spoke with me. I was doled out some rum by one of his supporters and another offered me some salty nibbles and chicken bits. 'I cannot take rum,' said the village leader, 'because I am a Muslim'. Instead, he had a large bottle of soft drink at his side. He said how delighted he was that I had come on the trip, and that I would be welcome at any of the other events that the village ran. The atmosphere was very warm and friendly, and before long I found myself happily smoking - an activity which cross-cut everyone on the bus, and we chatted together for some time.

Eventually, noises were made to the effect that the fishing had ended, and that it was time to weigh the catches and declare the winner. To the right of the bus, past the concrete sluice, was the bridge that led to the dam along which the road continued. As the weighing scales were being prepared and fishermen reappeared from their favoured spots, Vishnu and I strolled along the dam. The moon shone brightly down on the water, and there was not a feature on the landscape that couldn't be seen clearly. I was practically in tears at the beauty of the scene and with the welcome that had been shown to me during the evening, and then we stumbled back to the weighing area supporting each other.

There was a crush of people around the weighing scales, and Vishnu and I slowly moved through the crowd. Our small group had caught nothing at all, but as the crowd swayed and cheered the winning fish was eventually declared: a 2lb eel, which was very small. Someone else had caught a big *rosenbergii* fresh-water prawn, but that weighed a lot less. There was great amusement at the dearth of fish caught.

Slowly, we all got back onto the bus. The driver had been drinking right from the instant that we had arrived, but seemed to be fairly accustomed to doing this and then driving. Roshun must have thought that I would be worried by this, although I wasn't really capable of stringing a sentence together, and pointed out the fact that next to the driver was another, more sober, chap who was watching the driver's every move and would step in if he made any mistakes. With all the bucketing around of the bus, cigarette smoke and singing, I fell asleep, and when the time came to get off the bus I wasn't feeling so well. I found myself, with Roshun and Krishna, in the middle of an unknown small village in a bus-park. I vomited twice because of all the motion, and Krishna located a tap so I washed my face, and felt a bit better. We stood around in the moonlight, listening to dogs barking and awaited our next transport, in the middle of the ever so quiet village, and after a while a pickup with a hard top appeared, and inside was the village leader! (Field notes)

**Commentary**

This village fishing trip was a wholly inclusive affair (albeit, although for the final time, comprised only of men). There was a mixture of races, religions, occupations, wealths and ages. The fact that some of those present were Muslims and did not
drink did not mean that they couldn’t keep company with those that did, and some Muslims drank anyway. There was no mention made of anyone’s ethnic, racial or religious affiliation. A group of male villagers have come together for the sole purposes of enjoying an evening together and, in this moment at least, divisions (other than that of gender) are not relevant. It is the unity of the village which is important and although, perhaps, divisions may, although I have no evidence to support this claim, be relevently evoked at other moments in their lives, this is not such a moment. It would be wholly wrong for me to attempt to interpret this event in terms of ethnicity, religion, race or any other divisive factor.

226 Other than the recognition that I was from England
Part 2: Unifying and Shared Moments and Practices.

Having established, in the first part of this chapter, a sense of the unities which transcend ethnic, or other, divisions that we might expect to find in a socio-culturally heterogeneous society (such as Mauritius), I now move on to discuss the ways in which, on a daily basis, Mauritians - arguably - share more across analytically prefigured boundaries than they hold separate. I am not arguing that these sharings are at the expense of any ethnic, or other, distinctivenesses rather that although ethnic, and other, groups are distinct - i.e. they differ from each other - they also have similarities, and this social fact has been overlooked in previous work on Mauritius which have combined difference with division as synonymous and intractable.

This section outlines some means whereby unity is established between individuals, generally divorced from what might be described as any 'special occasion' either in terms of religious/spiritual context (e.g. Maha Shivaratree) or shared occupational space (the Typing Pool). I want to suggest that the norms which I have hinted at in Part I are not limited to special occasions or extraordinary individuals. Mauritians are bound together not despite but perhaps rather because of their diversities - through the sharing of practices. I have alluded to and hinted at some of these earlier in the Thesis, but I now tackle them systematically. This is a continuation of the themes established in my discussion of the varying membership of those attending Cavadee and Maha Shivaratree (above).

I want to explore these themes by way of the description of a close friend’s house, neighbourhood and a wedding which occurred in his family, which then gives onto short discussions of issues raised by this evocative ethnographic vignette.

Daivanaden’s neighbourhood:

In this section, I want to try and present a feel of life in an area of Curepipe that I came to know very well. Firstly, I guide the reader around the house belonging to a Tamil Policeman, and close friend, Daivanaden, and then demonstrate some of the features of the neighbourhood surrounding it.
Finding the house

Daivanaden, a policeman, lived in a small village on the outskirts of Curepipe. We had met Daivanaden at a Police exhibition on drugs control in Mauritius, and had been invited to visit him and his family. As we had moved to Curepipe from the coast, we were able to visit frequently during our time in Mauritius. Curepipe town itself is on the central plateau of the island of Mauritius, and the dominating landmark of the town is the large extinct volcanic crater which rises to the side of the suburbs. The first time we visited we had only vague directions as to the street on which his house lay. I knew that a road led down from that which circled the crater, much used by joggers and strollers. We followed the road down, and after passing through an area used as vegetable allotments, we emerged into Camp Montaigne.

A large mosque stands on the right-hand side of the road near a small football ground, its minaret being the tallest structure for some distance. Quite dense housing fanned out along the main road to Curepipe and a junction leading to Daivanaden's house in Robinson lane. A few small shops are centred in this area, as well as Rodeo tavern. As we passed through the narrow streets, locals engaged in conversing with friends and neighbours and kids kicking footballs and wobbling on bikes, and we asked for directions. It was enough to ask for 'Daivanaden - le policier'227. Everyone knew him, and although we generally misunderstood the directions proffered, we eventually found our way into Robinson Lane, and the general commotion brought Daivanaden into the street to meet us.

Daivanaden lived in the upper storey of a house which could be reached through an internal stairway, or an external one. His middle-aged parents lived downstairs, and in an adjoining flat lived Daivanaden's brother, his wife and child. At the end of the flat was a small garage, where Daivanaden's brother kept the trolley from which he and a relative sold hot foods (see below, page 229), and also where any DIY work was conducted. It was this one-storey building which was the original house, and onto which the bigger 2-storey house was now attached. Daivanaden’s father drives a lorry, whilst his mother works as a domestic servant for a local Franco-Mauritian family, and when at home enjoyed looking after any children in the extended family who required it.

Entering through the front door, over a small veranda, with a small herb garden in window boxes, one enters Daivanaden's parents' sitting room. A

227 'Soresh - the policeman'.

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leatherette sofa faces a television set which, being switched off, has a lace curtain over it protecting it from dust. Daivanaden's father likes watching television, and is keen on a variety of programmes including many in languages that he doesn't speak, such as Mandarin! He likes trying to work out what's going on just from the on-screen action. Against the walls and to the side of the sofa are smaller chairs. The floor is tiled, and the walls plain except for a few pictures of European landscapes and, beyond the reach of children's' enquiring hands, some racks displaying small momentos and figurines. Statues of the Virgin Mary, Christian praying hands, and Hindu religious icons stand together. On another high shelf sits the telephone.

Ascending the stairs at the far end of the room, one enters Daivanaden and his wife Meera's sitting room. Daivanaden was later to tell us that he had built the entire house, and fitted it out with electricity, water and much of the furniture. The floor is tiled with wood-effect tiles, which are cool but very easy to clean. To the right is a long couch which runs in an ‘L’-shape along the divider which separates the room from the stairwell. In the middle of the couch is a small display table, with some photographs, dried and plastic flowers and momentos substantial enough to withstand attack by their three year old daughter. Beyond the couch is a feature typical of almost every Mauritian home, the **vitrine**. This glass display case contains shelves of precious things given to, or purchased by, the family. There are beautiful plates and glassware, certificates of examinations passed by Daivanaden, photographs of family members or occasions, British-style ceramic teapots, and special toys which Sunita is not yet trusted to look after.

Leaving the sitting room, a long corridor has the bedroom on the left, then a side-corridor. On the right-hand side of this is the shower-room and toilet, recently completed in Daivanaden's spare time. The end of the corridor opens, through a door, onto a tiny veranda. Cemented to the wall, with a special drainage area around it, is the **ros cari**, the curry stone. This lump of volcanic rock, cut by a stonemason, is used, in combination with a **ros baba** (a kind of rolling pin, also made from volcanic rock), to grind up spices, peanuts and other ingredients, for use in curries, pickles, etc.. Like the **vitrine**, the **ros cari** is almost omni-present in Mauritian homes, and although it is known that electric grinders produce much the same result, the stone is believed to produce better flavours in the crushed

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foodstuffs. Glancing into the garden from the window, a small vegetable patch can be seen, as well as a newly-built deity shrine on a concrete pillar.

Passing back past the toilet and shower-room, and turning left, we enter the kitchen. Past the pine picnic table, where we shared many meals, snacks and conversation throughout our stay in Mauritius, the stainless-steel sink is on the left, with a large gas cooker on the right. Past the cooker stands a large upright fridge/freezer.

The Neighbourhood

Although generally poorer than the more central suburb in which I lived (see 'Ethnographic Residence', page 32), people in Camp Montaigne have what I found to be an enviable lifestyle and a warm community sentiment. I noted above that Daivanaden's parents and brother, and his family, lived in adjoining houses. Further to this, behind that plot was a couple of houses where other close relatives, and their families lived. In Robinson Lane itself, the immediate neighbours to the left, and then across the road were Daivanaden's uncles. In a street a short distance away was a one storey house where an aunt and her family lived, and they ran a small shop. Not everyone was a relative though. Opposite Daivanaden's house lived a Creole family, and other Hindu and non-Hindu families. There was frequent inter-house visiting, most intensively between family members, but also to those of other neighbours and friends. Similarly, during the course of a day, going to the local shop, visiting friends or family, walking to and from the bus stop, one would meet many people, and chat with most of them.

Daivanaden, being a policeman, commanded some respect from his neighbours and probably earns more than the majority of people. Everyone, however, lives in a concrete house, and many people have small plots in their gardens where they grow some vegetables. Because Daivanaden is a policeman he is able to help some of his neighbours if they have specific problems. He may be able to suggest the proper way of applying for certain permits, for example or, in a direct way by making written representations on behalf of the neighbourhood. Robinson Lane did not have adequate drainage at the sides of the narrow street, and Daivanaden was able to write to the local authority and, eventually, they installed a proper concrete, lidded drain. Just before my arrival in Mauritius, Daivanaden had been elected secretary of the nearby (100 metres) Tamil Temple's Association. In
this capacity, he marshalled local Tamils in donating money for the enlargement, and improvement, of the Temple. He was also a key figure in writing to local companies and requesting them to donate materials (tiles, sand, building blocks, cement and so on). He was also able to speak to the Special Mobile Force of the Mauritius Police and as part of their 'Hearts and Minds' mission have them bulldoze some of the land surrounding the Temple, which saved the Association an enormous amount of time, effort and money.

Daivanaden was consulted in other, less predictable ways, as well. As the Secretary of the local Tamil Temple, he was known to be highly knowledgeable on a range of spiritual issues. For example, when some Hindu acquaintances of Daivanaden wanted to participate in the (generally) Tamil ritual of cavadee, he was the only individual that anyone knew who was able to build the prestige cavadee structure (to be carried by the devotee) in the shape of a peacock. This structure, built up from strips of green twig, interleaved and criss-crossed, and given several layers of asparagus ferns, giving the appearance of feathers, decked out with flowers and garlanded. It is finally finished by adding a tail made from real peacock feathers.

On another occasion, Daivanaden was asked for his advice when a Creole neighbour's child was born with what is known in Mauritius as 'god hair'. This kind of rare, naturally clumpy, matted hair growing in whorls can happen to children of members of any ethnic group, and is regarded as highly propitious. It does, however, cause some concern amongst the parents of children, and everyone is keen to protect themselves from any ill-harm and hence consult anyone locally recognised as possessing the required knowledge of relevant protective procedures.

The Wedding

Probably the main neighbourhood event which I observed with Daivanaden and his family was the wedding of his nephew, who lived in the next door house, and who would be living with his new bride in an extension of that house. Preparations for the wedding were of a very long term. Saving for the days of celebration and ritual must have begun many years in advance, whilst the preparation of food, such as sorting through rice for stones, etc., took up a great deal of the time of female relatives. The wedding took place in a large Tamil temple in a town close to Curepipe. The large hall, containing some 200 or more guests, had a stage at one
end where the priest guided the bride and groom through the religious service, the
civil ceremony having taken place some days previously. After the religious
wedding, everyone returned to the home of the groom's family, and gave their
presents for the bride and groom.

Goat meat, traditionally served in seven curried forms at a Tamil wedding
celebration, had been prepared by Daivanaden and his male relatives the evening
before; and as guests streamed to Daivanaden's uncle's house wood-smoke from the
cooking fire hangs inside the tarpaulin awning (erected outside the house), and
stings the eyes. The seven curries are well under way. Inside the house, chairs line
the walls of the sitting room, and the floor has been expertly covered with
cardboard, neatly taped together to avoid the need to continually clean the floor
over, and after, the days of celebration and visiting. The living room was the centre
for dancing which took place, to both modern Mauritian and western Music for
several hours. During this time, an unending flow of Scotch whisky is offered to
those who drink, mainly men. At the back of the house, under the stairs, are piles of
boxes of whisky - it must never happen that the family run out of either food or
drink for their guests, and there is a steady slow of pre-meal snacks, limitless
servings of lunch followed by sagoo (sago) or tamarind.

In the afternoon, the wedding cake is cut by the bride and groom, Daivanaden gives a toast to the happy couple, and gives them some entertaining and
pragmatic wedding advice through 'The A to Z of Marriage', a speech he is
frequently asked to give at relatives' weddings.

In the days preceding the wedding, the large green tarpaulin awning had
been assembled across Robinson Lane, supported by scaffolding and attached to
houses on both sides of the street. The road, which led to houses in which non-
family neighbours lived, a public space, was harnessed as the only available one for
the guests to sit in, and eat and drink at long trestle tables hired for the occasion.
Neighbours, relatives or otherwise, were keenly involved in the preparations, and
lent much support. On the day of the wedding, they and members of both the
extended family of bride and groom eat, drink and dance at the house of the
groom's father,228 and there was a broad range of ethnic and religious groups
present here. Dancing, chatting, joking, sitting, eating together were Creole
Christian, Tamil Christian, Hindu, Tamil, Muslim friends, family, neighbours,
acquaintances, strangers - and even an elderly Franco-Mauritian paid a call to
express his good wishes.

228 A day later, the groom's family will visit the house of the bride's family, and be welcomed in the
same way.
Commentary and Elaboration

Mauritians that I met did not tend to talk about their neighbourhoods very much, overall their attitudes towards their neighbours was borne out through behaviour rather than verbalised extrapolations. However, Daivanadén’s father told me - after the wedding - that all those in the local area were ‘like a family’: that they were Hindu, Creole, Muslim didn’t matter - they all lived close by, they were all friends who visited each other frequently and were always on hand in the event of help being required. For example, he said, if someone dies, then all of the neighbours would rally around to help out the bereaved family: ‘so that they don't have to worry about anything’. Neighbours would hire the same kind of awning as used for weddings, under which to hold the post-funeral meal, sort out the provision of food and so on. Clearly, what was important was that someone had died and their family needed help; rather than that the deceased happened to be a Muslim, Hindu, etc..

The term ‘family’ is, perhaps, used more flexibly than might be expected. From anecdotal knowledge in the UK, we know that sometimes villagers speak of each other as ‘being like family’, but I believe that my research in Mauritius permits me to tentatively suggest that there is an added significance to the use of the term ‘family’. For example, as my partner and I became increasingly incorporated into the lives of those we met, we ceased to be ‘guests’, ‘friends’, ‘foreigners’ but became ‘brother’ and ‘sister-in-law’, ‘son’ and ‘daughter-in-law’, and so on. After a relatively short while, then, we would be greeted as close relatives - and I would greet the father (of my new brother) as a son would; and with my new brother our behaviour was as if we were real brothers, for example at some occasions, we would greet each other by kissing cheeks; hence differently, even, to how close male friends would greet each other.

Mewett, in his study of Clachan on the Isle of Lewis, claims that neighbouring ‘as a principle of association, cuts across rather than reinforces the social divisions otherwise present in the community. This means that people divided by the schisms of the other associational categories are brought together by the obligations of neighbouring’ (1982: 111). In my experience of Mauritius, however, I would - predictably - qualify Mewett’s otherwise acceptable and useful analysis by questioning whether Mauritians are necessarily divided before they are brought

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229 Translation.
together by neighbourhood/local community sentiment. For many of the Mauritians that I met, living close to others meant that one behaved towards them as if they were family. In fact, they were often referred to as family. Hence, a Tamil family would often take food and clothing across the street to a poor Creole family, and each would invite the other to family celebrations, mortuary prayers, and so on. Further, people would feel that they could visit and help each other without invitation, in a relaxed and easygoing manner.

In the forthcoming seven sections, I briefly detail some selected themes raised through the above vignette, and draw in associated issues.

1. Hosts and Guests.

[Slaves] had a wonderful sense of hospitality. Any person coming from anywhere at any time would be treated as a member of the family and was given food and drink without anyone bothering to know who he was, whence he came and whither he was bound. Their principal recreation was the dance song known as Sega which is sung with a cadence and rhythm of gesture accompanied by the marouvane, a hide instrument made of gourd filled with peas. The songs were prepared on the spot and dances were followed by a general clapping of hands interrupted by cries of joy. The Saturday nights and Sundays were mostly devoted to common Segas. In the night they would sometimes sit round to listen to the narrative of a long story, which although oft-repeated, would be listened to with rapt attention. As the number of slaves increased people of different races used to cluster into isolated groups (Roy 1960: 123-4).

Being good hosts, ensuring that the visitor has the best possible time is another way in which the practices of Mauritians are united and, as the above extract shows, this seems to have deep historical prescience in Mauritius. Guests are to be made welcome at all times and offered food and drink. The food and drink does not have to be special, indeed one really felt that one was a member of the family not only when people said that you were but when you were served the food that they ate on a daily basis. All Mauritians keep some food and drink in reserve in case a guest should drop in.

I had not predicted that having arrived in Mauritius, knowing no-one, that after just a matter of weeks I would have an expanding network of contacts. From a chance meeting with one individual who became one of my closest friends and sources, within hours Laura and I were participating in a family birthday celebration. I was also surprised and interested to find that members of one ethnic group would often easily compliment another group for their good hosting. For example, one Hindu friend told me that when he had been to a Muslim wedding - of the older sibling of a child that he taught - the family had looked after him exceptionally well; greeting him when he arrived, ensuring that he always had
plenty of food and drink and that he enjoyed himself. Interestingly, he added that ‘Indians [Hindus, his own ethnic group], would not bother introducing you, making sure that you had enough food and so on’. Here, then, the welcome and care afforded guests was more important to him than the fact that they were Muslims. He was very struck by the quality of their hospitality and frequently spoke about it over the following days, impressed with the significant contrast between his usual treatment by his own community.230

I am not able to do more than claim that hospitality such as this is the norm in contemporary Mauritius, but certainly Mauritians that I met regarded it as far more strange that someone would NOT behave like this than that one would. It is in the treatment of tourists that this hospitality is, arguably, writ large.

The number of tourists visiting Mauritius has been steadily increasing, from just 8,000 in 1963 to some 500,000 in 1997.231 However, tourism is not seen by Mauritians as an ‘intrusion’, as I hinted at in my earlier discussion of Maha Shivaratree. Indeed, it could be noted that tourists are very fortunate that their actions - which in certain other holiday destinations might be dangerously interpreted as intrusive - arouse no negative reactions. Such actions as an invasive interest in, for example, the preparation and cooking of roadside snacks fit with the critique of Krippendorf who wrote that:

Tourists often display peculiar behaviour in their new-found liberation, carrying on in a way that would be regarded as highly unusual and even bring censure and sanctions at home or at work. They feel and behave like some kind of exceptional people. They break the fetters of everyday rules. They are equally unwilling to observe the norms of the country they are visiting. Even elementary manners suddenly go by the board. Everything else is taken along, but manners are often left at home. The ‘have-a-good-time’ ideology and the ‘tomorrow-we-shall-be-gone-again’ attitude set the tone (1989: 33).232

The Mauritian novelist Collen writes that when the heroine (Shynee) of one of her novels (There Is A Tide) walked on red hot coals (mars dan dife), as part of a religious ceremony, ‘[t]ourists even took pictures’ (1991:56). In contrast, I found that rather than taking a critical line on tourists (or anyone else) ‘even’ taking

230 It would be wrong to claim that being a good host does not necessarily correlate with ethnic transcendence, because the guest is an outsider. However, in my experience of Mauritius, the real hospitality begins when people begin to describe you as one of the family, and treat you accordingly. I.e. when people know that you enjoy the kind of food and drink that they consume on a more daily basis - rather than that associated with special occasions. When friends know that they can serve you vegetable dishes and that you won't mind that there isn't any meat available. When you drink the same rum or wine that they do.

231 Whereas it used to take many months to get to Mauritius from Europe (from Marseilles, through the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal, all down the coast of East Africa, dropping in at many ports to deliver and pick up cargo, mail, and so on, and then to Madagascar and down the coast of that large island and then finally to Mauritius itself); it now takes between 12 and 14 hours.

232 It was interesting to find that these same snack-sellers, for example at the market in Mahéburg, found it more significant and, in fact, intrusive that I tried to take photographs of the tourists gazing invasively (from my point of view) at their livelihood - than the fact that the tourists were doing so. Tourists were expected to behave in this kind of way, and not like me!
photographs of religious or other events, Mauritians were more than happy that people took an interest in their celebrations. In fact one was usually invited to take photographs, and there one would join the rest of the family and friends in recording the occasion for posterity. A Tamil friend told me that at the main Cavadee in Port Louis, it is acceptable to take photographs, as long as the tourists do not try to enter the temple or wear anything made from leather, or else they run the risk (and some have) of being hit by the stout bamboo poles that the devotees carry. However, this kind of admonition is very rare and, when pressed, my informant could not specify the last time that this had happened, other than saying that it was 'several' years ago.

Mauritians, I suggest, treat others (strangers from both within and without Mauritius) as they would like, or even expect, to be treated themselves. Hence it is widely held to be indefensible to rip-off or steal from those who work hard. One informant, when I asked him why Mauritians were so welcoming and generous, summed up the norm by saying that 'hosts give their guests their lives, they have to eat before the host'.

2. ‘To Morisyen Twa?’ - Individual Attempts at Being ‘Mauritian’.

I want here to investigate the quotidian practices of individual Mauritians with an analysis of some Mauritians' actions and discourses concerning the evolution of a public ethos of 'Mauritianness' or 'Mauritianism' (cf. Jugessur 1984). Perhaps the most blatant example of the transcendence of divisions imposed on Mauritius by discourses of governmentality is illustrated by the efforts of some individual Mauritians to be Morisyen (Mauritian). Separate from official, state-backed rhetorics encouraging the 'rainbow nation' to cohere, I believe that these individuals' behaviour is not as extraordinarily rare as its absence from the ethnographic record might lead one to conclude. Indeed, I might lay claim to the sentiment that there have always been people in Mauritius who have sought to transcend ethnic, religious and racial identity for, as Roy noted earlier, '[t]he Indians are today in their fourth generation in Mauritius. They have become Mauritianised, and it is natural that they should become one with the rest of the population' (1960: 239).

I would be failing to adequately describe my experience in Mauritius if I did not mention the fascinating attempts of some Mauritians consciously and publicly to live as 'Mauritians'. I feel that they are employing the term 'Mauritian' here to
mean that they are opposed both to any public demonstration of ethnic/religious group membership and also to the possibility of any ethnically-based corruption or favouritism. However, this does not necessarily mean that they all believe that people should give up their ethnic, religious, racial identities in their *private* lives as well.

I noted earlier that the Mauritian anthropologist Nirsimloo-Anenden writes that *only* '[i]n a situation where a Mauritian is confronted with a non-Mauritian, [will] his terms of reference will not be caste, class, religion, colour or language [as, she means, is the case on a daily basis in Mauritius], but simply his own *Mauritianness* (1990: 6). However, I encountered several individuals who refuted this assertion completely because they were absolutely determined that in their workplace and in their dealings with others, they would be *premierment*233 - as one of them put it - Mauritian. For instance, although Raj was a Tamil, he said that he consciously strove to be a 'Mauritian' rather than a Tamil (and, in this case, this means in both their personal and public life). He and his wife put this into practice in their personal lives such that, for example, they both opted to eat beef - which is a prohibited food for Hindu Tamils - and never attend Temple. They both have a belief in God, but it is not exclusive and does not depend on dietary observances or Temple attendance. Other informants added that, for instance, 'I use caste at home but not in public'. Another admitted that 'I myself am not a 100% committed Mauritian, I know I should be ...', Mauritius, he added, 'is an unripe nation'. There is a somewhat widespread criticism of the necessity to use ethnic-based political connections to secure employment, places in schools and university and funds to study abroad, and occasional focus on other alleged sources of corruptions (such as freemasonry) (cf. Chapter 4, Part 1).234

An individual in his 30s recounted an instance where a Muslim man came into his office and greeted Kisnan and his (Muslim) friend. He said *'Salaam Aleikum'* to the Muslim employee and the regular *'Bonjour'* to Kisnan. So, Kisnan said *'To Morisyen twa?'* ['Are you a Mauritian?']. The visitor replied in the affirmative, so Kisnan asked *'Pourquoi to pa dir ki manyer, bonjour, kouma si to coze are enn Kreol, enn Chinois?* ['Why don't you say 'how are you?', or 'hello' as if you were talking to a Creole or a Chinese person']. Kisnan did not understand why the visitor felt the need to say *'Salaam Aleikum'* to his co-worker. Here, then, is an

233 'Firstly'.

234 For example (from my field notes), Jagadish showed me a few certificates and things signed by Kalychand (of Kalychand Motors, etc.): there are three dots in a triangle, and the same with a woman's signature in something else - it means that the person is a Freemason (*Francomannerie*);
example of an individual - who does not own the company whose office he works in - actively and forcefully confronting someone whom, he believes, is behaving improperly in the context of modern Mauritius which, he continued, being a modern country, should be leaving aside divisions based on caste, religion and colour. The reaction of the visitor to the office is not recorded, he would probably have been rather surprised.

The sentiments that my friend expressed, to the person that I shall temporarily refer to as the overtly Muslim visitor, is mirrored by the concerns expressed by secular political movements, such as Ledikasyon pu Travayer, Muvman Anti-Kommunalis, Lalit and others, that religious icons and shrines, for example, have no place in the public world. Thus they have campaigned against the construction of a Hindu shrine inside the grounds of a public (i.e. for Hindus and non-Hindus) hospital, and against the presence of icons in government offices (e.g. a police inspector is famous for having uplifting Christian paintings and text on his office walls).

Another friend worked for the national airline (Air Mauritius) and was a truly exceptional figure so concerned about the safety implications of the promotion of maintenance, and other, staff at Air Mauritius as being on the grounds of ethnicity - rather than ability - that he chose to fight the system by providing tip-offs to the newspapers. He declared that maintenance for Air Mauritius 'planes was being conducted by people who were not qualified for the job, but were of the same ethnicity as their Departmental Head. He continued:

people who like a particular job but are not of the same ethnic group are given jobs that they hate (e.g. someone who likes getting their hands dirty with mechanics will be

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235 It is also interesting to note that the same individual used the pejorative terms 'Lascar' for Muslims and 'Madras' for Tamils, but also refers to himself as a 'Malbar' or 'Maraz' - pejorative terms for Hindus - which is pretty even-handed. This is characteristic for Mauritius, in the popular song 'Dilo Pandalay', each community is sung about, using the pejorative label (Madras (Tamil), Lascar (Muslim), Sinnwa (Chinese)), etc.: no matter that those singing may belong to these groups.

236 I think this is a difficult area upon which to comment. I sympathise with the motives of these organisations to make workplaces secular, but as my examples of the Typing Pool, and elsewhere, show, Mauritians do not mind that icons, posters, customised screen-savers, and so on, indicate the religious or ethnic affiliation of an individual. Really, the only grounds for concern would be if restrictions were placed on one group which prevented them from personalising their space whilst others would continue. I understand the responsible point that Ledikasyon pu Travayer are making, though, that if one wants to have a country free of any form of corruption - ethnic, religious or otherwise - it must be demonstrated that advantage does not accrue to an individual if he/she happens to be of the same ethnic/religious group as the decision-maker. These are issues which have still to be debated in Mauritius - the majority of people are likely to be unconcerned about the presence of shrines, icons, etc.; and would probably doubt that they showed that an individual was corruptible.

237 My gloss.

238 Again, I should add that he had nothing to gain from doing this: he was not an engineer and had no interest in becoming one; he had the noble and selfless aim of wanting to preserve what he saw was great about Air Mauritius.

224
He mirrored this kind of transparent honesty in his private life, he described himself as a ‘neutral’ person who was giving up Hinduism, although he still believed in God. Thus, although he had buried his mother on the morning of the first day that I met him, he did not keep his karem (fast) after the ceremony, as an observant Hindu should: much to the dismay of his more orthodox relatives.

This segment has demonstrated the presence of a powerful, positive and liberal ideology of transparency and meritocracy originated, and promoted by, individuals who are not a part of governmental ideology (of ‘Unity in Diversity’). These individuals are almost ‘extreme’ examples of intersubjectivity - they believe so strongly that everyone is essentially the same that they seek to eradicate visible and verbal differentiation. Many of those Mauritians that I have previously introduced the reader to have been sometimes highly devout members of a religious group, or significant leaders of an ethnic community. However, those individuals dealt with in this segment see formally delineated religions and ethnic groups as divisive in themselves, and go beyond those earlier individuals who see, for example, Hindus and Muslims as essentially the same (even though their exact beliefs and practices differ). Rather than being advocates of this grass-roots form of intersubjective comprehension, they instead call on Mauritians to keep their religious and ethnic identities and memberships firmly as private matters. They would hence support calls for the removal of statues, shrines, icons and other impedimenta from public property (e.g. shrines in the grounds of hospitals; evangelical Christian posters from the offices of policemen). I do not claim that such sentiments are widely shared, but they are readily and easily elucidable from a significant minority of informants (and these are not academics or politically active individuals, indeed they tend to be middle or junior-ranking state or private-sector employees).

3. ‘We all came from ... somewhere else ... to this beautiful island’

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239 All of the planes on the Air Mauritius fleet are named after Mauritian birds, and the symbol of the airline, and name of one of them is the paille-en-que (frigate bird). All Mauritians know the names of all of the planes, and there is a great deal of pride concerning the national airline.

240 This is not an inexplicable reaction, even for orthodox Hindus. One another occasion, an individual’s decision not to perform his daily prayers, or those on special occasions, was understood because he was ‘angry with God’ because his cousin had died.

241 Air Mauritius television advertisement.
A second unifying feature also draws its inspiration from statements made to me by Mauritians. Many Mauritians whom I met had clear ideas about what structures or values held Mauritius together, and one of the most widespread was the argument that because everyone in Mauritius was an immigrant, no-one had any grounds from which to argue that they had any more right to do or say something than anyone else:

everyone gets along, because there were no autochthones [before settlement].
Mr. Abdul (informant).

no one community had any special title to claim because all were immigrants.
Simmons 1982: ix.

This is a simple but convincing explanation. I believe that the seemingly widespread adherence to this opinion is indeed an important cause of social stability. No-one has the authority of being ‘first Mauritians’ - which comes with being the ‘original’ or ‘authentic’ inhabitants. Everyone, as Mauritians say, is in the same boat (‘nou tou dan mem bateau’) and consequently no-one has any natural or accepted right to claim that they are any more Mauritian than anyone else. It might be argued that this is a relatively fierce expression of egalitarianism, and I believe that it must be accepted that the recognised immigrant history of all of the communities of Mauritius does have stabilising consequences. Mauritians are all immigrants, first, and then, second, differentiation becomes enactable. If there were an original population, representatives of it could claim that they were there first and thus morally had more right to control what happened on the island. This could easily be a highly divisive force.

Many Mauritians express the sentiment that ‘we are all immigrants’; in fact it is surprising, when one’s mind is primed by reading previous ethnographies, how often Mauritians talk about ‘we’ - not meaning ‘we Hindus’, but rather, ‘we Indians’ (Muslims + Hindus); or ‘we ordinary people’. Such sentential constructions are more common than references to ‘us Mauritians’.

4. Food

All of the Mauritians that I met made it a point to enjoy and sometimes even prefer the cuisine of other ethnic groups. Raman mentions Briyani as a national dish (above) and this is significant because it was originally a Muslim dish and, in fact,
everybody agrees that the Muslims still make the best Briani,\textsuperscript{242} even though it is served, for example, at Hindu weddings. Frequently, when non-Muslims served me Briani, they would observed that although it \textit{used to be} a Muslim dish: it was now a \textit{Mauritian} one, and I found that my informants would usually emphasise the importance of eating and enjoying the cuisine of other cultures as a start to comprehending and taking pleasure in the diversity of Mauritius, one friend told me that 'it is very important to eat the foods of other cultures', this seems to pave the way for greater inter-cultural understanding.\textsuperscript{243} This sharing of culinary tastes across ethnic boundaries sometimes reveals surprising situations. For example, the brother and father-in-law of a close Tamil friend actually had businesses making Chinese \textit{mein} (noodles), \textit{boulets} (fish balls) and Muslim foods \textit{Halim} (mutton soup). The plate below shows the trolley from which these foods were sold.

\begin{center}
Plate 9, hot food trolley, outside the shop also run by relatives of the food trader.
\end{center}

\textsuperscript{242} This is the usual Mauritian orthography (phonetic) for the dish.
\textsuperscript{243} When an earlier draft of this Chapter was presented at a Departmental Post-graduate seminar, one comment made was 'well, I eat Chinese food'. This is the situation where Steinberg (above) would say that food is being valued solely in its own terms. I suggest that there is a difference between that speaker's eating at a Chinese restaurant and some Mauritians' open appreciation of the cuisine as, for example, representative of wider Chinese culture.
This theme supports a comparative perspective - from America - where Steinberg argues that:

Many who have severed all other attachments to their ethnic background still retain a passion for their native cuisine. It would be wrong automatically to dismiss this as trivial. But it is one thing when food is integrated into a larger cultural matrix, another when food is valued for itself, rather than as a symbol for something larger. Furthermore, most Americans have developed a palate for the food of ethnic outsiders, therefore denying them exclusive claim to their own cuisine and reducing its symbolic value (1989: 63-4, emphasis added).

Mauritians value their own ethnicities' foods, and those of others, but they also see all of the cuisines combined into a category which they might label as 'Mauritian food': sole symbolic values of foods are short-circuited and re-broadcast as fitting into a national matrix. Indeed, the visitor to Mauritius would be hard-pressed to make the discovery that some of the foods were originally anything other than Mauritian. For example, the dairy drinks Alouda and Lassi are produced by Muslims and Hindus respectively, but it was many months before I came to be aware of this and in fact the historically ethnic provenance of these foods is not terribly relevant.

It is in connection with food that I encountered one of the most pragmatic displays of inter-communal tolerance in Mauritius. Parked near to a market in one of the larger towns of Mauritius one morning, a Mauritius Meat Authority van pulled up in front of the car in which I and a couple of friends were sat. The rear doors were opened and huge sides of beef could be seen suspended from ceiling gantries, with boxes on the floor containing smaller sections of beef and some cow heads. As all of the friends with me that morning were Hindus and Tamils, I expected them to make some comment of disgust or outrage at the sight of these dismembered animals (which I presumed that they held to be sacred). Surprised at the lack of reaction, I asked why there wasn't a problem. 'Oh,' was the surprising reply, 'we only believe that the female cow is sacred, so the Muslims are only allowed to kill male cows.' This seems to be a pragmatic, liberal and sensible settling of any potential conflict between Hindus and Muslims associated with eating beef. Clearly, it would not be fair or practical, or politically wise, for Hindus to ban the import or consumption of beef or animals for slaughter - and this was the ideal solution.244 In many ways this instant sums up the careful and mature way in which individual Mauritians balance interests.

244 I have been unable to find out whose inspired idea this was, but certainly the killing of male cattle in Mauritius is not an issue. I was interested, at other times, to hear Hindus speak of their own enjoyment of eating beef, sometimes in Mauritius and sometimes only abroad, and when this consumption was conducted abroad there was no way in which they could be sure that the beef was derived from a male animal.
Food, and its enjoyment, is a subtle and previously over-looked factor which, in my judgement, links Mauritians together. The topic of food does frequently occur in conversations, Mauritians are great gastronomes, and there was far more consumption of the typical foods of other ethnic groups than, even, in the UK. Without over-stressing the importance of food consumption, I would strongly argue that from my experience it could easily be claimed that an appreciation of other ethnic/culture groups' cuisine is an important precursor, or accompaniment, to wider inter-subjective and inter-communal understanding.

5. Fasting

Fasting is a key ingredient of the religious observances of several of the ethnic groups in Mauritius. I was interested to find that people spoke about fasting in either of two ways. The first drew on a highly modern metaphor and compares the human body to a machine. Ramadan, a Muslim friend told me, was like 'servicing a car', it is an opportunity to clean out the body of all its impurities and, following Ramadan, to return to one's usual ways of life both refreshed and rejuvenated. This was an idea shared by some Hindus as well, that fasting - as well as being necessary, for example before the pilgrimage to Maha Shivaratree - was a good idea for anyone's body.

Secondly, another Muslim friend told me that she looked forward to Ramadan, with its fasting and extra prayers because it 'makes me feel more Muslim'. This is not in tension with being a Mauritian, in fact such statements of devotion are common to members of all religious groups in Mauritius and are irrelevant to public life, they are private statements about something which is generally regarded as a private matter. Hence, they are statements which are arguably Mauritian, it is OK to feel proud of being a Muslim, Hindu, Christian, Tamil (etc.) as long as one does not then suggest that one's religion/ethnic group is better than another, which would not be a 'Mauritian' thing to do.

Returning to the notion of intersubjectivity - which I introduced earlier in discussing my Brahmin friend Ram’s condemnation of Muslims for breaking their own religious ordinances (cf. Chapter 3, Division 2) - fasting represents another instance where this theory can be employed to deepen anthropological comprehension of my informants' statements. Clearly, on a global scale simply because all of the major world religions employ the device of fasting does not
necessarily mean that there will be any greater understanding between members of these religions than between a member of a world religion and a non-member—but I claim that in Mauritius there is a connection: 'you fast for this, we fast for that ...'. It is the simple basis of a form of inter-communal understanding, but because this is historically the case attention is not usually drawn to it (other than - now - by the stranger, i.e. myself).

If one is an orthodox Hindu, for example, abstinence and non-consumption of meat may be a very frequent (or even permanent) occurrence. Christians fast for Lent, Tamils fast before Cavadee, and so on. Fasting is a theme which whilst being repeated differently, manifests similarities, and hence possibilities of inter-community comprehension are enabled.

6. The Sega: *amize, bizin sant sante, danse, amize, sant sante, danse*

![Plate 10, an informal sega dance in progress.](image)

One of the few contributions to a more general sense of Mauritian culture/folklore by Afro-Malagasy Mauritians, which is acknowledged by almost everyone in

245 Indeed, some older or very devout Brahmins (and other) Hindus never drink alcohol, are strictly vegetarian and will not eat food which is prepared outside of their own house. Such devoutness, however, does not mean that they do not go out to work, that women do not work, or that they are necessarily less tolerant of other communities.
Mauritius, is that of the *Sega* (see plate 10, above). This is a very popular dance, with its particular form of music: a party to celebrate a marriage, a birthday, or even just a spontaneous shuffle after a few drinks is not complete without this dance. Indeed, several Mauritian commentators regard it as somehow being in itself a summation of Mauritius: a *condensation* ("it has been felt that the Mauritian culture *is* the *seg*"\(^{247}\)) or distillate, a lowest common denominator of 'Mauritianness' - because everyone\(^{248}\) is thought to know and love it. Hence it has also become a major part of evening entertainments laid on at most of the international hotels. However, these paid performances are usually slick, highly choreographed, and feature floridly-dressed performers and so are very different to the more informal, relaxed, non-spectacle events which characterise most Mauritian celebrations.\(^{249}\)

Nowbuth cites the contrasting French travel-writer Milbert [1812] as observing of the male Sega dancers that "*leur passion pour les femmes est extrême*;\(^{250}\) matching with other statements that the Sega was the 'danse des sauvages' (in Unmole 1984: 30) This kind of animalistic sentiment has been adopted in tourist-guide discourse which seeks, as always, to both exoticise and sexualize the Other. In a locally published guide to Sega, JK Lee (a Mauritian) wryly notes that 'Western travel writers who have 'experienced' Mauritian sega never fail to allude to the fact that the dance is sexually suggestive' (Lee 1990: 46).\(^{251}\)

I have discussed the sega dance in some detail, but now I want to try and explicitly connect it with Mauritian cohesion: as the words of a Sega put it (below).

'We don't have anything other than the Sega to hold us in this exile [...] We don't have anything other than the Sega to unite us.'\(^{252}\)

The Sega is directly connected to the Kreol language, not least because the accompanying songs are most often composed in that language. Recently, there has been the exciting blending by four musicians (Ino, Balik, M Josée and Zamir) of

\(^{246}\) 'Enjoy yourself, you need to sing, dance, enjoy, sing, dance' - taken from Natcho Beti.

\(^{247}\) Nowbuth 1984: 30.

\(^{248}\) Except Franco-Mauritians and some of the more orthodox Muslims and, perhaps, Hindus.

\(^{249}\) I discuss sega as a unifying factor below.

\(^{250}\) "Their passion for the women is extreme."

\(^{251}\) For example: 'If you were to pick one art form to represent Mauritius, it would be the Créole Sega. It was through this dance that the African slaves would let down their hair at the end of a hard day in the cane fields. Couples danced the Sega around campfires on the beach to the accompaniment of drums. It was often a prelude to sex - a mating dance' (Lonely Planet guide *Mauritius, Réunion and Seychelles*, 1993: 52). In some ways, Lee's sentiment is one which this Thesis adopts and pursues: I am not satisfied merely to make the same kind of allusions and conclusions that previous researchers have.

\(^{252}\) Sega composed by Jean Erenne, entitled *Sega de liberté*, source unknown.
Bhojpuri and Kreol in their album *Natcho Beti* - underscoring the easy absorption into the Kreol language of many languages (French (e.g. *Bonjour*), English (e.g. *Sorry*), Arabic (e.g. *Salaam*), etc.. Dr. Cader Raman, following in the footsteps of his peace-maker father, tried in 1965 to defuse the growing levels of communalism that were sweeping Mauritius. To commence the project, a public meeting was called and Dr. Raman notes that:

This was the first time that people of goodwill from all communities joined spontaneously together and with only one motivation - to bring back the people of Mauritius to sanity and to the harmony that had always existed. As I was asked to guide them on what to do to restore order, I said "I do not know at this stage what can be done, but I know that in order to bring the communities together we must see what all of them in common like very much. There are two things which come to my mind and this is a good Mauritian food like the *briyani* or music like a *Séga*. It is expensive and impractical to give everybody *briyani*, so we have to think of a *séga*. If we can ask our musicians to compose a *séga* tune which is catching so that when it is played the children will be humming it the next day in the streets, and we can put the words which will condition the people to love one another, we may be able to transform the country again quickly to love and tolerance". The idea was accepted and the movement was unanimously called the MOUVEMENT D'ENTENTE NATIONALE (1991: 218).

The actions of Raman and his colleagues was very successful, yet again underscoring the high value that efforts made by non-governmental individuals have made to the post-Independence stability of Mauritius.

Although it is undoubtedly true that the slaves who originally danced the *Sega* certainly did not do so with a self-conscious awareness that such activity signified ‘Mauritianness’, it is now very much something that connotes Mauritius both to Mauritians and to outsiders. At family events, such as a marriage, I would be asked if I knew how to do ‘the Mauritian dance’, and it was very much an integral part of Hindu wedding parties as well as a fun thing to do during a male drinking *programme*. The Sega is an activity, I would suggest, which cross-cuts ethnic, gender, age, religious and other divisions. The Sega, once the dance of slaves, is now the dance of all free Mauritians.

7. Disinterest as a Strategy of Conflict Avoidance

Anthropology is usually thought to be concerned with the observation of things being done: anthropology in action. However, I suggest that it is precisely the shared *lack* of interest in some issues that has contributed to Mauritius' post-Independence stability. For instance, one evening a Hindu Mauritian friend and I discussed the economically pre-eminent position of the 2% of the population who
are Franco-Mauritians. The vast majority of Franco-Mauritians insist on a rigid separation between themselves and any non-white Mauritians, indeed a Mauritian writer recently observed that ‘ils [the Franco-Mauritians] vivaient en autarcie à l'intérieur de leurs clubs sociaux et étaient le groupe le plus détesté par tous les non-blancs pour leur arrogance et leur sectarisme’ (Moutou 1996: 150). However, my Hindu friend suggested that the picture was more complicated than Moutou allows for. In answer to my enquiries about how non-Franco-Mauritians regard, for example, the huge gulf in wealth and advantage that separated the bulk of the population from the Franco-Mauritians, my friend stated that ‘we [the Hindus - and perhaps with a wider sense of Mauritian nation] don't hate the Franco-Mauritians, neither do we envy them’. This conflicts with Moutou’s statement that the Franco-Mauritians are ‘hated’, because I never detected that kind of reaction.

Material possessions, to those Mauritians that I met, are not the most important aspects of life, and hence those people who have many such possessions are not to be envied or coveted, over and above one having moral probity (i.e. doing the right thing). For example, one man, Raj, told me that:

A teacher must share his knowledge, and hold nothing back, because he is giving his knowledge not only to those children but to millions of other people - because each boy will marry, and then have children. A whole country can then be built up. If someone comes to me on a Sunday and says, my musical instrument is broken and needs fixing, or I need some private tuition - I fix the instrument, and give the advice. For six days a week, God gives, on the seventh, you must give back. 
Mils: But that's not like all teachers here, is it? I mean that's quite rare!
Raj: Some teachers, on the Sunday, call so many pupils to their home, and make more money [doing private tuition] on that day than during the other six. But, you must give something back. During the week, for five or six days, I earn enough at work to eat, I don't need any more.

For Raj, as for my other Mauritian informants, there was neither pleasure nor necessity in having more than one needed in life ('I earn enough at work to eat, I don't need any more'). Simultaneously, my Mauritian informants told me that they did not envy the possessions of the Franco-Mauritians (or of other élites), but that instead they valued certain ways of doing things, certain values. It is therefore more important that an individual behaves properly in his or her interaction with others than that s/he happens to be rich, powerful (etc.). This was one of the most important lessons that I have personally taken from Mauritius: that good intentions, that politeness, honesty and fairness are valued and, even, prized and that if one - as

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253 I am here adapting Handler and Linnekin's discussion of 'québecitude' in Tradition, Genuine or Spurious, 1984: 280. Thanks to Jonathan Skinner for bringing this article to my attention.
254 'The Franco-Mauritians live in autarchic inside their social clubs and are the group most detested by all the non-whites for their arrogance and their sectarianism'.
255 Of course, one still has to have dealings with individuals who do not accord with the forms of behaviour which most of my informants prized (i.e. those who would do anything for power/money), but - like Lutchmun in a previous Chapter - these individuals, in spite of gaining power and money, lose status.
an ethnographer or otherwise - attempts to live honestly and honourably, one is doing the right thing.

Chapter Conclusions: From Banal Unities to Creolization and Back To 'Unity in Diversity'.

In this chapter, I have suggested that whereas potential lines of division are sometimes made analytically significant (i.e. because they are used by Mauritians), and Chapters 2, 3 and 4 gave examples of these, at other times we do not best understand individual social realities with this perspective. Earlier in the Thesis, I drew upon the work of Peter Mewett who laid out the rationale behind actors' ascription of themselves and others to what he calls 'associational categories' which provide the focus for group formation and the means by which each person can socially position - or, out differently, know about - each other person in the community. The social position of each person produces a commonly known and understood basis for their interaction with others in the community. In this way a local structure of interpersonal relationships is produced. A local social organisation, therefore, emerges from the associational categories that inform the everyday social activity of the community (1982: 102).

Chapter 3 set out to provide examples of ethnographic moments when Mewett's analysis was upheld, but also challenged in unpredictable ways, and Chapter 4 continued this objective. This chapter has sought to present ways in which individual Mauritians (as individuals or groups) often transcend categories which have become (for anthropologists and the Mauritian Government alike) taken-for-granted - seemingly natural and immanent divisions (such as ethnicity, race, religion, etc.) - and I will now suggest some means whereby we can humanistically comprehend these realities.

The majority of my research has involved participation in and observation of daily life, i.e. those times when notions of ethnicity, religion and race are, I have suggested, less likely to be evoked than, for example, at an explicitly religious ceremony or event. However, through this chapter, I have moved between the everyday and the extraordinary moment to show that EVEN at, for example, what might be assumed to be an ethnically, religiously and racially homogenous ceremony (e.g. Tamil Cavadee) - this assumption would be quite wrong. I want to argue that at all of the ethnographic moments presented in this chapter, there was a sense of inclusivity, that anyone could participate (as long as they followed the rules of, for example, the ritual or the workplace). Further, as the chapter developed, I began to introduce, by way of a fine-grained ethnographic portrayal of
Daivanaden's neighbourhood, what I have described as 'unifying and shared practices'.

The importance of the inclusion of these features is that the reader is invited, rather than thinking of Mauritius as a melting-pot or potentially boiling cauldron of ethnicities, to consider the possibility that divisions can be less important than unities, and that there may be something(s) shared between members of different (ethnic, social, religious, racial) groups. For example, whereas De Vos states that a group's ethnic identity consists of their subjective symbolic or emblematic use of any aspect of culture, in order to differentiate themselves from other groups. These emblems can be imposed from outside or embraced from within. Ethnic features such as language or clothing or food can be considered emblems, for they show others who one is and to what group one belongs (1982: 16), in my discussions of food (above) and of some other features (below), it is clear that in many instances in Mauritius, ethnic or religious features do not function as predictable emblems of belonging or identity (although some, of course, do: such as a certain kind of necklace worn by Tamil women, and a medallion worn by Tamil men).

It is significant that both ethnographers of Mauritius and the Mauritian state regard the non-existence of a daily and publicly enacted 'Mauritianness' as a bad thing. Ethnographers and state bureaucrats alike share the thought that this is dangerous, that instead of being united by the national interest of nation-building, individuals tend to be engaged in re-enacting their petty ethnic, religious and racial divisions. However, Billig, by focusing, as indeed I do, on the realities of daily life, would draw an altogether different conclusion. Firstly, the 'metonymic image' of the existence of nationalism is not individuals passionately and regularly waving the national flag (as ethnographers/Mauritius Government would have it), but instead 'the flag hanging unnoticed on the public building' (1997: 8). Clearly, most sociological research, especially classic anthropology, has been conducted in places where this form of nationalism is absent (or unseen), hence 'because the concept of nationalism has been restricted to exotic and passionate exemplars, the routine and familiar forms of nationalism have been overlooked' (Ibid). Perhaps if the unwaved flags which decorate the unfamiliar environment were to be removed they would suddenly be noticed, rather like the clock that stops ticking (Ibid.: 40-1). In how many nations do people, of their own free will, need to demonstrate, on a daily, public and mundane basis, their adherence to the nation? Why should the foreign ethnographer expect such demonstrations of nationalism when they are absent in his or her native land? Definitions of identity as rooted in the nation-state are as inappropriately described as being primordial or pre-eminent in ALL situations as
ethnicity - again, to borrow Holy and Stuchlik's terminology (1983), these are representational models of how reality should be - but 'is' solely in the eyes of the sociological or bureaucratic observer.

Mauritians' unity is actually demonstrated by their non-display of 'Unity in Diversity', by not replaying the divisions which previous ethnographers have argued exist in Mauritius. Through their daily and generally unspoken practices, where division is not pre-eminent, Mauritians' behaviour is, I believe, fruitfully commensurate with Billig's theorising - thinking the unthinkable - that routine and familiar forms of a grassroots concept of nationalism are constantly performed. I take great inspiration from Billig's focus on the banality inherent in much of human social life; I want to convince the reader that although raw divisions between people are often both looked for, and found, by anthropologists, that although this is a possible means of describing and analysing Mauritian social life: they have no relevance to making further sense of my field experience.

Some of the listed instances above seek to communicate a sense of the banal, but I will now attempt to force the point home by mentioning some instances which are arguably even more common than aforementioned events (such as describing your local community as your family). These features are so much a part of Mauritian daily life that their practically universal distribution would never be explained, even to the stranger:256

1. Many Hindu, Tamil and Muslim women wear the churidar (or, as known by Muslims, the shalwar kameez) a long shirt section over trousers.
2. Many Hindu, Tamil and Muslim women wear the sari: the only difference being that Hindu and Tamil women wear the sari in such a way that a section comes over the shoulder differently (i.e. on a different side), and Tamil women pin the section down. Naturally, all women know the differences and are happy to demonstrate them.
3. Many Hindu and Tamil friends and acquaintances (as well as in their buses and taxis) had a mixture of Hindu and Christian icons in their houses and cars (e.g. such as pictures of their favourite Hindu god(s) alongside a statuette or picture of the Virgin Mary).
4. Whenever a family or an individual acquires something new - be it a car, a hi-fi or even a house - a red ribbon is tied in a prominent place so that nobody else's envy or 'evil eye' can harm the owner. This is practise by every group on Mauritius, except, perhaps, the Creoles. There is some disagreement about whether this is a Chinese practice which others have adopted (as one individual suggested), or whether it just happens to be the identical practice of the Chinese and Hindus/Muslims: whatever its provenance - it is now an almost universal 'Mauritian' practice.
5. In Mauritius whatever the religion, all the cultures keep the dead body in the home and friends and relatives come to pay their last respects after the body is laid in the

256 Unless the stranger took an interest, and enquired.

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coffin and before it is covered. However she [the psychiatrist's wife] wanted to come with me and she was emotionally bruised on seeing the body on a white sheet on the floor and she prayed when the body was covered and was out in the coffin to be transported to the Mosque for the last rites before burial. I took her home after that and this memory haunted her for a long time. Two Muslim ladies from the family complained to father that Barbara prayed like a Christian by putting her two hands together instead of putting them alongside together in a cup shape and father told them they should be ashamed of themselves to say this as it was nice that Barbara prayed in the best way she knew' (Raman 1991: 131-2).

I suggest that this is a sample of a 'fund' of supra-ethnic behaviours. This fund, along with the other values detailed in the preceding sections, constitutes a bundle of practices where members of different ethnic (and other) groups meet: in the sharing of some of these practices. This might lead to the supposition that there is not one shared sense of 'Mauritianism' or 'Mauritianness', but different emphases of it with certain shared tones. One way of modelling this fund of supra-ethnic behaviours is by reference to Creolization.

Throughout this Thesis, I have consistently claimed and demonstrated that it is not tenable to discuss social life in Mauritius, or by extension anywhere else, by referring to the actions of solidary blocs: Hindus, Tamils, Muslims, and so on. My theoretical foundation for this argument is drawn from those who have recently been attempting to analyse the implications for social sciences contained in postmodern stances. Drummond, for instance, argues that it is no longer appropriate, if it ever was, to discuss societies and their internal structures in terms of separatenesses (1980). Thus the reliance upon those divisions which governmentality holds as essential and immutable - to rehearse my critique once more - are passed by. Drummond, and others, instead persuasively suggest that 'societies' and 'divisions' (as abstract notions) are actually just continua, or creolised combinations of features. As Rapport observes: '[s]ocieties are no longer discrete social spaces with their own discrete sets of people and cultural norms, if they ever were' (1997: 70). Culture(s) are inherently mobile, as I earlier noted. Rapport continues, '[a] series of bridges or transformations now lead across social fences and cultural divisions between people from one end of the continuum to the other, bridges which are in constant use as people swap artefacts and norms, following multiple and incompatible ways of life' (Ibid). Thus, in Mauritius, I might suggest that two individuals - who happen to be, in terms of religion/ethnicity, a Hindu and a Muslim - may share more between themselves (because of their leisure interests, political opinions, sharing of culinary tastes, occupation, etc.) than, say, any other two Hindus or two Muslims. Just because people are, at times, 'Hindu' or 'Muslim' or 'Christian' does not mean that these are always the pre-eminently significant
ways that people align themselves. It would be ludicrous for me to suggest that merely because I am white and British that I am necessarily more likely to have more, or even anything, in common with all other white and/or British persons. Mauritians can choose from a range of identities, behaviours, languages - and many other variables - from a creole continuum. Further, there may well be 'several coexisting continua, rather than a single, inclusive one' (Hannerz 1996: 67).

To adopt an analogy from the world of media (which has donated so much to postmodern analysis), we as individual human beings are now aware that we make our own beginnings and ends in relation to cultural forms. Like the videotape editor, we can 'cut in' and 'cut out' of the continua of social life to make our own meanings, paying no attention to historically conceived and reified concepts of categorisation (if you are a man, woman, Muslim, Christian, Hindu, Mauritian you must do this, this and this ...). Humanistically: we are each the authors of our identities and far from this being a recent phenomenon, it is only the academic realisation of this social fact that is recent. My recasting of Mauritian ethnography tends to indicate that in Mauritius this is a process with long historical precedence. It is postcolonial to highlight the achievements of a developing society in premiering such a management of social diversity long before Multiculturalism was even notionally conceived, let alone inspirational because I have drawn my ideas and directions from the world of individuals that I have met, rather than from previous ethnography.

It may be instructive, at this point, to mention the work of Bakhtin and his investigation of linguistic hybridisation into the discussion of the transcendence of Mauritian individuals above and beyond the narrow categories of governmentality - outlined in this chapter. Werbner (1997) reports that Bahktin's theorisation of the unconscious (or organic) form of hybridisation. This expression of hybridisation has much in common with the proposition that creole continua are a more adequate model of culture(s). It means that 'despite the illusion of boundedness, cultures evolve historically through unreflective borrowings, mimetic appropriations, exchanges and inventions [...] [t]here is no culture in and of itself' (Werbner 1997: 4-5). In terms of the material to which I have introduced the reader in this - and preceding - chapters, this means that despite the claims of governmentality (and, perhaps, some informants) there is no such thing as Hindu, Muslim, Creole, Chinese (etc.) 'culture' in Mauritius; just as there is no bounded identity of 'Mauritian' or 'British'; there is variation between every individual in terms of defining what it is to be Mauritian, British, Hindu, Muslim, etc.. However, as Ahmad notes, despite this 'organic hybrids remain mute and opaque, such unconscious hybrids ... are
pregnant with potential for new world views' (cited in Ibid.: 5). This connects with my earlier use of Billig’s notions of banal nationalisms; it is the ‘flag hanging unnoticed on the public building’ which is the ‘metonymic image of banal nationalism’ (Billig 1997: 8) - it is the unconscious, unthought of, unreflected-upon connections that individuals make across ‘ethnic’ or other boundaries that are most significant in my summation of life in Mauritius; rather than those odd moments when boundedness comes to the fore. And even when this boundedness does come to the fore, I have demonstrated that its actions and employment cannot be predicted, are not simple: ‘[b]ecause the concept of nationalism has been restricted to exotic and passionate exemplars, the routine and familiar forms of nationalism have been overlooked’ (Ibid). Hannerz picks up on this theme, and notes that those activities which we anthropologists generally refer to as ‘everyday life’ tend to be:

very repetitive, redundant, an almost endless round of activities in enduring settings. Furthermore, everyday life is in large part practical, people participate actively, training their personal dexterities without necessarily reflecting much on the fact. [...] What is local also tends to be face-to-face, in large part in focused encounters and broadly inclusive long-term relationships. People can have each other under fairly close surveillance. Shared understandings can be worked out in detail in the back-and-forth flow of words and deeds. Deviations can be punished informally but effectively, changes may need to be negotiated. [...] Moreover, it is in the face-to-face, and what will turn out to be everyday, contexts that human beings usually have their first experiences (I996: 26, 27).

Throughout this Thesis, I have been arguing that the allegedly humanist, liberal, Multiculturalist discourses of governmentality (‘Unity in Diversity’) are, to borrow the words of James Clifford, ‘meaningless, since they bypass the local cultural codes that make personal experience articulate’ (1988: 263). I have tried, instead, to present Mauritian individuals as eminently practical in their everyday manoeuvres, and have tried to achieve this representation through a focus on local contexts, to make my informants articulate in an anthropological conversation with you (the reader).

Let us anthropologists admit that we will never be capable of either capturing or communicating any holistic sense of a culture, and let us underline that by denying the existence of any holistic culture. The ethnographer approaches his or her research from idiosyncratic motivations, and pursues idiosyncratic paths both in the field and in the writing. Let us maintain a humanistic motivation: to present the most realistic picture of those that we have met and of what our informants and friends have told and demonstrated to us. This Thesis is my attempt at actualising these desiderata. The following Conclusion draws out the main threads of the sustained arguments I have made.
a map depicting the [social] world as partitioned into separable, internally cohering 'societies' is a highly simplified representation of the terrain of social relations.

Barth 1992: 18
Chapter 6
Conclusion

- Overview

This thesis has been intended as a radical review of the sociological and state discourses related to the socio-cultural heterogeneity of Mauritius, especially in its ethnic dimensions. I have aimed to 'have no qualms in writing anthropology to prove a point on behalf of individuality over and against 'culture' or 'society' (Rapport 1998: 554) as these latter have been presented by the aforementioned forms of governmentality.

I began this thesis by describing the conventional portrayal of Mauritians their as being divided on the grounds of differential ethnic, religious, caste and other identities. My extensive literature review (Chapter 1) began to problematize such a clear-cut vision of Mauritian social life by pointing out that some Mauritian authors have noted that although there were times in the past when individuals cooperated and cohabited with no regard to any ethnic, or other, differences. Chapter 2's examination of five individual Mauritians, and their 'loops of discourse', demonstrated that any reliance upon models of individual Mauritian identity which doggedly stuck with the belief that the ethnic (or other) dimension of one's identity determined behaviour and belief was unsustainable. Chapter 3 noted that there are indeed certain times when ethnic, racial, religious and caste (amongst other) divisions were appropriate ways of discussing individual behaviour, these were neither necessarily predictable, nor immutable. Simplistic predictions of behaviour based on ethnic, or other, bases, are shown to be far from sufficient, as Chapter 4 further demonstrates. Through the analysis of a number of social contexts, I highlight that ethnicity, caste and other ascriptive categories, even when they are drawn upon, are far from guaranteed to bring success to the individual deploying connections, for example with members of their own ethnic or caste group. Other, more idiosyncratic forms of mobilisation may be successful.

Chapter 5, continuing my aim to examine ethnicity, and other sources of identity, in ways which are meaningful to those who employ it, outlines a series of individuals and ethnographic moments when divisions established by governmental discourses are transcended by the actions of Mauritian individuals. At a number of
religious occasions, for example, where one might expect solely members of one ethnic group to be participating, the reality was far more complicated. In fact, anyone could, and many did, participate. The second part of this chapter proposes that a great deal of stability is brought to Mauritius by the sharing of beliefs, practices and values by individuals who differ in terms of ethnicity, caste, religion and so on. The chapter concluded that, from my researches in Mauritius, it could be stated that individual Mauritians, in a 'creolized' manner typical of postmodern analysis, shared behaviours from one supra-ethnic ‘fund’.

In my Introduction, I set out three main aims that this thesis sought to fulfil. These were

1. To resist totalisation, reification and holism; to focus on and highlight the daily management of diversity by Mauritian individuals.

2. To attempt to go beyond previous sociological and state-sponsored discourses which, as representational models, over-emphasise social categorisation and division as permanent, immutable and acontextual.

3. To deploy an array of anthropological and textual approaches to best present my alternative, contesting portrayal of Mauritian individual identity.

• Intersubjectivity, Transcendence and Creolization

The main notions which underpin my account of Mauritian identity are intersubjectivity, transcendence and creolization. This triumvirate of analytical tools allows me to agree with governmental discourse that divisions drawn between individuals of different ethnic, religious, caste, or other, memberships are sometimes appropriate - because used by Mauritian individuals - for the analysis of behaviour. There are moments when individuals do couch their discourses in terms of, for example, ethnic identity. Chapter 2 gave examples of individuals defining themselves as ethnic individuals, and Chapter Three gave a series of illustrations of divisive statements, but also illustrated the fundamentally unpredictable nature of such statements and gave examples of individuals expressing negative sentiments about others, but who even-handedly accepted the right of those others to express similar sentiments. Chapter 4 demonstrated that bases of division could sometimes be mobilised to provide, for example, patronage to enable an individual to secure employment.
An underlying theme of all of these chapters is that even when those Mauritians that I cite do describe each other as being ‘different’, as being ‘other’, the cited individuals generally maintained that their counterparts were coeval with themselves (intersubjective comprehension). My further examination of individual identity revealed that individuals transcend the kinds of social cleavages that governmental discourses predict (Chapter 5). This chapter also suggests an additional dimension of individual identity. Individuals, I claimed, frequently participate in, and believe in the efficacy of practices and ceremonies which are not constitutive of their own ethnic, caste, religious or racial group. I gave examples of uniting and shared practices, such as fasting, lack of indigenous population, food, neighbourhood sentiment, and so on. There is a supa-ethnic ‘fund’ of behaviours which draws Mauritians together against any divisive tendencies present at other moments of social life (creolization). As Hannerz writes, creolist conceptions mean that ‘there is hope yet for cultural variety. Globalization need not be a matter only of far-reaching or complete homogenization; the increasing interconnectedness of the world also results in some cultural gain’ (Hannerz 1996: 66). Perhaps we have much to learn from the management of diversity by individual Mauritians.

These three tools (intersubjectivity, transcendence and creolization) produce an analysis of individual Mauritian identity which is more realistic to my field researches than such rhetorical devices as ‘Unity in Diversity’. Taken together, these three tools combine to form a kind of banal nationalism (after Billig) which although not as glorious as the vista heralded by ‘Unity in Diversity’ is also not as fractured as governmental discourse claims. On a daily basis, individual Mauritians transcend such predicted divisions. Certainly, as Billig observed, it is the unnoticed flag and the forgotten clock which is noticed when, respectively, it is removed or the ticking stops (1997: 40-1), so the daily, unreflected upon intersubjectivity, transcendence and creolization of individuals in Mauritius has been, thus far, invisible in ethnographic and state discourses. Each of the three tools analytically separates dimensions of individual action; ‘action’ here defined as:

human conduct which may consist of physically tangible activities, of activities of the mind, of deliberately refraining from acting, or of intentionally tolerating actions of others. In each case, however, human conduct is considered action only and insofar as the acting person attaches a meaning to it and gives it a direction which, in turn, can be understood as meaningful (Schutz 1970: 8).

This thesis has extensively investigated the meaning attached to action by individual Mauritians, and I have striven to communicate these meanings in the most
appropriate and meaningful manner possible, above all through the above three analytical tools.\textsuperscript{257}

1. Intersubjectivity

Schutz has a concise and useful definition of intersubjectivity. It refers, he claims, to what is (especially cognitively) common to various individuals. In daily life, a person takes the existence of others for granted. He reasons and acts on the self-understood assumption that these others are basically persons like himself, endowed with consciousness and will, desires and emotions. The bulk of one's ongoing life experiences confirms and reinforces the conviction that, in principle and under "normal" circumstances, persons in contact with one another "understand" each other (1970: 319).

On a daily basis, I argue, those Mauritians I met did indeed operate on the understanding that others are basically like themselves. They may choose to do things differently, to give things different names and pursue them for different reasons - but they are essentially similar. I follow Schutz's definition by agreeing that, from my researches, this intersubjective comprehension is reinforced through quotidian experience. Whilst the ethnic, religious, racial and other diversities of Mauritius impress themselves strongly upon visitors to Mauritius (academic or otherwise), these diversities are familiar to Mauritius and are not synonymous with the social cleavage that one might expect. Those Mauritians who I encountered did recognise that there are differences which make people either unique as individuals or 'other' in terms of, for example, the name ascribed to their god(s), but this is subsidiary to their recognition of one another as, basically, 'similar'.

2. Transcendence

My Mauritian informants transcended the divisions set up in my mind by both anthropological and sociological texts and discourses of the Mauritius Government. My use of the term transcendence does not necessarily mean that individuals consciously choose to be more than solely motivated by ethnic or religious considerations (although some might). I earlier cited Eriksen's (1990) attempts to deploy the notion of transcendence to show how state-encouraged cultural shows and national day celebrations attempted to link people above and beyond their

\textsuperscript{257} These three tools are not cognitive processes which operate in individuals minds, although they might (e.g. intersubjectively recognising others as similar), rather they are the means by which I have sought to most convincingly (to myself) represent my field experiences.
ethnic, racial, religious and other identities, thus, for example, replacing ethnic symbols with national ones (cf. also Eriksen 1998: 145): classic Multiculturalist techniques. This is not how I have used the term.

I employ this term specifically to refer to the transcendence of individual Mauritians over the divisions which I argue that governmental discourses have created in our conceptions of Mauritian social life. Hence the divisions themselves need not exist in the realm of social action, because individuals intersubjectively constitute themselves as equals. This is not, therefore, the story of individuals gloriously and consciously laying aside, or burying, their tinderboxes of ethnic, racial, religious identity. Rather, this relates instead to individuals who are from the start more than simplistic sums of ethnicity, race or religion. Indeed, and aptly fitting with the postmodern mood, individuals (Mauritian or otherwise) are clearly creole. I cited Rapport (1997) as observing that there are no longer any discrete and bounded ethnic, religious, racial, linguistic (or other) cultures - if there ever were. This commonsensical view of identity will become a commonplace. I gave examples from both mundane and ceremonial contexts of such transcendence to support the employment of his analytical tool.

3. Creolization

Rather than the economic and social success and stability of Mauritius arising from the coming together of individuals previously fractured from each other along certain - especially ethnic - lines, I have claimed that the whole assumption of a priori division is deeply questionable. Intersubjectivity showed individuals recognising other individuals as similar and equal; transcendence showed individuals overcoming divisions predicated in my mind by governmental discourses. My studies at several religious events showed that there were, for example, members of a wide range of ethnic, religious and racial groups present. Creolization complements the other two analytical tools by extending my heartfelt claim that individual Mauritians have much in common. I gave numerous examples of ways in which informants spoke about each other, how they saw fasting, for example, as being basically the same activity - with no mitigation in terms of differential ethnic, racial or religious motivations. Being a good host, being

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258 This is not to say, however, that certain people, at certain times will not claim that there are bounded ethnic, or other, groups in existence. This is a political strategy also likely to proceed with us into the future.
disinterested in the activities of unfriendly elites, sharing in the competence of sega
dancing, all being immigrants to Mauritius, seeing one's neighbours as family,
attaching red ribbons to expensive items of property - all of these unifying, shared
practices and beliefs contribute to Mauritius' stability. This is a supra-ethnic
category of 'actions' (again using Schutz's definition) which means that noone needs
to compromise their ethnic or other identities to ensure that cooperation, toleration,
understanding continues (i.e. as governmentality/Multiculturalism would require).

• Unity in Diversity and Paradise

I suggested in Chapter 1 of this Thesis that the analyst's a priori categorisation of
individuals in an (ethnically, racially, religiously, linguistically) diverse society is
wrong, but that categorisation per se is not, because it is sometimes exercised by
Mauritians. I was certainly naive on arrival in Mauritius - I believed that Mauritius
was its public relations image of straightforward Multiculturalism, accommodating
peace and harmony, unity amidst the diversity of races, religion, etc.. However, this
is not the case. For instance:

In a tragic case reported on the 12th of December 1996 in Le Quotidien, a married
couple (Maya 18 and Soobash Bissoondoyal 29) committed suicide because Maya's
father (a rich supermarket owner) would not let her see Soobash (a poor factory
worker, who, by all accounts, was a truly exemplary person259). Maya's parents did
not know that they had got married in a civil ceremony, and I imagine that the young
couple ran out of hope (from field notes).

Of course Mauritius is not a paradise, nowhere is, and I hope that this Thesis has
gone some way to showing that alongside the achievements of a grassroots form of
inter-communal, inter-ethnic form of social life, there are unpleasant aspects of
culture (verbal xenophobia, etc.). This Thesis would hardly be convincing if it
mentioned only those events or moments which exactly fitted my argument.
Instead, I have shown the compromisable nature of human existence - but also that
there are very positive aspects of life in Mauritius, too. A critique of 'Unity in
Diversity' and those ethnographic divisions which mirror it is now timely. And, at
the same time, this critique is wrapped around the iron fist of the profitability of a
revealing focus on the individual.

Olwig and Hastrup argue that:

The idea that cultures can be conceptualized as separate and unique entities
corresponding to particular localities has not just been a means of bringing order into

259 'Il était un homme au coeur d'or. Il n'a jamais oublié de venir en aide aux pauvres. Il aimait son
prochain. Les voisins l'aimaient beaucoup' said a neighbour' (Le Quotidien, 12.12.96: 2). [He was a
man with a heart of gold. He never forgot to come to the aid of the poor. He loved his close friends,
and his neighbours loved him.]
In Chapter 1, I first suggested that governmentality entailed the creation of division based on the presumption that division was synonymous with difference. I then tacked away from Olwig and Hastrup's position, and concluded that through presenting cultures as governmentality does, rather than merely erecting frameworks for the comprehension of difference, governmentality creates permanent divisions which do not necessarily exist on the ground (i.e. in the behaviour/discourses of individuals).

Throughout this Thesis, I have been attempting to persuade the reader that the hitherto unthinkable is thinkable: that a position which wholly diverges from the discourses of the state of Mauritius, of Multiculturalism, of Eriksen, Moutou, Benedict, Meade and others IS valid. As Rapport puts it, social worlds are not now to be seen as comprised of deadening homogeneities, but consist in and of ‘a new diversity of interrelations: many different kaleidoscopes of cultural combinations, amounting to no discrete wholes, only heterogeneous and interpenetrating conglomerations’ (1997: 71). In a small way, by arguing this perspective as wholeheartedly as I have done, I have aimed to empower Mauritians and their achievements. That it is ethnographically more productive to think of Mauritians as living in an intersubjective, transcendent and creolised social environment does not mean that I deny that many Mauritians do think of themselves as distinctively, dedicated, complete persons within, for example, an ethnic identity. It is not for me to suggest ways in which Mauritians ought to think about their own social world(s) and their place(s) in it/them. What I am passionate about is influencing ethnographic discourse concerning socio-culturally heterogeneous areas. I have never been happy with attempts to convince readers that it is justifiable or even likely that we are gaining a realistic partial picture of any society where one is told that ‘the Ik believe that ...’; ‘the Yanomamo say ...’; ‘Mauritians claim ...’.

From the radical political arena of Mauritius comes another challenge to any remaining belief in notions such as ‘Unity in Diversity’.

There is a cliché that we hear so often, repeated ad nauseam, in a million forms, so often that sheer repetition makes it end up taking on the airs of an actual fact: “Mauritius is a country consisting of different communities”. The sentence masquerades daily as a plain fact and as “the truth”.

Not just as harmless truth either, not just as objective truth, but often it actually masquerades as “a good thing”. In fact, the offending little sentence often continues with the words “... living in peace and harmony” just to prove what a good thing it all is. [...] But as for the “communities” that we allegedly “consist of”, this is something desperately believed to be a known fact. “Desperately” because it has to be asserted all day long, night and day, in everyday life in order to be accepted as true. The minute we stop saying the darned phrase it is as though its truth, and we all know this, will get up and snake out of the phrase and leave the empty shell of bad ideology that it is.
And so we continue re-inventing our obsessive classification and categorization, day after day, in everyday life (Muvman Anti-Kominalis 1995: 5).

This is the crux of my argument too (which links my stance and that of at least some Mauritians): that the representational model of 'Unity in Diversity' depends for its very existence on categorisation. It does not exceed division, recognise intersubjectivity, celebrate transcendence and creolization. Rather, it requires and generates division. It does not represent reality, it is a pragmatic ideology which dehumanises, de-individuates and totalises the members of all of these categorised and classified groups - and is a movement shared with antecedent ethnographers. Communities and groups, which do not necessarily have such 'hard edges' or immanence, are being theoretically (ab)used.

The terms 'community' and 'group' are akin to the 'norm' as employed in anthropology. Holy and Stuchlik argue that the term 'group' usually refers to a plurality of individuals bounded by some principle(s) of recruitment and by a set of membership rights and obligations [...]. everybody fulfilling the recruitment criteria is a member of the group and every group member automatically has the rights and discharges the obligations characterizing membership. [...] Interactions of people are seen, not as those of individuals, but as those of group members, i.e. occupants of specific statuses (1983: 111).

This is a form of anti-individual and anti-humanistic effacement that anthropology ought to be going beyond for, as Overing notes, 'too often we superimpose a particular logic on our data, distorting it, before we have sufficient knowledge to communicate it appropriately' (1985: 20). However, I have exemplified how previous ethnographies of Mauritius have almost unquestionably adopted categorisation and classification (as advocated and practised by the state). This justifies my lumping together of these two power-structures as 'governmentality', and my dismissal of this strategy as, by-and-large, inappropriate to understanding the lives of those individuals that I came to meet. There is an alternative perspective, graphically put by the Muvman Anti-Komunalis (MAK):

We have even heard the absurd rhetoric that “Catholics pay taxes”. [...] We know that smokers and drinkers pay tax (excise tax), buyers pay tax (transfer duties), spectators pay tax (entertainment taxes), consumers pay tax (stamp duty and sales tax), bosses pay tax (company taxes), sugar estates pay tax (export levies), salaried people pay tax (income tax) workers pay tax (employees welfare fund), and even dead people pay tax (estate duty). But Catholics do not pay taxes. We know that long ago the whole of Europe paid taxes to the Pope, but that was done away with 400 years ago (in Dordad, 1996: no. 22, page 4).

I have not denied in this Thesis that, at certain times, people regard themselves as Catholic, Tamil, Hindu, Muslim or, indeed, Mauritian - just that none of these are continually appropriate or useful ways to conceptualise Mauritian social life. Individuals are not mere cultural dupes blindly and predictably following their groups' lead: although this is, admittedly, an attractively simple way of governing - both textually and literally. The creation of categories is the creation of stereotypes
and, as Herzfeld indicates, the creation of stereotypes is often central to the functioning of bureaucracies (1992: 72).
It is Homi Bhabha who neatly sums up the target of my critique - the nation as narration, as narrated by the state or academic:

In the production of the nation as narration there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitive, recursive strategy of the performative. It is through this process of splitting that the conceptual ambivalence of modern society becomes the site of writing the nation (1994: 145-6, emphasis in original).

The state of Mauritius and ethnographers who precede me in the ethnographic record firmly believe, true to their governmentalist ideology, that for Mauritius to be a successful, modern, stable society, everyone must be conspicuously made to subsume their differences to overarching rubrics of nationhood, and display their obsequiance to supra-segmental structures. This is the production of the 'nation as narration' that Bhabha mentions. It is at state-sponsored events (National Day; the opening of academic conferences and village fetes by Ministers and President) that a pedagogical temporality is played out: speeches are made, but nothing changes. However, my interest has been very much been with the 'scraps, patches and rags' (Ibid) of daily life; with individuals who exist outwith the academic or governmental aegis, but who pursue strategies which - whilst not couched in Multiculturalist rhetorics - are effective, liberal and admirable. Everyday, I have argued, intersubjective comprehensions, the transcendence of imposed division, and creolization, ensure that, as has historically been the case, individual Mauritians in this socio-culturally heterogeneous location continue, by-and-large, to live peaceably side-by-side.

The anthropological writing which I have enjoyed most has been bold - unafraid of, and not shying away from, confrontation. Hence this Thesis is studded with moments when I have passionately engaged with my academic peers.

As anthropologists, we should be testing out the adequacy of our colleagues' explanations and considering, as I have, possibilities that, for example, in Mauritius and elsewhere: 'the end result of promoting a multicultural society has been to racialise social relations through the construction of groups who define themselves, or are defined, in terms of race' (Wieviorka 1997: 140).

Hannerz lends his weight to this stance by declaring that 'we may be more actually worried when the state places its weight, even with benign intentions,
behind culture as an administrative category, using it perhaps rather clumsily to identify one target minority population or other for special measures’ (1996: 31). Smith here sums up my intellectual caution:

Our tendency to ‘commit category’, as Campbell [...] so aptly describes it, can be dangerous, demeaning and counterproductive. It helps us assume that ‘races’ are real, that ‘sex’ has innate social significance, that intelligence can be measured, that nations are natural, and so on (Smith 1995: 142)

I have argued that the sociological categorisation of Mauritius by my ethnographic peers - through committing category - is an insufficient way of describing individual realities. Being grounded in the taken-for-granted assumption that there are permanent divisions in Mauritius’ population, its Government and ethnographers posit the indubitable existence of some form of conflict: Mauritius is made up of a variety of ethnic, religious and racial groups, and yet it has ‘avoided violent ethnic conflict since moving to independence in the 1960s’ (Eriksen 1992: 11). The assumed underlying conflict, although not (yet) violent, is part of the ‘iron law of ethnicity’ which holds that ‘when ethnic groups are found in a hierarchy of power, wealth, and status, then conflict is inescapable’ (Steinberg 1989: 170). This is theorising of the feud: predicating division because of diversity.

I believe that the governmental discourses employed by ‘Unity and Diversity’ and antecedent ethnographers employ what Billig describes as ‘the syntax of hegemony’ (calling for unity within and for the nation state), and that, continuing to borrow his terms, ‘Unity in Diversity’ claims an ‘identity of identities’ (1997: 10). All of what I have defined as governmental discourses share with xenophobic racism its phobias about alien cultures, alien ideologies and ‘enemies within’ is the terror that without the known boundaries, everything will collapse in undifferentiated, miasmic chaos, that identity will disintegrate, and the ‘I’ will be suffocated or swamped (Donald 1988: 44).

The reader will have noted that I have followed a different path. A postmodern rupture with received wisdom sums up my stance:

A sweep through the refuse of the received wisdom supports another option: there is beauty and truth to be found in the cultural rough edge, in the ragged structure of carnival, the cracked and the disagreeable, the holographic play of the ludic, the pun, the challenges of the symbolically off-key, the upside-down, and the ethnically plural, among other odd possibilities (Brady 1991: 8).

Post-modern ethnography is an object of meditation that provokes a rupture with the commonsense world and evokes an aesthetic integration whose therapeutic effect is worked out in the restoration of the commonsense world (Tyler 1986: 134).

This methodological rupture has been therapeutic for me and perhaps, too, for anthropology. I have self-consciously sought to meld myself to the postmodern mood, to ensure that this Thesis ‘does not move toward abstraction, away from life, but back to experience’ (Tyler 1986: 135).
Allied with an awareness amongst anthropologists that they operate in power-suffused arenas (which they perform in, *but can challenge*); by supporting any accepted comprehensions of social life we need to beware simple explanations which cunningly disguise more complex pictures. As Barth put it 'a map depicting the world as partitioned into separable, internally cohering 'societies' is a highly simplified representation of the terrain of social relations' (1992: 18).

This Thesis claims a location of culture, and Werbner poses the contemporary problem concerning 'culture':

In the present deconstructive moment, any unitary conception of a 'bounded' culture [Mauritian, Hindu, Muslim, etc.] is perjoratively labelled naturalistic and essentialist. But the alternatives seem equally unconvincing: if 'culture' is merely a false intellectual construction, a manipulative invocation by unscrupulous elites or a *bricolage* or artificially designed capitalist consumer objects [...] - where does the destructive or revitalising power of cultural identities and hybridities come from? (1997: 3-4).

The answer, the source of the destructive/revitalising power of cultural identities, it seems to me, is from the return of the individual as central to anthropological study. In the postmodern context of anthropology, we are all individuals studying other individuals in our own idiosyncratic ways. We perhaps need to be reminded of the creative power and inherent unpredictability of individuals, but - as I have in this Thesis - bear in mind that bloc mobilisations (category) may be the appropriate way of considering human activity at some few times. Throughout this Thesis I have followed Barth's recent statement that:

'Society' cannot defensibly be represented by *any* scheme which depicts it as a whole composed of parts. Probably no such hierarchy of nesting parts within wholes will exhaust the social organization of *any* population; it can certainly not be taken as paradigmatic for all social organization. If individuals are taken to form the elementary parts, they regularly will prove to hold memberships in groups of a diversity of levels and scales and in groups which transect the boundaries of any designated region (1992: 19).

Consequently, I have had to remodel my conceptualization of Mauritian individuals vis-à-vis those ethnographies which pre-date mine - in Overing's words - 'systematically rethinking many of our [i.e. anthropologists'] traditional concepts' (1975: vii).
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WOMEN

Sense and Sensibility

The number of debates, seminars, newspaper articles dealing with "Mauritianism" has been overwhelming since our country obtained its independence. In not a too distant past, students of the University of Mauritius organised a debate on "Mauritianism". The result was that after 29 years of independence, students of the University of Mauritius are still in doubt whether they are Indians, Chinese, Muslims, Creoles or simply Mauritians. If on the eve of the third millennium young Mauritians are still in search of an identity, politicians are mainly to be blamed. They have made matters worse in order to catch votes.

Mrs. Naidoo, who was born on 10th November 1911, said in her book "Sense and Sensibility" that she had been interested in the idea of change and learning to adapt ways of thinking and living. She was a member of the Tamil community and had always accompanied her husband to church. It was only after his death that she started to attend mass on her own. She said that her religious beliefs became an eye opener to her close friends and relatives. She realised that it was possible to practise both religions and feel at ease in both. Quite a few have done the same since.

What do you think of all this?

Loga Virahsawmy

Are your children Catholics?

My husband and I took the wise decision of not getting our children baptised until they could decide for themselves. Late Father de Rebillard who was a very close friend of our family supported us. My children are therefore not Catholics although they are quite close to the Catholic church.

What are the souvenirs that you cherish most of the Catholic Church?

The Tamils used to give offerings to the Church for certain religious ceremonies. After the Tamil religious ceremony, the Mauritian community also offered fruit and flowers in return.

What were the attitudes of parents and friends towards you?

I used to be interested in the Bible of my parents and grandparents was written in Tamil. They even did their rosary in Tamil.

How come that you are culturally a Tamil as well?

I am a Catholic and a Tamil. I can assure you I am not only good in both practices but feel very well at ease in both. On a fateful day in the year 1957 I not only married a fantastic man but also the Tamil culture.

Did you encounter any objections getting married to a Hindu of Tamil culture?

The Tamils of Mauritius, especially those of Port-Louis, were quite close to the Catholic Church although they were not Catholics. My husband was open to all religious beliefs and accepted me as I was. On our wedding day, parents and friends gathered in the Cathedral for a prayer after the Tamil religious ceremony. Since then, my husband has always accompanied me to church. It was only after his death that I started to attend mass on my own or accompanied by my children.

Are your children Hindus?

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