



Pieces of the Mauritian Mosaic: The Puzzle that is My Identity



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INTRODUCTION

*“I was born an Aussie and whacked with some bloody confusing identity hyphens”*¹

Being a Sino-Mauritian-Australian², I can relate easily to the feeling expressed above; my great-grandparents grew up in China, my grandparents and parents grew up in Mauritius, and I grew up in Australia.

Born and raised in Australia where public knowledge about Mauritius is minimal, my micro world offered me only tentative links to Mauritian identity. Mauritius’ population consists of *“People of European, African, Indian and Chinese origins”*³ and their diverse cultural influences have resulted in a highly hybrid society.

My PIP will investigate what defines diasporic Sino-Mauritian identity (a category I find myself under). However to do this, it is necessary to explore national ‘Mauritian’ identity that is influenced by such a diverse range of cultures. On personal reflection and after numerous discussions with my Society and Culture teacher, the only factor shared by all ethnic groups in Mauritius appeared to be the language (also my first language), Kreol⁴. This prompted me to focus on the role of language in facilitating national unity.

¹ From Randa Abdel-Fattah’s novel *‘Does my head look big in this?’*

² ‘Sino-Mauritian’ refers to Mauritians of Chinese ancestry

³ *‘The Republic of Mauritius Web Portal: People and Population’* (accessed 6/7/08):
<<http://www.gov.mu/portal/site/abtmtius/menuitem.ba207ccf347122984d57241079b521ca/>>

⁴ For the purpose of this report, ‘Kreol’ is spelt with a ‘K’ when referring to the language Mauritian Kreol, to distinguish from the ethnic group called ‘Creole’ in Mauritius

Aware that my knowledge about Mauritius was very limited, undertaking secondary research was invaluable to establish greater understanding of why Mauritian identity was initially so difficult for me to define in my micro world. Having learnt the limits of my micro world experience, distributing 'Questionnaire 1 – Mauritian diaspora' with both open- and closed-ended questions provided qualitative and quantitative responses that gave me access and an opportunity to reflect on thoughts and experiences other than my own. A structured interview was conducted with a Doctor of Political Social Anthropology at the University of Oslo, Thomas Hylland Eriksen⁵ (Interviewee no.1) via email, whose work in Mauritius, and academic writings on ethnicity, identity, politics, nationalism and anthropological theory, were applicable to my topic. His interview provided an expert academic perspective of identity in Mauritius, a contrast to the semi-structured, face-to-face interview with my grandmother (interviewee no.2) which offered qualitative information based on her personal experiences.

My PIP covers all 5 Society and Culture core concepts as components of cross-cultural difference; society, people, culture, environment and time. These are highlighted in exploring the impacts of different environments on individuals' sense of identity; the examination of Mauritian society (different to my own Australian society); the change and continuities regarding Mauritian identity over time, experienced by different age

⁵ Interviewee no.1: **Thomas Hylland Eriksen**: b. 1962, Dr. polit. (social anthropology), University of Oslo, Senior Research Fellow (PRIO, International Institute of Peace Research) 1990-1, Senior Lecturer, University of Oslo 1991-5, Professor, University of Oslo 1995-. Editor, *Samtiden* 1993-2001, EASA Newsletter 1992-4, *Norsk antropologisk tidsskrift* (Norwegian Journal of Anthropology) 1993-7. Fieldwork in Mauritius and Trinidad. Academic writings on ethnicity, identity politics, nationalism, anthropological theory, minority issues etc. – '**Bionote**' found on: <<http://folk.uio.no/geirthe/Self.html>> (accessed on:7/7/08)

groups – all underpinned by my individual cultural experiences as part of a Sino-Mauritian diasporic group in Australia.

By engaging in primary and secondary research, my PIP allowed me to delve into a great number of personal experiences and a wealth of public knowledge regarding Mauritian identity. As I realised the subtle interplay between micro and macro world persuasions, my socio-cultural literacy was enhanced. I was constantly challenged to reflect and empathise with perspectives and experiences different to my own, and this allowed me to achieve a greater sense of my own personal ‘Sino-Mauritian-Australian’ identity and pride.

LOG

As a child, I learnt to dread the question “*What nationality are you?*” I have always found it difficult to explain my Mauritian background to people with no previous knowledge about the island. Part of the problem has been my Chinese appearance and my personal experiences that integrated some Chinese cultural aspects, along with “Mauritian” elements that included parts of Indian culture.

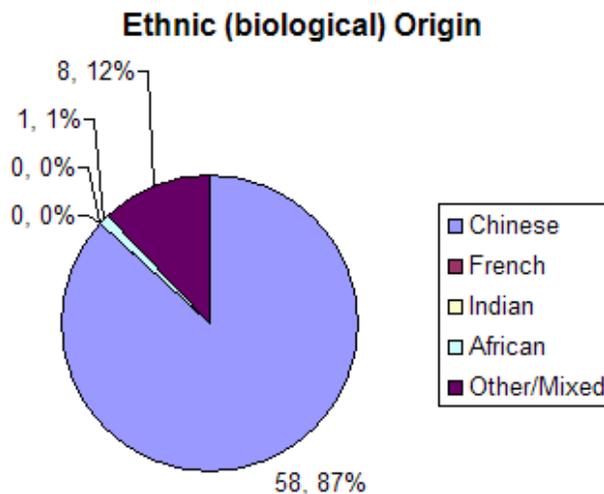
It was only upon reflection when brainstorming ideas for my PIP that I realised being part of a minority Mauritian diaspora in Australia was not the only contributor to my confusion. My feelings of uncertainty about identity in my micro world were a product of macro world persuasions; the pluralistic (rather than integrated) Mauritian society. Not only was my confusion about Mauritian identity a result of lack of knowledge on my part, but also Mauritius’ complexities as a nation in determining their national identity; if their own national identity was confused, no wonder mine was. This provided the basis of my PIP.

After undergoing secondary research that significantly increased my understanding of why Mauritian identity was so difficult to define, I wrote rough plans of what I wanted to obtain from primary research, keeping in mind my own personal reflection. I began primary research to obtain qualitative and quantitative responses regarding ideas about Mauritian identity.

While undergoing secondary research, I came across various publications by Norwegian social anthropologist, Thomas Hylland Eriksen. His academic expertise and written thesis' concerning Mauritian identity prompted me to contact and interview him via email. The information obtained in both my interview and from his academic publications were essential sources of reference throughout the research and writing of my PIP.

'Questionnaire 1 – Mauritian Diaspora' (including both closed and open-ended questions) was distributed mainly by email due to accessibility limitations – 85 surveys were distributed and 67 responses were received. Most of the respondents (Figure A) were of Chinese ethnic origins, a skewed demographic due to my restricted access to Mauritians other than family and family friends.

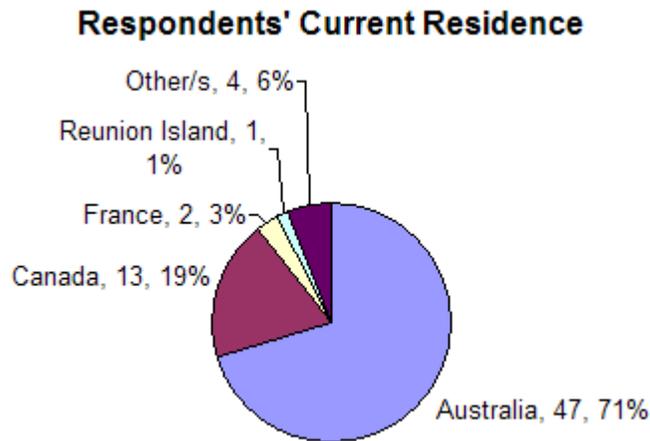
Figure A:



I decided that 'Questionnaire 1 – Mauritian Diaspora' would be distributed to Mauritian expatriates living in any country (not just Australia), as I was uncertain of the number of

questionnaires that would be returned. Even so, respondents' current countries of residence (Figure B) are disproportionate, with most living in Australia.

Figure B:



After collating my primary research, I began to write the central material, looking back at my original rough outlines of chapters, and shaping them into a clearer structure based on my findings. I attempted to synthesise and triangulate my ideas, using primary and secondary research as support. Although it took copious amounts of editing and rewriting, I feel that it was well worth the reward of a polished finished PIP.

CHAPTER 1 – Defining the Undefinable: the Island of Mauritius

“The ends of the earth are never the points on a map that colonists push against...”

- Michael Ondaatje in *‘The English Patient’*



Why is it so difficult to explain Mauritian identity?

When I asked “...*what do you think gives Mauritians a sense of national pride?*”, social anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen (interviewee no.1) replied “*Well, the first question ought to be whether or not Mauritians do have a sense of national pride...*”⁶

⁶ Interviewee no.1: **Thomas Hylland Eriksen**: b. 1962, Dr. polit. (social anthropology), University of Oslo, Senior Research Fellow (PRIO, International Institute of Peace Research) 1990-1, Senior Lecturer, University of Oslo 1991-5, Professor, University of Oslo 1995-. Editor, *Samtiden* 1993-2001, EASA Newsletter 1992-4, *Norsk antropologisk tidsskrift* (Norwegian Journal of Anthropology) 1993-7. Fieldwork in Mauritius and Trinidad. Academic writings on ethnicity, identity politics, nationalism, anthropological

Part of the difficulty in defining Mauritian national identity has been influenced by its hybrid nature, rooted in its history; “*You can feel the layers of colonization in the mixture of races and the names of the villages, mountains and bays...*”⁷. While Mauritius achieved independence within the Commonwealth in 1968, its cosmopolitan society stems from its colonial past. Because the island was originally uninhabited; “*If it hadn’t been for the French and the British, there would have been no Mauritius – and people know this*”⁸, there is less hostility between the ex-colonisers and colonised than usual in postcolonial nations.

The Dutch were the first to occupy the island, but abandoned it in 1710. Five years later, the French claimed the island, and it was during this period that slaves from Africa and Madagascar were imported to work on plantations, and serve the French elite. In 1810 the French capitulated the island to the British, ensuring that the British allowed inhabitants to retain their language, customs, laws, and religion.

When slavery was abolished in 1833, freed slaves left the plantations and became artisans or farmers, and so the British brought nearly 450 000 Indians between 1837 and 1907 to undertake field labour. Chinese immigrants also arrived on the island, working as traders, during the 19th and 20th century.

theory, minority issues etc. – ‘**Bionote**’ found on:

<<http://folk.uio.no/geirthe/Self.html>> (accessed on:7/7/08)

⁷ Baroness Sheri de Borchgrave, ‘Jewel in the Indian Ocean’ from magazine *World & I*. May 1996.

eLibrary. Proquest CSA. HORNSBY SHIRE COUNCIL LIBRARY (accessed on 7/7/08):

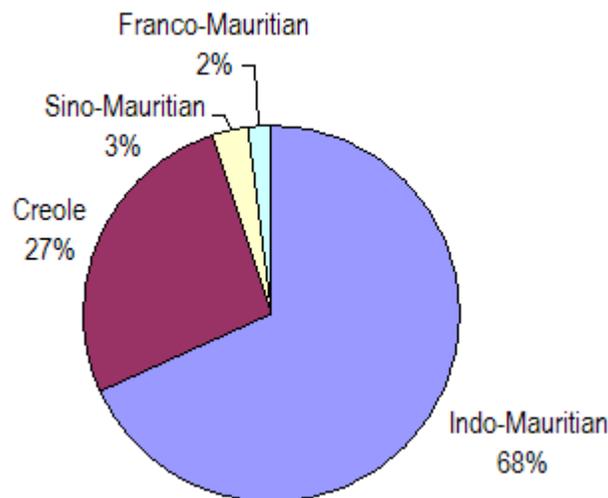
<<http://elibrary.bigchalk.com/australia>>

⁸ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, ‘*Communicating Cultural Difference and Identity: Ethnicity and Nationalism in Mauritius*’ (1988), Occasional Papers series at the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo

Current Ethnic Composition

Mauritius has a total population of roughly 1.2 million, composed of “*People of European, African, Indian and Chinese origins.*”⁹ Indo-Mauritians make up most of the population at 68%, with Sino-Mauritians (my heritage) a minority group of 3%, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1¹⁰: Ethnic Divisions in Mauritius



As each ethnic division have ancestral ties with various distinct cultures, the hybrid society, together with the restrictions of environment, facilitates acculturation that has resulted in a highly pluralistic Mauritian culture. This is further supported as the 1968 Constitution for Mauritius legally identifies four ethnic categories: ‘Hindus’, ‘Muslims’, ‘Sino-Mauritians’, as well as the ‘General population’ which includes white European Mauritians (nearly all Franco-Mauritians and only a few Anglo-Mauritians) as well as

⁹ ‘*The Republic of Mauritius Web Portal: People and Population*’ (accessed 6/7/08):
<<http://www.gov.mu/portal/site/abtmmtius/menuitem.ba207ccf347122984d57241079b521ca/>>

¹⁰ Statistics from ‘*CIA – The World Factbook – Mauritius*’ (accessed 6/7/08):
<<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mp.html>>

Coloured Creoles¹¹ (offspring of French settlers and African slaves) and Creoles with African physical features¹².

The “catch-22” predicament of Mauritius, is embodied in that “*National unity can be taken to imply loss of distinctiveness (identity), whereas remaining distinctive precludes national unity*”¹³; that is, creating national identity and unity among ethnicities may result in a loss of ethnic identity, whereas retaining ethnic social differentiation denotes lack of national Mauritian identity. While Mauritians attempt to find a balance between the two scenarios, the micro world identities of expatriate individuals are indistinctively linked.

Having a Sino-Mauritian background, an ethnic group already a minority diaspora within Mauritius, I feel that my ‘nationality’ is Australian (where I was born and raised), however my ‘ethnicity’ as a ‘Sino-Mauritian’ or even ‘Mauritian’, is difficult to discern.

¹¹ The ethnic group now known as ‘Creole’ refer to those of African descent

¹²Stephan B. Wickman. Mauritius: Chapter 1B. Society and Culture. Countries of the World. Bureau of Electronic Publishing. 1991. eLibrary. Proquest CSA. HORNSBY SHIRE COUNCIL LIBRARY. (accessed 6/7/08):

<<http://elibrary.bigchalk.com/australia>>

¹³ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, ‘*Communicating Cultural Difference and Identity: Ethnicity and Nationalism in Mauritius*’(1988) , Occasional Papers series at the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo

CHAPTER 2 – The Death of ‘Nationality’ and ‘Ethnicity’

“...it is becoming difficult for many people to maintain their traditional attachment to any...cards of identity that have been so essential to social reality in the past”¹⁴

- Walter Truett Anderson

Sino-Mauritian Identity

The elusive nature of Sino-Mauritian identity reflects how the terms ‘Ethnicity’ and ‘Nationality’ are losing their appropriateness as globalisation has led to increased mobilisation in the 20th and 21st centuries. People who migrate often still retain emotional attachments to their previous environment and society. My grandmother (interviewee no.2) who moved to Australia in 1991, commented that “*I am more Mauritian than Australian, because I have been living so long there...*”¹⁵ when questioned about her nationality. This highlighted her emotional attachment to the environment of her younger years, and its impact on her identity.

Being a Chinese diasporic group in Mauritius originally, defining Sino-Mauritian migrant identity, in ethnic and national terms, is an arduous task.

The Society and Culture Stage 6 Syllabus defines ‘ethnicity’ as: “*Based on perceived common origins that people share a specific ancestry and culture that mark them as*

¹⁴ Walter Truett Anderson, ‘*Reality isn’t what it used to be*’ (1990), HarperCollins

¹⁵ Interviewee no.2: 74-year-old female living in Australia

different from others,”¹⁶ however in the case of Sino-Mauritian expatriates, “*common origins*” can refer to their Chinese ancestral roots, their ties with “Mauritian” culture, or a degree of overlap between the two.

The Macquarie Dictionary defines ‘nationality’ as: “*the quality of membership in a particular nation (original or acquired),*”¹⁷ so the country of residence or citizenship that generally denotes nationality also affects the identity of diasporic Sino-Mauritians.

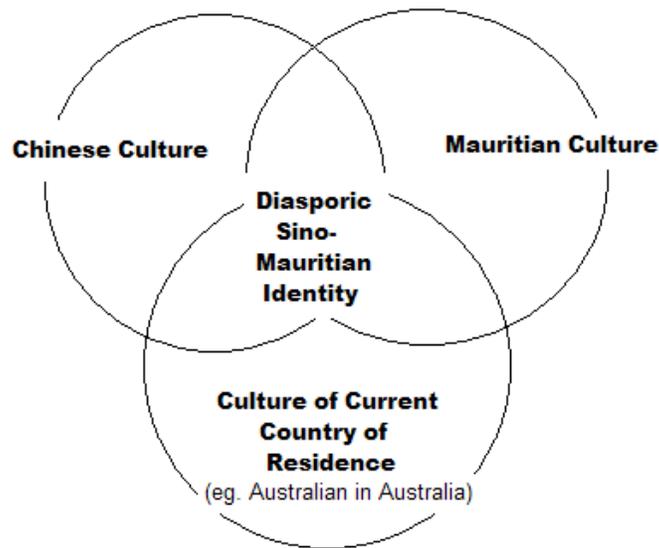
Respondent no.38 to my questionnaire agrees, writing “*You never lose the [Mauritian] identity but it is shaped and transformed when someone superimposes experience of living in foreign countries*”¹⁸. These ideas prompted my reflection that there are 3 spheres (Chinese culture, Mauritian culture and Culture of the Current Country of residence) that influence diasporic Sino-Mauritian identity, illustrated in Figure 2 below. However, degrees of influence/overlap of these cultures vary for each individual.

¹⁶ ‘*Society and Culture Stage 6 Syllabus*’

¹⁷ ‘The Macquarie Dictionary Online© 2008 Macquarie Dictionary Publishers Pty Ltd. (accessed 7/7/08): <<http://macquarinenet.com.au/article?recid=000049364&db=dictbigmac>>

¹⁸ Mauritian-born male living in the UK, aged 30-39

Figure 2: Spheres of Influence – Diasporic Sino-Mauritian Identity

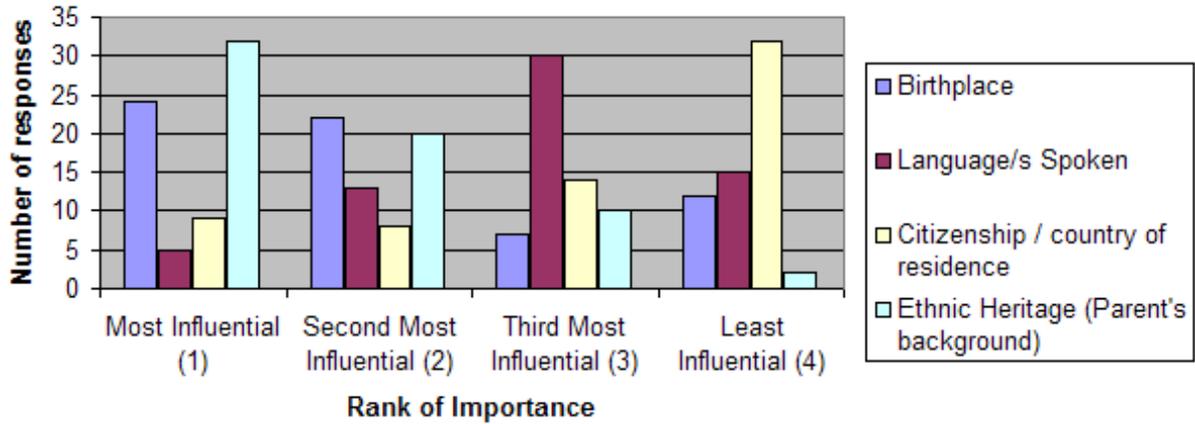


It appears that an individual's socialisation, especially their family's role, particularly affects the degree that the different spheres influence diasporic Sino-Mauritian identity.

In the responses to my questionnaire (Figure 3) I found that 'Ethnic Heritage (Parent's background)' was ranked most often as the most important factor in the development of respondents' identity, whereas 'Citizenship/country of residence' – nationality – was the least influential factor. This suggests that "*Most people need some public identifier, some anchor to a historical tradition and a recognised group,*"¹⁹ and Sino-Mauritians are looking to their parents' heritage for feelings of inclusiveness and identity.

¹⁹ Walter Truett Anderson, *Reality isn't what it used to be* (1990), [HarperCollins](#)

Figure 3²⁰: Responses to “Rank the factors that have influenced your identity in order of importance”



Of the 67 Mauritian expats surveyed, 41 respondents (62%) were aged 40 and over, and 49 respondents’ country of birth was Mauritius. This older demographic suggests that many respondents’ parents’ backgrounds would have been more strongly connected to Chinese and Mauritian culture, influencing respondents’ sense of identity (Figure 2).

With ‘Birthplace’ being marked as the most important factor in influencing identity after ‘Ethnic Heritage’, and Mauritius being the birthplace of 49 respondents (Figure 5), it can be deduced that many respondents were emotionally attached to the Mauritian environment, not only their ethnic heritage. For the children of Sino-Mauritian expats who were born and raised in countries other than Mauritius, the removal of emotional ties to Mauritian environment may skew their notions of national and ethnic identity.

²⁰ Results from ‘*Questionnaire 1 – Mauritian Diaspora*’

Figure 4²¹:

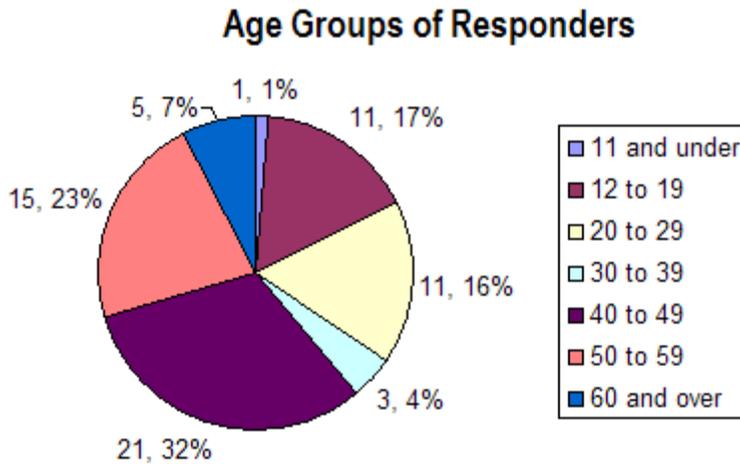
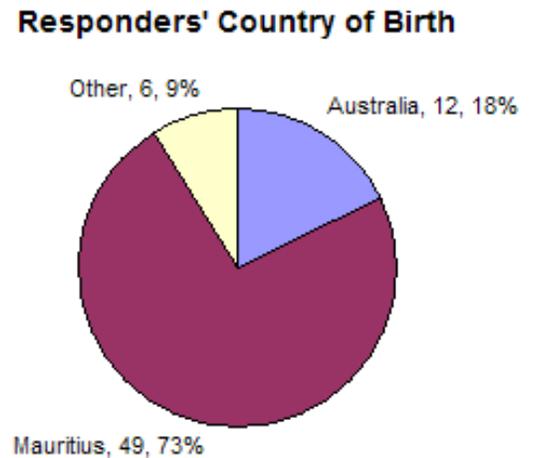


Figure 5²²:



Although ‘nationality’ has previously been defined as the “*quality of membership in a particular nation*”²³, my questionnaire results contradicted this, revealing that many respondents did not perceive their ‘citizenship’ or ‘country of residence’ as synonymous with their nationality. British sociologist Anthony Giddens²⁴ believes that “*The era of the nation-state is over,*”²⁵ and this idea was supported in my questionnaire responses where in many cases the nationality felt by respondents was not always directly linked with a nation-state.

Figure 6 below, shows that of the 67 surveyed, 15 respondents felt their nationality was ‘Sino-Mauritian’ and 14 respondents felt their nationality was both ‘Australian’ and

²¹ Results from ‘*Questionnaire 1 – Mauritian Diaspora*’

²² Results from ‘*Questionnaire 1 – Mauritian Diaspora*’

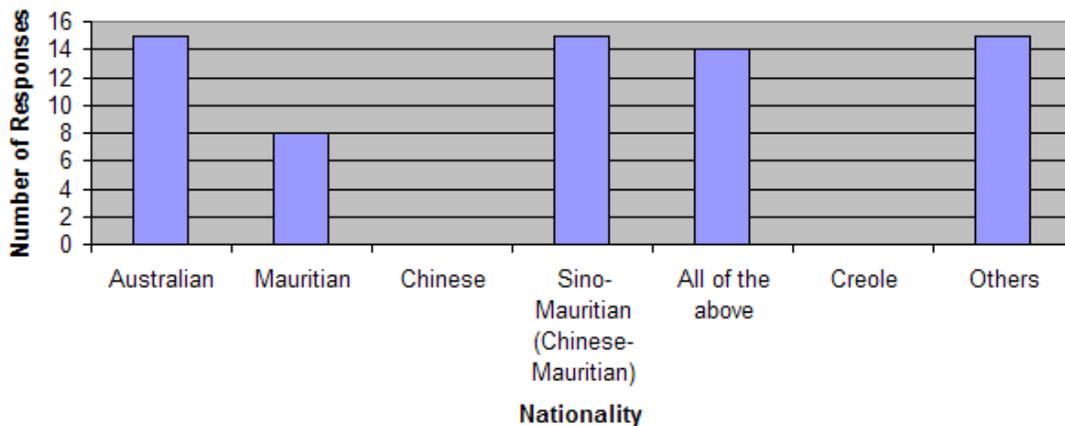
²³ ‘The Macquarie Dictionary Online© 2008 Macquarie Dictionary Publishers Pty Ltd. (accessed 7/7/08): <<http://macquarierenet.com.au/article?recid=000049364&db=dictbigmac>>

²⁴ British sociologist, renowned for his ‘Theory of Structuration’ (an attempt to reconcile theoretical dichotomies of social systems such as agency/structure, subjective/objective, and micro/macro perspectives) ‘Biography’ found on: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anthony_Giddens>

²⁵ Anthony Giddens, ‘*Runaway World: How Globalisation is Reshaping Our lives*’(1999), Routledge New York

‘Sino-Mauritian’²⁶. Of the respondents that selected ‘Other’, only 2 of them felt their nationality was singular, with the other 13 feeling a mix of Sino-Mauritian/Mauritian nationality together with their country of residence. These figures exemplify the increasingly subjective notion of ‘nationality’.

Figure 6²⁷: Nationality felt by responders



In response to the question “*Personally, what do you think determines Mauritian Identity?*” Respondent no.41 wrote, “*Living in Australia, a very multicultural country, yes you may be born there but you still call yourself the nationality your parents or grandparents were born in...if you agree to call yourself Mauritian, then you are.*”²⁸ He demonstrates the transient nature of nationality as individual perceptions; rather than citizenship, shape national identity, suggesting the death of ‘nationality’ as it has previously been defined. Academic writer and lecturer Walter Truett Anderson²⁹

²⁶ Option ‘All of the above’

²⁷ Results from ‘*Questionnaire 1 – Mauritian Diaspora*’

²⁸ Australian-born male living in Australia, within the age group 12-19

²⁹ Independent writer and lecturer, **EDUCATION:** Ph.D., Political Science and Social Psychology, University of Southern California

supports, “Amid the collapse of old ways of belief comes the discovery that we are capable of creating many layers of belief and unbelief, of living partly in and partly out of socially created realities,”³⁰ and applied to the notion of ‘nationality’ this reinforces the idea that nationality is a socially constructed reality. As globalisation changes the nature of society, the constructs of that society consequently undergo redefinition on an individual basis.

Figure 7³¹:

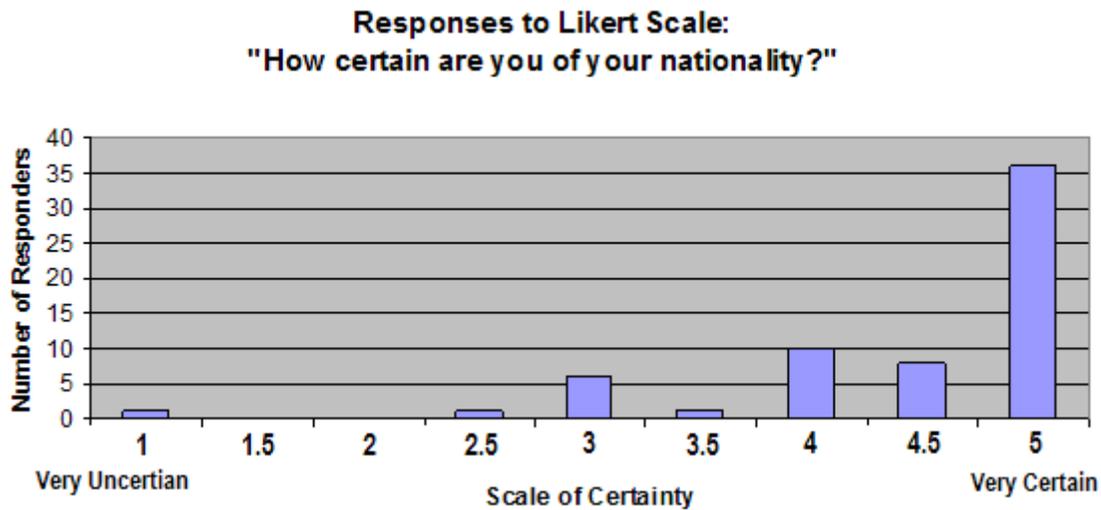


Figure 7 above, shows that despite the fairly diverse spread of nationalities felt by diasporic Sino-Mauritians, over half (36 out of the 63) indicated that they were very certain of their nationality. These results correspond with Philippe Legrain’s³² belief that “National identity is not disappearing, but the bonds of national identity are loosening,”³³ implying that rather than feelings of confusion and uncertainty as I originally predicted,

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³⁰ Walter Truett Anderson, ‘Reality isn’t what it used to be’ (1990), HarperCollins

³¹ Results from ‘Questionnaire I – Mauritian Diaspora’

³² Chief economist of Britain in Europe. He has a first-class honours degree in economics and a masters in politics of the world economy, both from the London School of Economics.

³³ Philippe Legrain, ‘Open World:/ The Truth About Globalisation’ (2002), Abacus

the breakdown of traditional ‘nationality’ can have a liberating affect on individuals as they are given more choice. Anderson believes this is a dimension infiltrated by the postmodern world as *“Instead of forming our ideas of who and what we are on the basis of the “found” identity fixed by social role or tradition, we begin to understand ourselves in terms of the “made identity” that is constructed (and frequently reconstructed) out of many cultural sources”*³⁴.

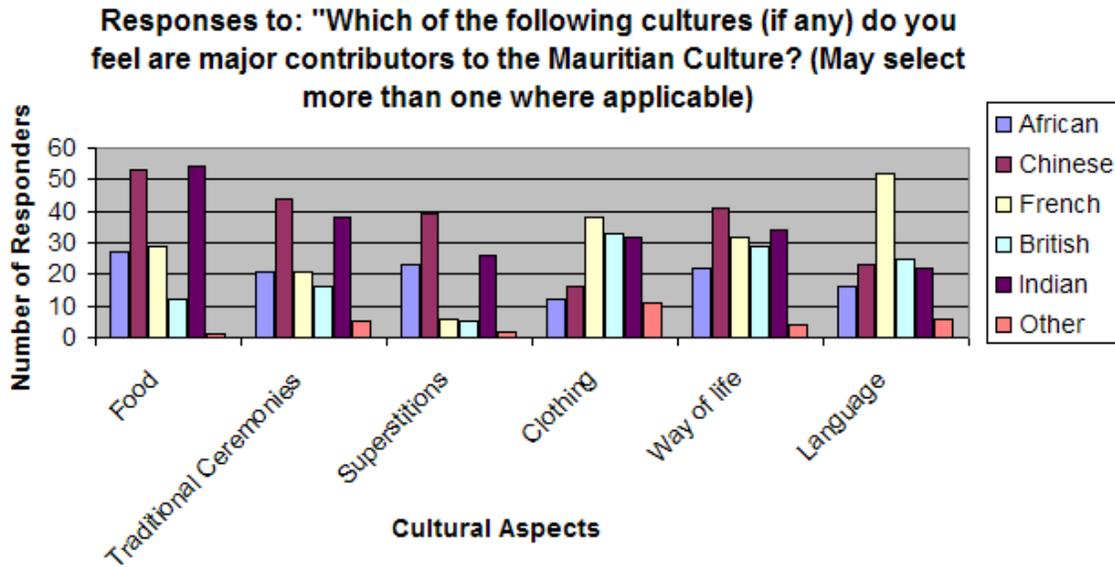
The “Constructed” Mauritian Identity

Mauritian identity is composed of cultural aspects that have been influenced by the myriad of cultural practices of the diverse ethnic groups living on the island. In the open-ended question 15, *“Personally, what do you think determines Mauritian Identity?”*, most respondents mentioned the food and languages of Mauritius.

In Figure 8, food and language, two aspects recurrently mentioned in question 15, were perceived as being most influenced by Indian and French cultures respectively, demonstrating dual cultural influence.

³⁴ Walter Truett Anderson, *‘The Fontana Postmodern Reader’* (1996), [HarperCollins](#)

Figure 8³⁵:



Furthermore, apart from the ‘Superstitions’ category³⁶, at least 12 respondents selected each ‘African’, ‘Chinese’, ‘French’, ‘British’ and ‘Indian’ cultures as major contributors to the different Mauritian cultural aspects. The varying degrees of influence apparent suggests that acculturation has played a major role in defining ‘Mauritian’ culture, despite ethnic differences also hindering national unity. During my interview with Eriksen he concurred “...*their national identity is largely founded on the image of the mosaic, the notion of “the rainbow society” and other elements of diversity.*” In light of these ideas, Mauritius’ national *identity* – that is defined by its pluralistic society – does not necessarily foster national *unity*.

³⁵ Results from ‘*Questionnaire 1 – Mauritian Diaspora*’

³⁶ ‘Superstitions’ category included as superstitions are often linked with ethnic or cultural affiliation and practices, helping to reveal identity. ‘Superstitions’ was chosen as the category label rather than ‘beliefs’ or ‘rituals’ to ensure ethnicity-influenced (eg. the number ‘4’ is unlucky in Chinese culture) responses rather than religion-influenced ones that are a completely different factor in ‘identity’, not just ‘Mauritian’ identity

Therefore, feelings of ‘nationality’ itself, become dependent on the individual’s experiences regarding a mix of both Mauritian identity and Mauritian unity – affecting the quality of their membership. This was illustrated when I asked my grandmother “*Is there a strong sense of Mauritian identity?*” and she replied “*...sometimes they say ‘all the apes protect their own mountains, protect their own areas’ that means when Mauritians go abroad and meet together, they want to be one, but when they are in Mauritius, they are criticising each other...*” Her reply reveals that the interplay between Mauritian ‘identity’ and Mauritian ‘unity’ affect the quality of national membership. Environments other than Mauritius tend to facilitate greater *unity* between Mauritians of different ethnicities, that is, a greater sense of national collectiveness (regardless of ethnicity).

In accordance, many respondents mentioned that ‘Mauritian Identity’ was more strongly felt among ethnicities when visiting or living abroad³⁷. Respondent no.65 wrote that “*In Mauritius there is no “Mauritian identity”, it is all ethnic-based. It is only when Mauritians are outside the country that there is a “Mauritian identity” ...*”³⁸ Many other respondents also revealed a stronger sense of “Mauritian Identity” when off the island. More often stated was the excitement experienced by respondents when recognising Mauritians abroad. Although respondents could not always pinpoint what made Mauritians (from any ethnic group), recognisably Mauritian, Respondent no.6 replied “*You can identify a Mauritian in the street of Sydney or London, when they are ‘pe cause*

³⁷ Question 15: “Personally, what do you think determines Mauritian Identity?” from ‘*Questionnaire 1 – Mauritian Diaspora*’

³⁸ Mauritian-born female living in Australia, aged 40-49

ca gros creole la lors chemin...ca ene mauricien – ki li noir, blanc ou jaune...li pou
toujour ene moricien’(Translation from Kreol in footnote)’³⁹.

This language “*is the daily, ethnically-neutral means of communication that allows the daily successful crossing between different ethnic groups, and in doing so, aids in the masking of the constantly reinforced ethnic identities – particularly in public spaces*” of Mauritius. One of the few non-ethnic related aspects of Mauritian culture⁴⁰, Kreol⁴¹ has been a great facilitator towards a unified Mauritian identity.

³⁹ Mauritian-born male living in Australia, aged 50-59. Translation: “*speaking that big Kreol on the street...that is a Mauritian – whether he’s black, white, or yellow...he is still a Mauritian*”

⁴⁰ Reena Dobson, ‘*Beaches and Breaches: Articulations and Negotiations of Identity, Ethnicity and Cosmopolitanism in Mauritius – ‘the Most Cosmopolitan Island Under the Sun’*’ (2007) Limina: A Journal of Historical and Cultural Studies, University of Western Sydney

⁴¹ For the purpose of this report, ‘Kreol’ is spelt with a ‘K’ when referring to the language Mauritian Kreol, to distinguish from the ethnic group called ‘Creole’ in Mauritius

CHAPTER 3 – I Speak Therefore I Am: the Correlation Between Language and Identity

*“...speaking that big Kreol on the street...that is a Mauritian – whether he’s black, white,
or yellow...he is still a Mauritian...”*

- Respondent no.6 (translated)

Shared language allows communication and empathy between members of a society interacting within a particular environment. As a large part of individuals’ socialisation occurs in the communication of culture and values through verbal language, this plays a significant role in the construction of personal identity. On a macro world scale, language “represents identity (falsely or not)”⁴² by acting as an indicator for social differentiation, that is, “criteria used to divide society into groups according to perceived differences.”⁴³

In response to “*Personally, what do you think determines Mauritian Identity?*” many respondents mentioned ‘language’ in terms of either bi-/multi-lingualism and, more commonly, knowledge of Kreol.

In my micro world, Kreol was my first language, and it has become a symbol of my Mauritian identity.

⁴² Frank Campbell, ‘By Hook or By Crook: A Journey in Search of English’ (2007), The Australian

⁴³ ‘Society and Culture Stage 6 Syllabus’

Kreol and Mauritian Identity

Mauritius' colonial past that has resulted in the hybridised Mauritian society also accounts for the diversity of languages in Mauritius. Although English is now the official language, French had been before that, and Mauritians learn both languages at school. However, "*The languages heard [in Mauritius] include Kreol; a French dialect, French, English, two dialects of Chinese, and six Indian languages,*"⁴⁴ revealing the continued use of traditional languages within and between ethnic groups, that are retained as part of their cultural identity. Despite ancestral languages being retained by corresponding ethnic groups, my grandmother explained how her brother had learnt Hindi informally "*In the shop, with the customers who come in...just learning in conversation,*" demonstrating acculturation through direct social interaction. Eriksen concurs, noting "*...many of the ancestral languages are no longer in active use, and tend to serve as emblems of ethnic membership rather than being vehicles of communication*"⁴⁵, implying that the role of ethnic-based languages are to reinforce identity, rather than for everyday communication. For everyday purposes, Kreol is used.

In everyday situations English is barely used, despite compulsory French and English classes at school, and English being the official language. Instead, the French dialect Kreol (that evolved on the island during slavery in the 18th century) has become the lingua franca of the island. Although it originated within the ethnic group now referred to

⁴⁴ Burton Benedict, '*Lands and People: Mauritius*' (2008), Grolier Online, (accessed 6/7/08): <<http://lp.grolier.com/cgi-bin/article?assetid=4044400>>

⁴⁵ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, '*Tensions between the ethnic and post-ethnic: Ethnicity, change and mixed marriages in Mauritius*' (1997), Macmillan

as the ‘Creole’⁴⁶, it is now the most-commonly spoken language, and the first language of virtually all Mauritians⁴⁷, thus transcending individual ethnic affiliations. Kreol has become an unlikely facilitator of Mauritian unity, as it “*has over the last one-and-a-half century or so proven practically capable of uniting otherwise very diverse groups into a reasonably homogenous linguistic group.*”⁴⁸ The recurrent mention made by respondents that ‘Kreol’ is an important determinant of Mauritian identity⁴⁹ highlights how it has become a symbol for Mauritian identity. In practical use, my grandmother revealed that her parents didn’t “*...know English and French. They can speak Kreol, so we speak Kreol to customers who come into the grocery*”, so Kreol acts as a communication bridge in the public domain.

However, despite Kreol’s vital role and its symbolic status in Mauritian society and identity, movements to officialise the language have been met with as much resistance as support. Language can be seen as “*...a diagnostic tool for the dissection of power, identity, class and origin: language as social DNA,*”⁵⁰ and an examination of Kreol in these terms reveals how the correlation between language and identity can have both positive and negative implications.

⁴⁶ People of African descent, or mixed-African descent

⁴⁷ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, ‘*Communicating Cultural Difference and Identity: Ethnicity and Nationalism in Mauritius*’ (1988), Occasional Papers series at the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo

⁴⁸ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, ‘*Communicating Cultural Difference and Identity: Ethnicity and Nationalism in Mauritius*’ (1988), Occasional Papers series at the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo

⁴⁹ “Personally, what do you think determines Mauritian Identity?” from ‘*Questionnaire 1 – Mauritian Diaspora*’

⁵⁰ Frank Campbell, ‘*By Hook or By Crook: A Journey in Search of English*’ (2007), [The Australian](#)

While interviewing Eriksen, he stated that Kreol is still “...*(vaguely) associated with the Creole ethnic category, just as English is (vaguely) associated with certain rich countries,*” and because the Creole ethnic category has historically been perceived as lower class, this identification undermines the language. French and English are historically associated with higher social classes, but in contemporary times the stronger motivation for keeping French and English institutionalised is the occurrence of westernisation. This is articulated in that “*French is the preferred written language of most Mauritians, while English is the language of the bureaucracy and the state...Mauritian fiction tends to be written in French while political memoirs are usually written in English*”⁵¹. Television news programs also tend to be in French, though more recently a few more are in English, and even fewer in Hindi.

Popular culture mediums, including television shows and movies, are generally Western productions dubbed in French, demonstrating an amalgamation of westernised influences underpinning socialisation through the media. Part of the reason Mauritians debate against making Kreol a national language, despite its unifying influence, is the fear of further isolating themselves from the global world if they replace English and French with only locally spoken Kreol.

Despite these reasons against officialising Kreol, my questionnaire results surveying Mauritian expatriates reveal in Figure 9 that only 10 of those surveyed could not speak Kreol suggesting its likely continuation regardless of its unofficial status. (At least 12 of

⁵¹ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, ‘*Tensions between the ethnic and post-ethnic: Ethnicity, change and mixed marriages in Mauritius*’ (1997), Macmillan

the respondents were born and raised in English-speaking nations, refer to Figure 5.)

Figure 10 demonstrates that despite all 67 respondents being able to speak English (Figure 9), there was a greater spread in the languages that they were most comfortable with. This spread occurred despite most of the diasporic Mauritians surveyed currently living in English-speaking countries (Figure 11), and reveals that many respondents still speak Kreol in their current country of residence.

Figure 9⁵²:

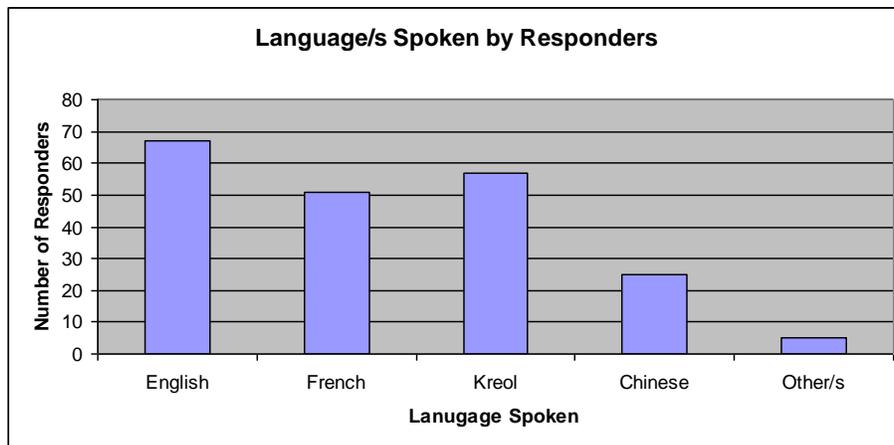
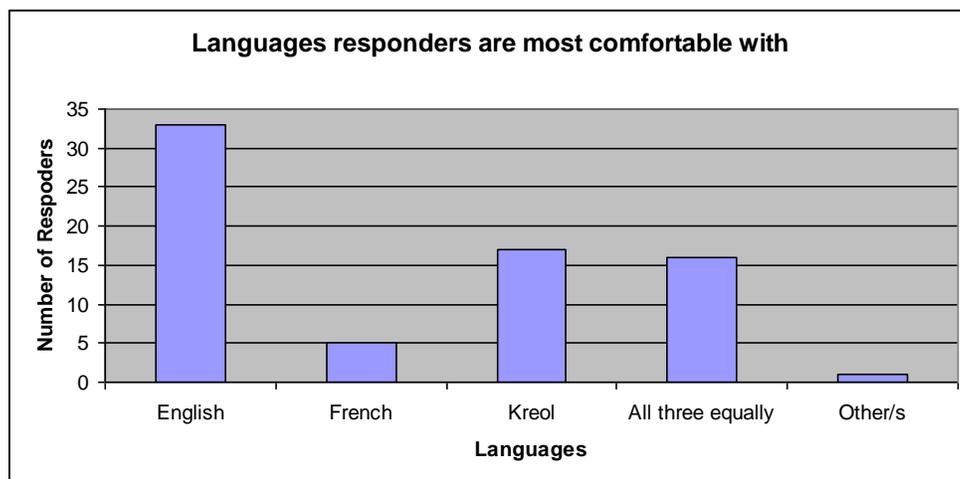


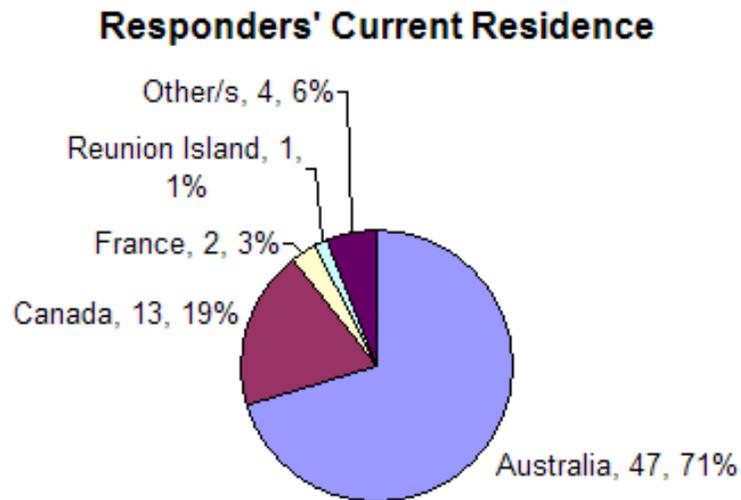
Figure 10⁵³:



⁵² Results from 'Questionnaire 1 – Mauritian Diaspora'

⁵³ Results from 'Questionnaire 1 – Mauritian Diaspora'

Figure 11⁵⁴:



As a result of the various uses of English, French and Kreol, possibly together with other ethnic group-related languages in Mauritius, “multi-lingualism” was recurrently mentioned as a determinant of Mauritian identity.

It is evident that the correlation between language and identity is especially significant in Mauritian society. Eriksen identifies that Kreol “...has a triple role of ethnic language (for the Creoles), mother-tongue (for most Mauritians) and lingua franca (for all)”⁵⁵, reflecting the pluralistic nature of Mauritian society. Structurally, majority of Kreol words originate from French, though “...more than 150 are derived from English, more than 50 from Indian languages and several from Malagasy and Chinese.”⁵⁶ In this case language not only acts as the medium through which different ethnic-related culture and

⁵⁴ Results from ‘*Questionnaire I – Mauritian Diaspora*’

⁵⁵ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, ‘*Tensions between the ethnic and post-ethnic: Ethnicity, change and mixed marriages in Mauritius*’ (1997), Macmillan

⁵⁶ ‘*Kreol Morisyen, the language of Mauritius*’ (accessed 10/8/08):
<<http://www.kreol.mu/>>

Mauritian culture is transferred through time, but the very nature of Kreol represents the hybrid Mauritian society.

Acculturation between ethnicities has resulted in the creolisation of language and culture.

CHAPTER 4 – Cultural ‘Creolisation’

“Then, within an instant of evolutionary time...that which had been flowing apart for millennia suddenly began to flow together”⁵⁷

- Walter Truett Anderson

‘Creolisation’ is a term that has historically “...been intensely studied by linguists looking at the emergence of new languages from two or more prior languages”⁵⁸. Creolisation, in a linguistic sense, is obvious in the Mauritian ‘Kreol’, but the more recent emergence of the notion of ‘cultural creolisation’ is also relevant to Mauritian identity.

Professor of Social Anthropology, Ulf Hannerz⁵⁹, first introduced the concept of ‘cultural creolisation’ to anthropology in 1992, referring to it as the “*intermingling and mixing of two or several formally discrete traditions or cultures*”⁶⁰. Although since then notions of ‘cultural creolisation’ have been criticised by some for “*being too wide and general – if every cultural process is creole in character, the term seems superfluous...*”⁶¹, this only accentuates the importance of exploring ‘cultural creolisation’ in a globalised world, where communication technologies amplify and accelerate cultural processes.

⁵⁷ Walter Truett Anderson, *Reality isn't what it used to be* (1990), HarperCollins

⁵⁸ Robert Cohen and Paolo Toninato, ‘*Creolization*’ (accessed on 11/7/08):
<<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/sociology/research/csacs/creolizationconcepts/creolisation>>

⁵⁹ Ulf Hannerz has been Professor of Social Anthropology at Stockholm University since 1981 (acting professor 1976-1980). He has devoted himself particularly to urban anthropology, media anthropology and the anthropology of globalization. His field studies have been in the United States, West Africa and the Caribbean, and he has also worked multilocally in Jerusalem, Johannesburg, Tokyo and elsewhere in a study of newsmedia foreign correspondents.

⁶⁰ Ulf Hannerz, ‘Cultural Complexity’ (1992), Columbia University Press

⁶¹ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, ‘Creolisation in anthropological theory and Mauritius’ in *‘Creolization: History, Ethnography, Theory’* (2007) edited by Charles Stewart, Left Coast Press

I will refer to ‘cultural creolisation’ in relation to Mauritian identity in accordance to Eriksen’s definition of ‘creolisation’ as:

“...Cultural phenomena that result from displacement and the ensuing social encounter and mutual influence between/among two or several groups, creating an ongoing dynamic interchange of symbols and practices, eventually leading to new forms with varying degrees of stability.”⁶²

As a child, what I originally thought were ‘Mauritian’ cultural practices were revealed, as I grew older, to have originated from Indian, Chinese, Muslim, and other cultures. This fuelled part of my initial confusion about my Sino-Mauritian identity in Australia, and supported the idea that Mauritian residents were experiencing cultural creolisation, thus forming a new Mauritian identity.

Cultural Creolisation and Mauritian Identity

While Mauritian identity is largely based on its pluralistic society, creolisation has occurred in linguistic terms, but cultural creolisation has also occurred to a certain extent. As all of Mauritius’ inhabitants are “*descendants of immigrants who have arrived during the last three centuries – from France, China, Africa, Madagascar, and different parts of*

⁶² Thomas Hylland Eriksen, ‘Creolisation in anthropological theory and Mauritius’ in ‘*Creolization: History, Ethnography, Theory*’ (2007) edited by Charles Stewart, Left Coast Press

India”⁶³, even *within* the ethnic groups there are differences in cultural practices, let alone between them.

Indications of an emerging creolised “Mauritian identity” are evident in acculturation between ethnic groups that result in ethnic aspects that become markers of “Mauritian” identity, rather than simply “ethnic” identity. Determinants of Mauritian identity that were commonly mentioned by diasporic Mauritian respondents⁶⁴ was food (listing a few) and the “Mauritian” dance called the ‘Sega’. Respondent no.59 wrote that “*if most Mauritians living outside Mauritius are asked what they missed most from Mauritius, they would probably answer the food: dhol purees, “archards” (pickled veggies), “vindaye” (pickled fish)...*”⁶⁵. As many foods mentioned by respondents included “*Creole rougailles, Indian curries, Muslim byranis...*”⁶⁶, they demonstrate that the interchange of food practices between ethnic groups has resulted in a fairly stable creolised identification of “Mauritian” cuisine, transcending ethnic affiliation. Similarly, the frequently mentioned ‘sega’ is rooted in African song and dance, but has “*attained a status as the unofficial national music of Mauritius*”⁶⁷, exemplifying how “Mauritian” identity constitutes a pastiche of different ethnic cultural symbols and practices.

⁶³ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, ‘*Tu dimunn pu vini kreol: The Mauritian creole and the concept of creolization*’ (1999), Paper presented at the Creolization Seminar ‘Transnational Communities Programme’, [University of Oxford](#)

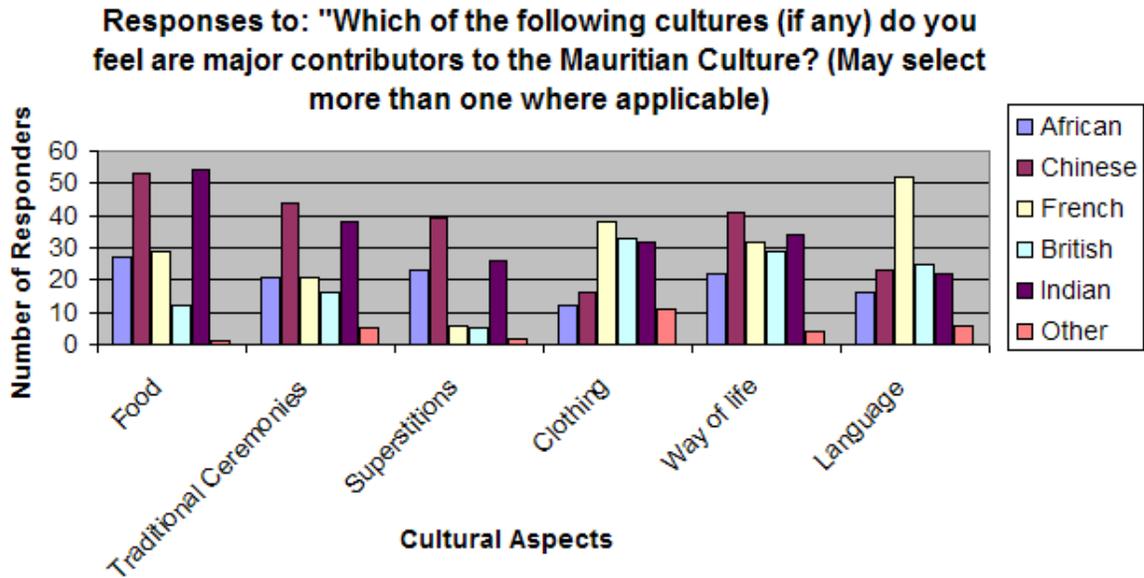
⁶⁴ “Personally, what do you think determines Mauritian Identity?” from ‘*Questionnaire 1 – Mauritian Diaspora*’

⁶⁵ Mauritian-born male living in Australia, aged 40-49

⁶⁶ Madeleine Philippe, ‘Mauritius Australia Connection: International Recipe Links’ (accessed on 11/8/08): <<http://www.cjp.net/cuisine/index.htm>>

⁶⁷ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, ‘*Tu dimunn pu vini kreol: The Mauritian creole and the concept of creolization*’ (1999), Paper presented at the Creolization Seminar ‘Transnational Communities Programme’, [University of Oxford](#)

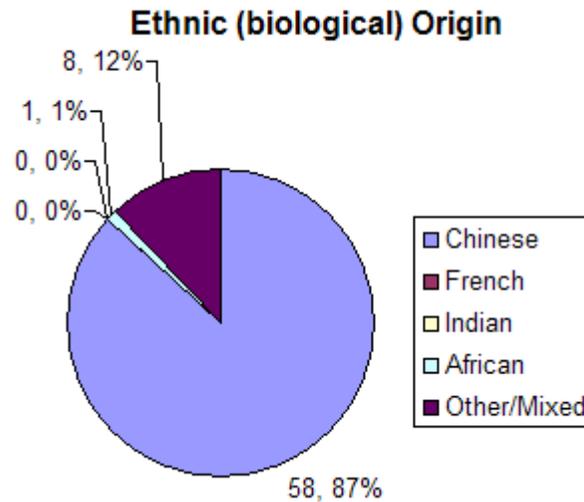
Figure 8:



Referring to Figure 8 (ch.2 and above), at least 5 respondents (of 67) marked each ethnic culture as a major contributor to different aspects of Mauritian culture. This suggests that perceptions of ‘Mauritian culture’ were not limited by ethnic experiences, as 87% of respondents were of Chinese biological origin (Figure 11), yet ‘Chinese culture’ was marked most often as a major contributor to *Mauritian Culture* in only 3 cultural areas (‘Traditional Ceremonies’, ‘Superstitions’ and ‘Way of life’). Additionally, of these three aspects, there was a maximum difference of only 13 responses between ‘Chinese’ culture and the next most marked contributor.

This supports the concept of a creolised Mauritian culture, as an amalgamation of ethnic influences have created a more unified and less ethnically segregated Mauritian identity.

Figure 11⁶⁸:



Although cultural creolisation is evident in Mauritius, it remains unlikely that it will result in a stable, homogenized Mauritian culture, as it relies on the constant interaction between ethnic cultures. Also, “*Opposition to cultural mixing and mixed marriages within Mauritian society is strong*”⁶⁹, so ethnic boundaries still exist, despite accepting some degree of acculturation.

A widespread Mauritian belief is that “*peace is maintained on the crowded, culturally heterogeneous island only because there is a precarious numerical equilibrium and functioning politics of compromise between ethnic groups.*”⁷⁰ This reveals that there is an ironic sense of Mauritian unity in the mutual tolerance and compromise between ethnic

⁶⁸ Results from ‘*Questionnaire I – Mauritian Diaspora*’

⁶⁹ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, ‘Creolisation in anthropological theory and Mauritius’ in ‘*Creolization: History, Ethnography, Theory*’ (2007) edited by Charles Stewart, Left Coast Press

⁷⁰ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, ‘Creolisation in anthropological theory and Mauritius’ in ‘*Creolization: History, Ethnography, Theory*’ (2007) edited by Charles Stewart, Left Coast Press

and cultural differences; a growing asset in an increasingly globalised world where diversity is unavoidable.

Although many critics believe globalisation facilitates homogenisation, if Mauritius is perceived as a possible microcosm for a future globalised world (as processes that are currently occurring on a global scale have long existed in Mauritius), then creolisation may mean diversity is advocated.

CHAPTER 5 – Mauritius as a Microcosm: ‘Identity’ in Mauritius and a Future Globalised World

“I think Mauritius is a small world in itself, a tiny world”⁷¹

- Interviewee no.2

Part of the confusion I felt regarding my Sino-Mauritian background in my micro world experiences, resulted from the highly hybridised and creolised nature of Mauritian society and culture. Living in the 21st century where globalisation is a relatively new topic of popular discourse, and even in multicultural Australian society, ties between diaspora with ancestral nation-states or ‘unified’ cultures are still identified through homogenous shared distinctions. However, on a global scale, this is likely to change as globalisation through communication technologies and mobilisation facilitate acculturation and an exposure to different ethnicities and nationalities (and consequently their cultures and values), a phenomenon long occurring in Mauritius.

When asked about the consequences of an increasing globalised world, Eriksen replied:

“Both things are happening: a stronger sense of cosmopolitanism, and a strengthening of group identities, nationalism, ethnic ideology, politicised religion, and so on. What is fascinating about Mauritius, is that these two dual processes could be observed there, at a microcosm level, as early as the 1970s...”⁷²

⁷¹ Interviewee no.2: 74-year-old female living in Australia

⁷² Interviewee no.1: **Thomas Hylland Eriksen**: b. 1962, Dr. polit. (social anthropology), University of Oslo, Senior Research Fellow (PRIO, International Institute of Peace Research) 1990-1, Senior Lecturer,

The parallels between the processes evidently undergone in Mauritius' past and increasing globalisation in the world now, suggest that Mauritius can be viewed as a microcosm for a possible future scenario of the globalised world. My confusion about my identity could be seen as a direct result of globalisation (with my ancestors' migration to different environments within the past few generations), and so examining Mauritius reveals a possible future basis of 'identity' as mobilisation increases.

Plural Identities

Originally my perceived lack of Mauritian national 'unity' caused me to think that there was no Mauritian 'identity', or only a fickle one facilitated by environment and the lingua franca Kreol. However, I discovered that Mauritian identity and unity were strengthened by the acceptance and tolerance of different ethnic groups, rather than weakened by it. The restricted environment facilitated acculturation and creolisation, but the richness of Mauritian identity stems from the continuation of ethnic-based cultures, and the interplay between groups.

It was evident that notions of 'nationality' and 'ethnicity' were subjectively identified by respondents, and were more often a mix of influences rather than a single definition.

Anderson writes that "*More and more, we find it suitable to identify ourselves with more*

University of Oslo 1991-5, Professor, University of Oslo 1995-. Editor, *Samtiden* 1993-2001, EASA Newsletter 1992-4, *Norsk antropologisk tidsskrift* (Norwegian Journal of Anthropology) 1993-7. Fieldwork in Mauritius and Trinidad. Academic writings on ethnicity, identity politics, nationalism, anthropological theory, minority issues etc. – **'Bionote' found on:**
<<http://folk.uio.no/geirthe/Self.html>> (accessed on:7/7/08)

*than one term. Multiple identity becomes a common feature...Whenever we describe ourselves, we should add "etc."*⁷³ As identity is increasingly determined on an individual-basis, the nature of group identities is likely to change, however in Mauritius group identities were not weakened, but became more flexible. As my individual “Sino-Mauritian-Australian” experiences influence a unique perception of identity compared with other individual expatriates, the acceptance of differences still facilitates a loose group identity.

Creolisation

Although some critics foresee that “*Globalisation is by and large the spread of American culture, ideas, product, entertainments and politics...you will shudder for the fate of the world*”⁷⁴ – a more extreme opinion of ‘globalisation’ as synonymous with ‘westernisation’ – these opinions are disputed by other social researchers, as well as shown when examining creolisation in Mauritius.

As globalisation allows strong group identities (eg. ethnicity and nationality) to be exposed to different systems of belief, creolisation offers a process dissimilar to westernisation. In Mauritius, despite Indo-Mauritians being the dominant ethnic group, making up 68% of the population, Figure 8 (ch.2 and 3) showed that all ethnic groups influenced Mauritian culture.

⁷³ Walter Truett Anderson, ‘*Reality isn’t what it used to be*’ (1990), HarperCollins

⁷⁴ Polly Toynbee, ‘Who’s Afraid of the Global Culture?’ essay from ‘*On the Edge: Living with Global Capitalism*’ (2000) edited by Will Hutton and Anthony Giddens, Random House UK Ltd

It was found that in Mauritius where acculturation was inevitable, and some cultural elements transcended ethnic groups, that cultural creolisation “...*does not refer to any kind of mixing but to those adaptations, dislocations, and cultural dynamics, resulting from contact, that do not result in a fixed belonging to a bounded, historical tradition*”⁷⁵. This suggests that a future sense of ‘global unity’ will not be homogenised, but reliant on the constant dynamic interplay between and within group identities, such as the Mauritian identity that is based on diversity.

Although the parallel drawn between Mauritius and the increasingly globalised world is simply one scenario based on my research, it is possible that the future of ‘identity’ in the globalised world will shadow processes that shaped Mauritian identity. I found that ‘identity’, in Mauritius and perhaps in a globalised world, is becoming less based on the ‘unity’ that comes from commonalities within groups, but more on accepting, tolerating, and even embracing the differences of individuals and groups.

⁷⁵ Thomas Hylland Eriksen, ‘Creolisation in anthropological theory and Mauritius’ in ‘*Creolization: History, Ethnography, Theory*’ (2007) edited by Charles Stewart, Left Coast Press

CONCLUSION

Initially, I considered the multi-faceted and thus elusive ‘Mauritian’ identity as a cause for confusion and displacement in terms of my own personal identity. However, through undertaking my PIP I discovered that the very hybrid nature of Mauritian society, and consequently identity, facilitates an *acceptance* of difference between individuals and groups that forms the very core of what it means to be Mauritian.

When I began my investigation, I set out to find what defines ‘Mauritian’ identity, so I could better understand my place in the ‘Sino-Mauritian’ ethnic group, and thus my diasporic identity in Australia. Ironically, I found that looking for *common* cultural links, such as language, had been the mistake in my approach (long before I even began high school, let alone my PIP) of defining Mauritian identity, an identity which is based on *difference*. I learnt that:

“If people who know each other well serve the welfare of their fellow citizens, they may learn something unexpected about each other, perhaps about how different they are. If people who did not know each other well, perhaps because they come from different cultures, serve the welfare of their fellow citizens, they may well discover how similar their values are”⁷⁶

That is, Mauritian identity is defined by the tolerance and acceptance of differences between not only ethnic groups, but individual entities.

⁷⁶ John Ralston Saul, ‘The Collapse of Globalism: and the Reinvention of the World’ (2005), Viking (an imprint of Penguin Books)

Even notions of ‘nationality’ and ‘ethnicity’ are less influential binders of group identity than I originally considered, particularly with their increasingly subjective interpretation by different individuals.

My secondary research provided a solid basis for shaping my ideas, but it was my primary research in the form of qualitative and quantitative methodologies that really opened my eyes to the nature of Mauritian identity. Despite their helpfulness, I am aware of various limitations that have impeded my investigation. Limited access to diasporic Mauritians other than family and family friends meant that my questionnaire sample size was dominated by Sino-Mauritian respondents. Had I been able to distribute questionnaires to diasporic Mauritian individuals from different ethnic groups in similar proportions, my results may indicate different trends and offer a greater cross-cultural perspective needed as Mauritius consists of several ethnic groups. For similar reasons, semi-structured interviews with a greater variety of Mauritians from different ethnic groups would have provided a greater range of personal experiences of Mauritian diaspora, and possibly offer conflicting perspectives.

Interviewing my grandmother, however, gave me a chance to actively practice my social and cultural literacy as her experiences as a Sino-Mauritian expat were so different to my own micro world experiences. The semi-structured interview allowed conversation to lead into areas and bring up ideas I had not originally considered, but offered invaluable new insight to Sino-Mauritian identity that helped shape my ideas.

The entire PIP process was a demanding and challenging task, but the aspect of personal discovery in my PIP topic maintained my interest. Undertaking the PIP was a great learning experience for me, not only allowing me to practice and enhance my socio-cultural literacy and develop invaluable life skills, but also finding personal closure regarding my Mauritian identity that had been a cause for confusion until now.

RESOURCE LIST

Secondary Research

Books

- Anderson, Walter Truett (1990). *Reality Isn't What It Used To Be*. HarperCollins.

This source was informative regarding the influence of globalisation on the changing notion of 'identity', both individual and group ones. I found I could draw many parallels between what had long occurred in Mauritius with what Anderson discussed was occurring globally in contemporary society.

- Anderson, Walter Truett (1996). *The Fontana Postmodern Reader*. HarperCollins.

Ideas and discussions regarding 'identity' being constructed and reconstructed by individuals, depending on their cultural exposure, rather than a "found" identity fixed by social role or tradition inspired new ways of perceiving my diasporic Sino-Mauritian identity.

- Eriksen, Thomas Hylland (1988). *Communicating Cultural Difference and Identity: Ethnicity and Nationalism in Mauritius*. Department of Social Anthropology, University of Oslo: Occasional Papers series.

This source was extremely useful in the initial development of my PIP, and remained a constant source of reference throughout. Its discussion of conflicting notions of national and ethnic identity *within* Mauritius led me to the realisation that Mauritius as a nation had difficulty defining its identity, not only diasporic Mauritians. Its exploration of

language and national symbols also spurred my own investigation into the role of language in facilitating Mauritian identity.

- Giddens, Anthony (1999). *Runaway World: How Globalisation is Reshaping Our Lives*. New York: Routledge.

This source communicated thought-provoking ideas regarding globalisation and the end of traditional notions of the ‘nation-state’, which I found supported the results of my questionnaire for Mauritian diaspora.

- Hannerz, Ulf (1992). *Cultural Complexity*. Columbia University Press.

In this publication, Hannerz was the first to apply the linguistic term ‘creolisation’ in an allegorical sense to culture. Reading this source, together with various other sources regarding creolisation, gave me a greater understanding of how ‘cultural creolisation’ has been interpreted differently by different sociology experts, ensuring that I acknowledged the relatively new use of the term in my writing.

- Hutton, Will & Giddens, Anthony (Ed.). (2000). *On the Edge: Living with Global Capitalism*. UK: Random House.

The essay ‘Who’s Afraid of the Global Culture?’ by Polly Toynbee in this compilation was particularly useful as it provided a well-informed critical view of globalisation, bringing to light a new perspective I had not considered yet.

- Legrain, Philippe (2002). *Open World:/ The Truth About Globalisation*. Britain: Abacus.

Although most of the information was regarding economics and globalisation, thus irrelevant to my PIP, a small section on ‘Cultural Clash’ informed about the affect of globalisation on the bonds of national identity that I found useful in my research.

- Saul, John Ralston (2005). *The Collapse of Globalism: and the Reinvention of the World*. Viking (an imprint of Penguin Books).

Although the discussion of the concept of ‘Positive Nationalism’ in this text was interesting, it was not especially useful to my research. However, it raised the idea that serving the welfare of ‘fellow citizens’ should transcend the examination of commonalities and differences among individual and group identities, an important reminder to me that difference is not always a precondition for conflict.

- Stewart, Charles (Ed.). (2007). *Creolization: History, Ethnography, Theory*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.

This compilation of essays by credited sociologists provided a useful and multi-perspective source of explanations and theories regarding the concept of creolisation, how it emerged, and both positive and negative views of it. Doctor or Political Social Anthropology, Thomas Hylland Eriksen’s, essay ‘Creolisation in anthropological theory and Mauritius’ was particularly useful as it focused the discussion of creolisation in Mauritius, and provided me with a well-informed definition of creolisation.

- Wickman, Stephan B. (1991). *Countries of the World: Mauritius*. Bureau of Electronic Publishing.

This source provided an excellent, comprehensive overview of Mauritian society and culture. It also detailed the four ethnic categories: ‘Hindus’, ‘Muslims’, ‘Sino-Mauritians’, and ‘General Population’, that were legally identified in the 1968 Constitution for Mauritius.

Newspaper Articles

- Campbell, Frank (2007). *By Hook or By Crook: A Journey in Search of English*. *The Australian*

While this source was not a major source of reference, its suggestion that language can falsely represent identity caused me to consider any negative connotations with languages used in Mauritius, and its role in establishing social differentiation.

Journal Articles

- Dobson, Reena (2007). *Beaches and Breaches: Articulations and Negotiations of Identity, Ethnicity and Cosmopolitanism in Mauritius - 'The most Cosmopolitan Island Under the Sun'*. *Limina: A Journal of Historical and Cultural Studies*. 4-11.

Although this article delves mainly into ethnic divisions and their interaction in the Mauritian beach environment, its expression of enthusiasm and discussion of the ‘Cosmopolitan’ nature of Mauritian society helped me understand the nature of ethnic interaction in Mauritius as both communal and segregated.

- Eriksen, Thomas Hylland (1997). Tensions between the ethnic and the post-ethnic: Ethnicity, change and mixed marriages in Mauritius. *The Politics of Ethnic Consciousness*.

This publication gave credible information about ethnic boundaries in Mauritius, and the nature of interplay between the ethnic groups. Although it deals explicitly with marriage, its information focuses on the influence of ethnic identity, providing helpful information that widened my understanding of how Mauritian society works. It also raised interesting points regarding language as a marker for ethnic identity within Mauritius.

Magazine Articles

- Sheri de Borchgrave, B. (1996, May). Jewel in the Indian Ocean. *World & I*

For the most part, this article was not that useful as it was a travel guide to Mauritius. However, it provided examples of various ethnic-influenced place names that reflects Mauritius' colonised past, effectively demonstrating pluralism in Mauritian society.

World Wide Web

- About Mauritius. Retrieved 6/07/08, from Republic of Mauritius Web Portal Web site: <http://www.gov.mu/portal/site/abtmmtius>

Viewing this website was interesting in terms of how the Mauritian government chose to portray their country: as a nation that is built on diversity. The 'History' page was particularly useful as it provided a brief overview that revealed how colonisation and migration have influenced a hybrid Mauritian society.

- Burton, Benedict (2008). Lands and People: Mauritius. Retrieved 6/07/08, from

Grolier Online Web site: <http://lp.grolier.com/cgi-bin/article?assetid=4044400>

This site was useful in providing reliable background information regarding the country of Mauritius. Its simple explanation of language divisions within Mauritius was especially useful.

- Cohen, Robert & Toninato, Paola Creolization. Retrieved 11/07/08, from

Warwick Sociology Web site:

<http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/sociology/research/cscs/creolizationconcepts/creolisation/>

This website was extremely useful, as it discussed the various meanings that ‘creolisation’ can imply. It contains small excerpts from different credited sociologists’ publications defining ‘creolisation’. As it sourced all its excerpts, I was able to further search for publications that appeared useful or relevant to my PIP, to read them in full.

- Eriksen, Thomas Hylland (1999). Tu dimunn pu vini kreol: The Mauritian creole and the concept of creolization. Retrieved 7/02/08, from Eriksen's Web site:

<http://folk.uio.no/geirthe/Creoles.html>

This transcript of a paper presented at the Creolization Seminar ‘Transnational Communities Programme’ in the University of Oxford by Eriksen was extremely useful and thought-provoking throughout the process of my PIP. It explores ideas regarding the Creole people, Kreol, and Mauritian national identity, providing a wealth of information that helped shape my ideas.

- Eriksen, Thomas Hylland (2005, September). McDonalised or Diversity?: Notes on the use of English as a foreign language. Retrieved 9/01/08, from Eriksen's Web site: <http://folk.uio.no/geirthe/EFL.html>

While this source was not useful in the actual writing of my PIP and did not discuss Mauritius, reading it prompted me to consider the parallel between Kreol in Mauritius, and English in the global world, which led on to a brainstorm of other parallels in their societies. These ideas acted as a catalyst for my speculation that Mauritius could be viewed as a microcosm for a future globalised world, so this was an essential source in the shaping of my ideas.

- Kreol Morisyen, the language of Mauritius. Retrieved 10/07/08, from Mauritian Creole - Kreol Morisyen Web site: <http://www.kreol.mu/>

Although I was unsure about this website's reliability initially, it raised points about the different use of English, French and Kreol in Mauritius, as well as the structure of Kreol, that I found to be valid when cross-referencing with more reliable sources.

- (2008). Mauritius. Retrieved 6/07/08, from CIA - The World Factbook Web site: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mp.html>

This source was useful in providing reliable and recent statistics regarding the ethnic composition of Mauritius, an important factor when exploring Mauritian identity.

- (2008). Nationality. Retrieved 7/07/08, from The Macquarie Dictionary Online Web site: <http://macquarienet.com.au/article?recid=000049364&db=dictbigmac>

This link provided a reliable source to define ‘nationality’. This was essential in writing my PIP, as ‘The Macquarie Dictionary’ is a well-known and well-accessed resource, providing a benchmark for the differently defined term ‘nationality’.

- Philippe, Madeleine Recipes from Mauritius. Retrieved 11/07/08, from Mauritius Australia Connection Web site: <http://www.cjp.net/cuisine/index.htm>

Although this source did not provide much useful information overall, it gave good summary of the different ethnic influenced dishes that have become ‘Mauritian’ cuisine. This prompted my thoughts that creolisation is occurring to create a new ‘Mauritian’ culture by drawing on the cultural elements of the ethnic groups within the island.

Primary Research

Questionnaires

- (2008, May) ‘Questionnaire 1 – Mauritian Diaspora’, distributed May via email

This questionnaire contained both open- and closed-ended questions, providing a fundamental source of qualitative and quantitative responses. This methodology allowed me to collate statistical data that indicated some unexpected trends, a great learning experience for me and invaluable in the writing of my PIP. The careful thought and consideration that went into the writing of this questionnaire was essential in obtaining useful results, and definitely paid off.

Interviews

- (2008, April) Interviewee no.1: **Eriksen, Thomas Hylland** via email.

b. 1962, Dr. polit. (social anthropology), University of Oslo, Senior Research Fellow (PRIO, International Institute of Peace Research) 1990-1, Senior Lecturer, University of Oslo 1991-5, Professor, University of Oslo 1995-. Editor, *Samtiden* 1993-2001, EASA Newsletter 1992-4, *Norsk antropologisk tidsskrift* (Norwegian Journal of Anthropology) 1993-7. Fieldwork in Mauritius and Trinidad. Academic writings on ethnicity, identity politics, nationalism, anthropological theory, minority issues etc. – ‘Bionote’ from: <http://folk.uio.no/geirthe/Self.html>

This structured interview via email provided an expert academic perspective of Mauritian identity. Eriksen’s knowledge in sociology and particularly his work in Mauritius and on creolisation, ensured credible answers that were invaluable to my PIP. His willingness to help meant he gave useful and thorough responses, despite the obstacle of an interview via email due to his current location in Norway.

- (2008, June) Interviewee no.2: **Grandmother**, immigrant from Mauritius.

The semi-structured, face-to-face interview with my grandmother allowed for a conversational, but informative talk. This interview provided me with an in-depth qualitative perspective of Mauritian identity, based on my grandmother’s personal experiences. Conversation at times moved away from the focus of my PIP topic, but these diversions often revealed or provoked important ideas that I had not originally considered.

APPENDIX

Questionnaire 1 – Mauritian Diaspora

(currently living in Australia / a country **other than Mauritius**)

I am currently investigating the factors that determine Mauritian identity in Australia, particularly the role of language, as part of my Personal Interest Project for the Year 12 HSC course in Society and Culture. It would be greatly appreciated if you could fill out this quick and anonymous survey.

**For multiple choice questions, please type an ‘x’ next to your selection/s.
For written responses, please type your answers in the space provided.**

1. Please select your age group:

- a) 11 and under
- b) 12 – 19
- c) 20 – 29
- d) 30 – 39
- e) 40 – 49
- f) 50 – 59
- g) 60 and over

2. Gender:

- a) Male
- b) Female

3. Country of birth:

- a) Australia
- b) Mauritius
- c) Other (Please state): _____

4. What is your ethnic (biological) origin? :

- a) Chinese
- b) French
- c) Indian
- d) African
- e) Other/Mixed (Please state): _____

5. What country are you currently living in? :

- a) Australia
- b) Canada
- c) France
- d) Reunion Island

e) Other (Please state): _____

6. What languages can you speak? (**May select more than one where applicable**):

- a) English
- b) French
- c) Kreol
- d) Chinese
- e) Other/s (Please state): _____

7. Where have you received most of your primary and secondary education?

- a) Mauritius
- b) Australia
- c) France
- d) Canada
- e) Other (Please State): _____

8. What language are you **most** comfortable with?

- a) English
- b) French
- c) Kreol
- d) All three equally
- e) Other (Please state): _____

Give reasons why: _____

9. What nationality do you feel you are?

- a) Australian
- b) Mauritian
- c) Chinese
- d) Sino-Mauritian (Chinese-Mauritian)
- e) All of the above
- f) Creole
- g) Other/s (Please state): _____

10. How certain are you of your nationality? (**Select most accurate**):

(**Very Confused**) 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 (**Very Certain**)

11. What culture do you most practise? :

- a) Australian

- b) Mauritian
- c) Chinese
- d) Sino-Mauritian (Chinese-Mauritian)
- e) All of the above
- f) Creole
- g) Other/s (Please state): _____

12. How certain are you of your cultural identity? (**Select most accurate**):

(**Very Confused**) 1-----2-----3-----4-----5 (**Very Certain**)

13. Rank the factors that have influenced your identity in order of importance, using the numbers 1 to 4:

- ___ Your birthplace
- ___ Language/s spoken
- ___ Citizenship / country of residence
- ___ Ethnic Heritage (Parents' background)

14. Which of the following cultures (if any) do you feel are **major** contributors to the Mauritian Culture? (**May select more than one where applicable**):

(**'Culture'** – food, traditional ceremonies, superstitions, clothing, way of life, language)

(i) Food:

- a) African
- b) Chinese
- c) French
- d) British
- e) Indian
- f) Other (Please state): _____

(ii) Traditional ceremonies:

- a) African
- b) Chinese
- c) French
- d) British
- e) Indian
- f) Other (Please state): _____

(iii) Superstitions:

- a) African
- b) Chinese
- c) French
- d) British
- e) Indian
- f) Other (Please state): _____

- (iv) Clothing:
- a) African
 - b) Chinese
 - c) French
 - d) British
 - e) Indian
 - f) Other (Please state): _____

- (v) Way of life:
- a) African
 - b) Chinese
 - c) French
 - d) British
 - e) Indian
 - f) Other (Please state): _____

- (vi) Language:
- a) African
 - b) Chinese
 - c) French
 - d) British
 - e) Indian
 - f) Other (Please state): _____

15. Personally, what do you think determines **Mauritian Identity**?

Thank you for completing the survey!

If you have any further comments or enquiries, please contact me by email:
<email address>