THE MAURITIANS IN CANADA:

BETWEEN GLOBALIZATION AND NATION-STATE BUILDING

ALESSANDRA MIKLAVCIC

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to be an exploratory investigation of the ways in which Mauritian national identity is constructed in Mauritius, abroad, and in the virtual space of the Internet. Gramsci's conceptual scheme of civil society is used as a political locus where hegemony and spontaneous consent as well as counter-hegemony are generated.
Through fieldwork in Toronto and Montreal, renegotiations and reassortments of identities are explored in order to grasp the meaning of being Mauritian in Canada.
Particular attention is given to the perpetuation or challenging of the Mauritian "national" identity. This state-generated national identity promotes a homogenizing supra-ethnic discourse to counteract the colonial heritage of "communalism," which perpetuates a division in ethnic groups among the population. Although among Mauritians in Canada, *Mauricianité* is promoted and expressed through the multiple spaces and shapes of civil society, the racial political history of Mauritius, characterized by its "communalism," still filters through everyday social interactions.

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There are no words to thank my family and Moez for their unconditionally support; Elena, Stacey and Heidi who have constantly been present in the process of writing helping my thought to "become" English. Last but not least I would like to express my gratitude to Angela de Gasperis, our secretary, who makes the anthropology department such a nice place to be.

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION

I.1. PURPOSE OF THESIS

Transnationality, the large-scale flow of people, images, and cultural forces across borders is not necessarily detrimental to the nation-state. Individual agency can create some new social space of communication in which flexible citizen's foster old loyalty in new forms. From this premise, I investigate the social space of the Mauritian migrants in Canada, particularly those who live in Toronto and Montreal. In the framework of globalization and transnationalism, I observe the way people perceive themselves and mirror them in the nation of Mauritius. My aim is to take into account the situation of Mauritians abroad as an important part of the negotiation of Mauritius as a nation-state.

Displacement and exile are part of "the dislocating mechanism of modernity" (Giddens 1990) in which social relations and identities are separated from the local context of interaction and restructured across large time-space distances. Following the Basch et al.' (1994) analysis of the characteristic of nation state as being increasing deterritorialized, I will pay particular attention to "transnational social fields" grounded in kinship and social networks that unite family and economy in two or more nation-states. The context of my study is the continuous tension between the local and the global. Taking into consideration the "postmodern hyperspace" (Jameson 1994) which has fundamentally challenged the convenient assumption that mapped cultures onto places and peoples, two further

morphological aspects will direct me toward this study: the multiplurality and the interpolarity of migration. The multipolarity of migration has brought Mauritians since the 1960s to the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, South Africa, Australia and Canada. The interpolarity includes not only ties maintained with the country of origin - according to the conventional migration theories, - but also those existing between the various poles of migration. It is also expressed in migration from one pole to another, in addition to visits and business relations between the various poles (Guillon - Ma Mung 1992). The interaction of multi and inter-polarity creates a web which transcends national borders. The most complex and innovative of this interaction is characterized by the utilization of the Internet which drowns all these geometrical lines in a virtual space: a virtual Mauritian community.

Mauritius is a plural/multi-ethnic society both culturally and religiously composed of descendants of immigrants, slaves and coolies who arrived in the island since the eighteenth century. The Mauritian population of slightly over one million is composed between four and twelve ethnic groups, the number (or rather, the level of segmentation) depending on the situation. Officially, four "ethnic groups" (*nasyon*) existed until they were removed from the censuses in 1983, but they still exist in folk representations: the Hindus (52%), the Muslims (17%), the Chinese (3%) and the "General Population" (28%). However, most Mauritians would agree that Tamils (7%), Telugus (2.5%) and possibly Marathis (2%) should not be lumped together with the majority Hindus from Bihar and Uttar Pradesh in northern India, and that the residual category of "General Population" really encompasses at least three distinctive categories; the Creoles of African and Malagasy descent (23--24%), the Franco-Mauritians of French descent (2%), and the *gens de couleur* of mixed descent and French language (2--3%). Regarding the Chinese, there is a distinction between Hakka and

Cantonese. When asked about the number of ethnic categories, most Mauritians would immediately list the Hindus, the Tamils, the Muslims, the Creoles, the Chinese and the Franco-Mauritians (Eriksen 1997). Mauritian society is sometimes assigned to "Creole culture." This term borrowed from the more accurate linguistic term creole language (Bernabe' et al. 1993) suggests the presence of an incongruous mixture of cultural traditions known as hybridity (Bhabha 1995).

I.2. THESIS OUTLINE

The project of my thesis is threefold. First, I provide a cultural-historical account of Mauritius focusing on its ethnic and religious components. I examine the French and British colonialisms and their legacy. The French influence is still present in the cultural milieu and in the Kreol - a French patois which is the most widely spoken language on the island. The long-standing British administration, which ended in 1968, has mainly left its traces in the constitutional system of the Mauritian state.

Second, looking at Mauritius as an island, I explore the metaphorical and literary dimension of islands often depicted as paradise. Through the looking glass of Mauritian poets the intense relation between Mauritians and their island will be drawn. The obsolete social science island paradigm as a bounded category will be deconstructed. The island as periphery of the capitalist colonial economy (Wallerstein 1978) and its changing role in the global economy will be further considered. Turning to island as a nation-state, I investigate the traditional nineteenth century nationalist literature concerned with the minimal size of the state to be sustainable, *lebensfähig* (Chabod 1967) and the different approaches to microstates. I engage in the role played by the Mauritian state in forging a national unity

based on the concept of *un seul peuple un seul nation* inscribed in the *pluriculturalisme mauricien*. Using the Gramscian distinction of political and civil society, I investigate how the civil society is competing with the state in making the nation state through different political symbols (Eriksen 1993, 1994; Kertzer 1986). Civil society comprises all those non-state movements and organizations - schools, churches, clubs, journals and parties - which contribute in molecular fashion to the formation of social and political consciousness. Political society at the other end is composed of those public institutions - the government, courts, police, and army - which exercise "direct hegemony" and are almost synonymous with the state.

Third, through fieldwork in the cities of Toronto and Montreal, I explore how through the civil society Mauritians outside Mauritius portray their nation. Benedict Anderson (1983) has clearly pointed out that although we may trace the origins of nationalism to European political philosophy, many of the early nationalists were exiles, members of diaspora and creoles. Particular emphasis is given to the ways Mauritians maintain a link to their homeland. I try to map out the Mauritian community,[1] (period of arrival in Canada, ethnic background, religion). In doing so, I will look at the dynamics: association and re-assortment of identities used by the Mauritians in Toronto/Montreal: whether there is a division along ethnic/religious or class lines or if coming from the same island is reason enough for belonging to the same community. I give particular attention to issues of language among Mauritians in Francophone Montreal, and in the "global city" of Toronto. I investigate the role of cultural practices, especially cultural performances in celebrating national/religious

[1] The use of community is highly problematic and it is intended as a symbolic community (Cohen 1985).

events peculiar to the Mauritian nation. 1998 marked the thirtieth anniversary of independence from Britain. Looking into the identity/identification of Mauritian migrants, I explore the problematics opened by the ambivalence and elusiveness embodied in hybridization: the other, the self. In questioning how definitions have constantly to be negotiated and reconstructed, I engage in the analysis of the relation between identity, race and hybridity and the open "third space" (Bhabha 1990).

The theoretical framework I deal with - in an open and flexible way - is grounded in the theory of nation, (Gellner 1983; Smith 1983) state (Giddens 1990) imagined community (Anderson 1983), multination states (Rex 1995) authenticity and invention of tradition (Hobsbawn-Ranger 1985; Friedman 1992), transnational fields (Basch et al. 1994; Ong-Nonini 1997) and deterritorialization (Malkki 1992, 1995) theory of state and civil society (Gramsci 1971; Putnam 1993; Walzer 1992), as well in postcolonial discourse theory the diaspora (Hall 1990; Bhabha 1990, 1995), hybridity (Young 1995) and globalization (Appadurai 1990, 1991; Friedman 1990). In my analysis, I utilize Gramsci's concept of civil society as a sphere where hegemony and consent are produced and challenged. I apply this concept to the Mauritian state as well to the Mauritians abroad trying to see if it is possible to theorize on the formation of a deterritorialized civil society, taking place in the "interpolarity" of migration.

The thesis unfolds as follows. Chapter One is the introduction. Chapter Two takes into consideration globalization and its implication outside the mere capital market. The human factor is an important component of globalization and should not be underplayed. In the asymmetrical relation between capital and labor flow, the human agency in this global age takes new forms. Mauritius is entirely a creation of the process of globalization.

Globalization that takes root in Mauritian colonial history, its very raison d'être, has most recently developed in the form of a democratic modern nation state based on capitalistic mode of productions. "Globalization is fantastic," this was the comment of the Mauritian Minister of Economic Development but as well globalization further exacerbates cleavages of class and ethnicity. The riots which exploded in Mauritius last February are a strong signal.

In the framework of globalization I deal with two "scapes": the technoscape and the ethnoscape (Appadurai 1991). The reason I start with the technoscape is because I firmly believe that the novelty that distinguishes the current globalization from other world system theories is indeed "the information-technology revolution" superposing space and time. Chapter Three provides a social historical account of Mauritius. My eagerness to speak about the past is not a mere exercise of erudition but is an important way to understand how the different colonial systems, which generated the flux of people arriving in Mauritius in different eras, have deeply shaped a stratified level of communalistic[2] and racialized identities into a Mauritian identity. Thus "there is always a past in the present, an a priori system of interpretations and therefore always a present in the past as that in turn is interpreted" (Sahlins 1985: 144). Chapter Four describes the effort of the Mauritian state in building a national identity and the pressures expressed by lay persons in finding different realms where the national identity takes place. The emergence of migration is briefly examined. Chapter Five finally presents my fieldwork in Toronto and Montreal. A particular focus is given to those associations, which promote Mauritius abroad and forge a civil society fostering the

Mauritian identity among the Mauritians overseas. Renegotiations of identities and patterns of choosing who and what is a Mauritian will further be questioned. The multi-sited fieldwork urged by the global condition we live pushed me to participate/observe through an Internet forum, the virtual Mauritian community. In this virtual site, Island Mauritians, Mauritians abroad and the Mauritian state interact to build a deterritorialized civil society. In the last chapter of the thesis, the conclusions of this study are presented.

I.3. FIELDWORK

I conducted fieldwork from March 1998 to March 1999 mainly in Toronto with four weekend visits in Montreal. I contacted and interviewed in an informal way 25 Mauritians, 9 living in Montreal, all students, and 16 in Toronto, over this period of time. My informants were aged between 19 and 55. Of them 10 were men and 15 women. All my informants arrived in Canada in the last 15 years; many of them are quite new here and have the status of international students; among them there are a number that have applied for landed immigrant status. Most of the Mauritians I interacted with already had some relatives in Canada. Although in my fieldwork it is not always possible to speak of chain migration e.g. sponsored immigration, among my informants, the kinship network played an important role in the choice of Canada.

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[2] The words "communalism" "community" "communal" are terms widespread in the political discourses in Mauritius referring to ethnic and/or religious groups that usually act as political unit.

The contacts with the informants occurred in different ways. After a first failed attempt to find some Mauritian associations in Toronto, I decided to take into consideration also Montreal, which is the seat of an Honorary Mauritian consulate. The consul, a Quebecois provided me with material and helped me to understand how the Mauritian community in Montreal is "structured." I contacted by e-mail the entire list of Mauritian students belonging to the student associations of McGill and Concordia Universities. Those students who replied to me showed interest in seeing me and we managed a few meetings in the course of the year. They also invited me to some Mauritian parties they organized. In Toronto it slowly started to delineate a Mauritian presence harder to grasp, as it was not easy to pinpoint. In a later stage of my fieldwork, I managed to find a Mauritian association in Toronto: Club Mauritius. Most of my contacts in Toronto were with individuals, many of them not aware of other Mauritians living in the city. In some cases, I met Mauritians in a fortuitous way such as in the library carrying a book about Mauritius or asking a man working on a newspaper if he knew any Mauritians. He looked at me surprised and answered me back: "I come from Mauritius." On occasion, Mauritians who knew somehow that I was interested in them directly contacted me. I interviewed my informants in different public sites such as coffee shops and parties, less often in private sites such as, their house or my house.

The surprise that my fieldwork raised was discovering that the overwhelming majority of my informants were Mauritians of Chinese descent. I would have never expected that the Chinese who are just the 3% of the entire population of 1,000,000 in Mauritius would become the majority of my informants. This fact made me study Chinese history - a history that I had partially ignored - and helped me to discover a sub-group of Chinese: the Hakka.

Hakka means "guest people" and this is the way many Mauritians felt in relation to Canada, hoping to return soon to their country, especially students and middle-aged people. Others underlined their facility to adapt to different social and geographical environments and their peculiarity as Hakka to migrate: "We are the Asian Gypsies, we can live everywhere!"

I.4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodologies I used included participant observation, interviews (unstructured and by common themes), social network, life history, virtual fieldwork and library research. The aim of the interviews was to obtain a broad understanding of the Mauritian migrations to Canada and to understand them from their point of view "what it means being Mauritian in Canada." I ensured all my informants anonymity and in my thesis I did not use their real names. The language we spoke was most of the time English. After a while when we started seeing each other more, they switched to French. And in the context of parties, where my presence was not that imposing and having fun was more important than self-consciousness of my scrutiny, Kreol - the French based patois - was spoken. They taught me the minimal amount of Kreol to survive in Mauritius and they told me what the different groups are called.

Participant observation has become almost a definition of the work of anthropologists. As Spradley (1980: 54) states: "the participant observer comes to a social situation with two purposes: (1) to engage in activities appropriate to the situation and (2) to observe the activities, people, and physical aspects of the situation. This methodological credo is founded on the idea that we can understand another culture through sharing the experience of the practitioners themselves. Of course, I was an outsider but in interacting with them for one

year I could achieve an in-between status. Spradley (ibid.: 55) emphasizes: "our experience of participating in a social situation takes on meaning and coherence from the fact that we are *inside* the situation, part of it. In short, we are insiders." I shared laughter, I shared food, and I shared long conversations.

Interviewing was a new methodology for me that required some skills and a lot of practice. My first performance was not really brilliant. I found myself suddenly asking questions without any logic. When I realized what I was doing my stream of questions had already taken their course. The interview demonstrates the limitation of native theories of communication and of reality. My "native theories" did not help in this spontaneous interview. Ellen (1984: 214) emphasizes the positive aspect of non pre-determinated questions: "In the informal interview everything is negotiable." But a wrong question is hard to renegotiate. I tested the possibility of utilizing questionnaires in my fieldwork but I turned to an unstructured interview containing few questions common to everyone: common themes such as the reasons for coming to Canada (when?); identities issues; contacts with other Mauritians in Canada, abroad and in Mauritius. I faced theoretical and practical problems in utilizing questionnaires. The use of the questionnaire in anthropology differs from other social sciences like sociology, as it is not used for quantitative analysis or in an experimental way. It is the purpose of social anthropology to understand people not as units but as integral parts of systems of relationships. The interview is not a single recording of objective fact: it is an exploration of meaning. Although the interview is a social interaction, I was aware that the power that my position implied: asking questions, perhaps questions that hurt my informants. I have really tried my best to show that power relation is circular; that they could ask me back, protest or not answer at all. If the questions became an obstacle to

communication, I would dispense with them. The interviews, most of the time, occurred in one to one relation. I did not use any type of recording but I wrote short fieldnotes in front of my informants. I let them participate actively in my note-taking; asking several times: how do you spell, could you write? What do you suggest? Often, they wanted to make sure that I understood what they meant and they returned my questions with questions. The common questions or interviews by themes were quite useful because in cross-checking analysis, I had the opportunity to begin to put together the different parts of the "puzzle."

Oral-life history and social network as field techniques have been utilized in this research through participant observation and through interviews. I have some reservations about oral history if it is not contextualized and supported by other sources. Oral history interviews represent the social perception of facts and are all, in addition, subject to social pressure from the context in which they are obtained. I tried to elicit questions about their migration experience and the way they managed to keep in contact with Mauritius. Personal histories showed me once more the importance of human agency. With regards to social network, this field technique has been very useful for me to trace the structure of social relationships among Mauritians, but I did not experiment with any mathematical implications. The aims of network analysis, accordingly to Boissevain (1979: 393) are three: "it asks questions about who is linked to whom, the nature of the linkage and how the nature of that linkage is affected." Employing only participant observation would not have allowed me to grasp all these aspects. The common questions helped me out. Beginning with a general question like "do you know any other Mauritians in Toronto/Montreal?" I turned to more specific ones. I asked whether there was a kin relation with them and how often and in which occasions they gather. These specific questions helped me to create a map of

connections, which extended beyond the city of Toronto with a constant mention of Montreal and vice versa.

Virtual fieldwork offered me the arena to interact simultaneously with a virtual Mauritian community located all over the space and engaging with the problematics of multi-sited fields. Of course the interaction you have is different. Hastrup (1994: 3) is right in pointing out that "there is no way to substitute a phone call [I add surfing on the net] for fieldwork; most of the relevant information is non-verbal and cannot be 'called up,' but has to be experienced as performed." I participated in a Mauritian virtual forum and I read Mauritian newspapers: *Le Mauricien*, *L'Express*. Through these two means I was at least able to grasp partially the other side of the dialogue: how island Mauritians interact with those living abroad and how this 'diaspora' is perceived and portrayed. The possibility to see "virtually" one other site of the multi-sited field showed once more how Mauritian identity is a construction that takes place inside and outside Mauritius. Regarding my library research, I went almost in all directions. Trying to have a holistic approach, I engaged with economics, development studies, history, literature, census data, and of course anthropology.

I.5. REFLEXIVITY: THE ANTHROPOLOGIST TURNS TO HERSELF

Probably this section would be better not to appear in an ethnography, but the time of objective anthropology is over and the "naked" anthropologist shows her/his body without hiding and probably with a little bit of pride: "I am a human being as you are." All

knowledge is positioned and all perspectives are partial (cf. Clifford 1986; Rosaldo 1989). Thinking and writing, it takes time before they can actually work together. This is often expressed in the long painful period where no word can be written, no thought can be expressed. In this situation of liminal status before even you can say that your work is in progress you feel trapped in a web of meanings that cannot be revealed, that do not make sense to you. To think about what are you thinking sometimes help and writing why you cannot write has been my therapy to initiate this thesis.

"Reflexivity is a condition embodied in anthropological practice. It is beneficial as a continuous mode of self-analysis and political awareness" (Callaway 1992: 33). Reflexivity refers to the conscious use of the self as a resource for making sense of others. It helps make sense of experience. "Why are you interested in Mauritians?" At one point or the other, the question will always come up. It took me some time to bring the answer from the subconscious level. Is it the exotic difference? Is it the "monstrous hybrid"?[3] Is it because you need something that is distant from you?

I came to realize the link between my previous research on the different constituent religious groups in Bosnia under the Ottoman Empire and my current one on Mauritius one day when I was reading the speech of the co-founder Andreas Riedlmayer of the Bosnia Action Coalition at the Charity Dinner held in Mauritius on 7 March 1997:

[3] Mary Douglas argues that what really disturbs cultural order is when things turn up in the wrong category; or when things fail to fit any category - such as a substance like mercury, which is metal but also a liquid on a social group like mixed-race *mulattoes* who are neither white nor black but float ambiguously in some unstable dangerous, hybrid zone of indeterminacy in-between.

> Like Mauritius, Bosnia is a small country, distinguished by its great natural beauty. It is also a place where people of different ethnic and religious traditions have together produced a wonderfully rich and complex cultural heritage, and what - until recently - was the region's oldest and most successful example of a functioning civil society. Bosnia is the one country in Europe where Islam, the Eastern and Western forms of Christianity, and Judaism have all flourished side-by-side over many centuries. In Bosnia's towns and cities, it is a common sight to see the main Friday mosque, the Roman Catholic cathedral, the Eastern Orthodox church and the Jewish synagogue all facing each other on the same street or on the main town square. The placement of such buildings is not a matter of chance. Choosing a site for architecture is an intentional, thoughtful, political act. People who do not want to live together, who cannot stand the sight of each other, will not build their houses of worship and the monuments of their religious and communal life in the shadows of those of the others. In fact, the historic centers of Sarajevo, Mostar and other Bosnian cities bear witness to centuries of successful coexistence, with the Islamic minaret, the Catholic campanile and the Orthodox church steeple all reaching up from one skyline. Like other countries in Europe - and elsewhere in the world - Bosnia has had its share of social and economic conflict and political turmoil. But over the - longue durée - Bosnians of all religious and ethnic traditions did find ways to live, work and build together. The hatreds that have torn apart Bosnia in recent years are rather new. They represent a departure from this historic norm, not the inevitable result of ancient history. What has motivated the mayhem and destruction of the last five years is not religion as such, but a political ideology that proclaims - in contradiction to history - that people of different cultures can never live together. This is the same premise that forms the basis of apartheid, fascism and other essentialist ideologies. Unfortunately, this has become a political disease that has plagued much of the world during our lifetime, and which is threatening to become a world-wide epidemic of cultural and religious intolerance as we stand on the threshold of the twenty-first century. To those who are infected by such ideologies, multiculturalism is unthinkable and culture itself is seen as the enemy. The past, with its evidence of successful coexistence, becomes a threat that has to be destroyed and obliterated.

His words were my words that have not yet been able to be pronounced. Engaging in Mauritius for me is a further attempt to investigate an example of successful coexistence of different ethnic and religious groups that through a dialectical dialogue managed to create a peculiar hybridyzed culture. Unfortunately, I could not afford to do my fieldwork in the island but the fact that I was doing my study in Toronto opened up the possibility to turn

my interest to the Mauritians living here. Toronto, the global city, is really a great spot to do fieldwork as the entire world is just at the corner next to you.

Studying the Mauritians in Toronto and Montreal have been quite useful in showing how it is not necessary to go far away to do anthropology, as anthropology is a question of method and not of field site. In fact because of globalization it is no longer possible to concentrate just on one field site! Studying Mauritians in Toronto was a personal challenge for me in testing the dynamics of transnationalism so much theorized. Mauritians in Canada represent such a small group of people compared to other more numerous immigrant groups. Will Mauritians succeed in not being "swallowed" by the sea of North American society? Or will Mauritians abroad be able to strengthen their national identities through the formation of a civil society expressed in the form of associations? Reflecting on the fact that both Canada and Mauritius are multicultural societies, I wanted to understand how these two multicultural ideologies differ. Chapter Four precisely looks at the *pluriculturalisme mauricien* and its ideology of representing equally all different ethnic and religious groups in the frame of the Mauritian national identity. Mauritians who came to Canada, thanks to their cosmopolitanism and their familiarity with ethnic/religious/linguistic differences did not experience any particular difficulties in the social relations with the various components of the Canadian society. Besides they found themselves advantaged, compared to other migrants, in mastering the two official Canadian languages: English and French.

Fieldwork had always reminded me of something exotic or some kind of old fashioned sociology that used people instead of guinea-pigs in the microlaboratory of the world. I come from history, a discipline that shares many characteristics with anthropology, but in one feature differs: "historians interrogate sources that are mute and not alive," while

anthropologists engage instead with people, people who can answer back.[4] This was my reason for turning to anthropology and engaging with people. When is someone ready to do fieldwork? This question I posed to myself many times. Am I ready? I think it is a rhetorical question because just in doing fieldwork you will realize your own limitations. I can honestly say that I was scared. I read a wide literature on the power embodied in the figure of the anthropologist: the object-subject dichotomy, the insider - outsider relation, the authority of the writing and the attempts of multivocality. These considerations are quite important but when you start your fieldwork you are in a very weak position, looking for contacts no matter from whom, you are totally dependent on random events: regardless of how solid your research proposal is and how much theory implies. This is the painful and amazing aspect of fieldwork: being able to work on practice, theory and experience. Paraphrasing Bhaskar "What is involved in the transformational processes of social life is never just practical and discursive consciousness, but always also sentiment, the whole affective domain of feelings, meanings, memories that make up a sense of place or structure of feeling"(1983: 92). Armed with theory, experience and sentiment I began my fieldwork.

To this point I have been so engaged in discussing the problematics of doing fieldwork and speaking of meta-anthropology[5] that I almost forget to acknowledge the real actors: my informants, the students, the people who made this project possible. You do not begin to do fieldwork until you have asked the first question. I do not remember exactly what my first question was. I did not deliberately forget, probably checking my field notes I could find it. Engaging with people was the most joyful part of this project. It came

[4] Of course interpreters of sources can answer back too!
[5] Meta-anthropology is a reflection on the cultural condition of anthropology itself.

naturally. I decided that the best strategy was to be myself. I showed my vulnerabilities as a way of stimulating dialogue; I did not want to exploit anyone by making the conversation one-sided. The reactions were positive: people told more about themselves than I had expected or wanted. I did not take into consideration that questions, which I thought were neutral, would evoke sufferings and strong emotional response. Once I asked a male informant if he had any contacts with other Mauritians in the city. After a short silence he told me that he has no contacts with his relatives since he decided "coming out." In recalling this event, all his anger and pain came to the surface. He needed someone to talk to. I realized that in dealing with people you have to be aware of the possibility of many reactions, and that you must be governed by ethical, rather than purely academic considerations. At times I really enjoyed the experience; at other times, I was frustrated and perplexed.

The atmosphere that was created around us was always joyful and it started typically with many questions being asked about me. My accent was a good facilitator in not imposing knowledge and not imposing power. I explained my "ethnic background" of belonging to those people who live on the borderline: Italian born by Slovene parents and living in Trieste on the border between Italy and the ex Yugoslavia. "Am I a hybrid?" The same situation of being a newcomer to Canada opened up a space of solidarity where we shared experiences of racism and suggestions for the landed immigrant application. The Mauritians, I met, were surprised that I was interested in them but not unfamiliar with being questioned about their island. It seems that the number of scholars that choose Mauritius, as a place to study is increasing. The political asset, the numerous languages and religions, the economical success, the EPZ (Export Processing Zone), the environmental problems and last but not least the

wonderful scenery and the weather attract many scholars. Mauritians are used to recognize them in the rural and even in their urban settlements. The image they gave me of Mauritius was at least at the beginning always positive and nostalgic. The nice weather compared to the cold of Canada, the warmness of the people compare to the coldness of Canada, the *joy de vivre* compared to the workaholic style of Canadian life. But scratching the surface, step by step and with the possibility to meet them successively opened a new gray area of job insecurity, of clientelistic practices, of overwhelming Indian power. The paradise turned to be an "enfer," "enfer tropical où règnent les préjugés raciaux" [tropical hell where racial prejudices rule] (Chazal 1951).

My fieldwork has been a learning experience and indeed quite positive. Engaging with people let me discover my limits and to overcome them (at least a few). I feel that there is still a gap between theory and methodology, on the one hand and practice on the other and that one's understanding of the former is determined by the latter. I am convinced that fieldwork can help to overcome this gap.

CHAPTER II.

The coexistence of centralization and fragmentation, of nationalism and transnationalism, of traditional and modern, is characteristic of the world as it approaches the twenty-first century. Thus it is hard nowadays not to be involved with issues of globalization, diaspora, identity and transnationalism, issues which are deeply entangled with one another. In this chapter I grapple with these different aspects to better situate my research on Mauritians living in Canada and on the relation these Mauritians have with their mother country. I start by analyzing the phenomenon of globalization, a fashionable and multifaceted term that seems to incorporate all current tensions. But globalization is not a neutral term, it can hide many different ideological projects. Whereas prophets of globalization such as business guru Kenichi Ohmae (1995) have argued that we are moving towards an era of global capitalism in which "nothing is overseas anymore" and in which capitalism has become "borderless," others are arguing that in fact during a period of globalization we are witnessing an intense "localization." There are also concerns about the issue of "globalization from above" - globalization imposed by outside forces such as transnational corporations versus "globalization from below" - the efforts of workers and national liberation movements to build from the ground up organizations to confront global capital: global civil society. In the framework of globalization, I engage with the transnational condition that opens up a space where migrants can accommodate their "diasporic identities" in new forms of loyalties. The role of the state in the age of globalization is under revision, revision that does not mean that the state is loosing its relevance.

Theories and methodologies are connected and each depends on the other. In the last part of the chapter I explore the problematics that anthropology faces in the new global scenario. I will look at how globalization has affected anthropological methodology and fieldwork and how these issues have affected my own research and fieldwork.

II.1. THEORIZING GLOBALIZATION

In discussing the tendency of capitalism to "unite, in some measure, the most distant parts of the world, by enabling them to relieve one another's wants, to increase one another's enjoyments, and to encourage one another's industry" Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations*, in 1776 asked himself what " benefits or misfortunes to mankind may hereafter result from these events, no human wisdom can foresee" (Smith 1962: 141). He was discussing globalization. If Adam Smith, as defender of capitalism saw this process as positive, Marx and Engels held a more critical position. Marx pointed out the global tendencies of the capitalist system. Established local and national self-sufficiency and limitations are giving way to all-round transport connectedness and the interdependence of nations, as well as the declining role of nations. Capital and goods know no borders, homeland or nation and presuppose the growing role of the world market. In this sense globalization seems as a déjà vu even though the new terminology creates the impression of discontinuity. A globalizing imperative has been evident in many previous periods of history (cf. Braudel 1977; Frank 1969, 1998). It is dated by many in the modern age: the age that brought the rise of the West, the rise of the state (Roberston 1990: 26) and it is perhaps most powerfully visible in nineteenth century imperialism and colonialism.

The idea of the incorporation of all peoples into a single world society (Albrow 1996) is new although it came dramatically out in many situations of crisis: first world war it was hinted at by Karl Jaspers (1957), who saw the dropping of the atomic bomb in 1945 implicating the globe as a whole. "Squabbling" about the date is less important than recognizing that the general idea of the world getting smaller is fairly recent. We think immediately of Marshall McLuhan's "global village." The revolutionary ideas of Marshall McLuhan were the first to capture people's attention about the process of globalization. In 1967 he wrote, "Time has ceased space has vanished. We now live in a global village. [..] a simultaneous happening." The media plays a vital role in creating this "simultaneous happening." Globalization, the integration of everyone into a single world system, is not just a matter of capitalism but also a consequence of it. Globalization has become buzzword in the last decade to signify that something profound is happening, that the world is changing, that a new world economic, political, and cultural order is emerging. Yet the term is used in so many different contexts, by so many different people, for so many different purposes, that it is difficult to ascertain what is at stake in the globalization problematic. What function does the term serve? How is globalization theorized? How is it described and to what factors is it attributable? What may the results of this trend be? What impact will it have on the nation-state? And what effects does it have for contemporary theory and politics?

McGrew defines the contradictions and varying perspectives on the subject as "global babble." According to McGrew the term refers to the:

> Multiplicity of linkages and interconnections between the states and societies which make up the modern world system. It describes the process by which events, decisions, and activities in one part of the world can come to have significant consequences for individuals and communities in quite distant parts of the globe (ibid. 1992: 23).

A "multiplicity of linkages and interconnections" of people, money, technologies, commodities, ideas constitutes globalization. There is not in fact, such a thing as globalization per se, rather the term is used as a cover concept. The term is neither innocent nor neutral. It replaces older discourses like "imperialism" and "modernization." Globalization as a theoretical construct can be described positively and negatively. Personally I am neither an advocate nor a critic of globalization; I neither applaud it nor do I condemn it. I seek only to discern the significance of what it historically is.

A wide and diverse range of social theorists are arguing that today's world is organized by increasing globalization, and that this is strengthening the dominance of a world capitalist economic system, supplanting the primacy of the nation-state by transnational corporations and organizations, and eroding local cultures and traditions through the creation of a global culture. Marxists, advocates of worlds systems theory, (Wallerstein-Frank-Mintz-Wolf), functionalists, Weberians, and many other contemporary theorists are converging on the position that globalization is a distinguishing trend of the present moment. Moreover, advocates of a postmodern break in history argue that developments in transnational capitalism are producing a new global historical configuration of post-Fordism, or postmodernism as a new cultural logic of capitalism (Harvey 1989; Jameson 1991). The discourse of globalization is caught up in the modernity/postmodernity debates For some globalization thus constitutes a continuation of the problematic of modernization and modernity, while for others, it signifies something new and different and is bound up with the postmodern turn, or an altogether novel and as yet untheorized global condition. For some theorists, globalization is seen as a process of standardization in which a globalized

media and consumer culture circulates the globe creating sameness, homogeneity and massification everywhere. Some postmodernists champion, by contrast, the local, diversity, difference, and heterogeneity, and sometimes claim that globalization itself produces hybridity and multiplicity. They argue that global culture makes possible unique appropriations and developments all over the world with new forms of hybrid syntheses of the global and the local, thus proliferating difference and heterogeneity (Hall 1991). I am following Robertson (1990) in arguing that globalization as intimately related to modernity and modernization, as well as to postmodernity and postmodernization.

Two theorists – Giddens (1990) and Harvey (1989) - offer different approaches in understanding globalization, which according to me, are complementary. Giddens characterizes the trend as one of time/space "distanciation" or the "intersection of presence and absence" that is, a profound reorganization in social life of time and space. He sees the development of global networks of production and exchange as weakening any control people have over local circumstances, resulting in the extraction of micro and macro socio-economic decisions from local interests of interaction, what Giddens calls a "disembedding of social relations."

> .... larger and larger numbers of people live in circumstances in which disembedded institutions, linking local practices with globalised social relations, organise major aspects of day-to-day life (Giddens 1990: 79).

For Giddens, globalization encourages "relations between absent others, locationally distant from any given situation of face-to-face interaction" (Giddens 1990: 18) combining both presence and absence through a systemic interlocking of local and global social events and social relations. In other words, local circumstances have less of a hold on people's lives, and

more distant circumstances gain importance. In contrast, Harvey focuses on a time/space "compression." This compression is the imperative of the capitalistic political order to shorten the average turnover between investment and the taking of profit. It results in a feeling that our world has become smaller.

As to the cause (or causes) of this globalization trend, competing perspectives are expressed: those who perceive a single causal logic, and those who identify multiple, interrelated causes. Wallerstein, Rosenau, and Gilpin fall into the former category, and Giddens and Robertson belong to the latter. In the frame of the world-system theory Wallerstein (1974, 1978) focuses on capitalism and the growth of a universal economic space which is based on the center-periphery and semi-periphery model. Rosenau's (1990) emphasis is on the importance of technological progress in globalization, noting that both people and ideas are easily transportable across territorial boundaries. Finally, Gilpin identifies politico-military factors as those which underlie the trend, arguing that it is the hegemonic states (i.e., those with the most power and influence) which impose world order. Both Giddens and Robertson stress the importance of the interconnections of more than one factor in the conceptualization of globalization, such as capitalism, the inter-state system, and militarism. However their results are distinct. Giddens is more interested in focusing on how these aspects intersect, and Robertson is interested in how they simultaneously universalize and particularize in a dialectical dimension. Robertson shows that it is impossible to dichotomize the spheres of local and global and a division of globalists and localists does not make much sense in the analysis of the globalization phenomenon. For globalists, globalization it the solution to the problems of underdevelopment, backwardness, and provincialism. For localists, globalization is the

problem and localization is the solution. I suggest that this simplistic division can not, of course easily help our comprehension of the present global scenario and it is therefore a mistake to focus on one side in favor of the other. I align myself with Robertson and Giddens in arguing that we must consider the interconnectedness of more than one factor in defining the phenomenon of globalization. Capitalism of course is of paramount importance, but linked to other characteristics such: as information technology and inter-state political systems. I have a hard time thinking of globalization as a theoretical tool since I see it as a generic term, as a container for a number of different processes and political projects under way today. The novelty of globalization in relation to other world-economy views based on the rise of capitalism is in my opinion, the emergence of new technologies; thus, a discussion of globalization is essentially a discussion of new technologies, their relationship to capitalism, and the possibilities they create. This perspective does not claim that capitalism no longer operates according to the laws of the past, but it recognizes that what is taking place today is new, epochal, and different from the capitalism of previous eras (Davis 1998).

Globalization is also about the alternate forms of cross-ethnic, interreligious mobilization often possible with the important role that migrants play in the formation of transnational communities. This kind of globalized culture developed through the flow of ideas, people and goods is defined as cosmopolitanism (Hannerz 1990) and it means that a coexistence of cultures understood as distinctive entities is present in individuals' experience of every day life. Globalization is a useful framework, which allows you to study the macro in the micro and vice versa, in a continuous dialectic of universalization and particularization. This tension is well grasped by Appadurai (1990) who targets the "central problem of today's interactions as the tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization"

(ibid.: 5). Appadurai introduces the neologism "scape," which used as a suffix and combined with appropriate prefixes--ethno-, media-, techno-, finance- and ideo, offers a framework for examining the "new global cultural economy as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order that cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models." *Ethnoscapes* include the landscape of people: tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles and guestworks. *Technoscapes* include the "global configuration, also ever fluid, of technology, and of the fact that technology, both high and low, both mechanical and informational, now moves at high speeds across various kinds of previously impervious boundaries" (ibid.: 8) *Financiascapes*, are produced by the rapid flows of money in the currency markets and stock exchanges. *Mediascapes* are distinguished by the flows of film, television newspapers and magazines. *Ideascapes* are characterized by the flows of ideas produced by ideologies of states and by counter-hegemonic forces. The concepts of technoscape and ethnoscape are useful explanatory tools in this research, thus they will be further explored in the next section.

These five dimensions of global cultural flows (ethnicity, technology, finance, media, and ideology) move in non-isomorphic paths, opening an alternative way of seeing space, not "fixed" as a typical landscape might be. They are the "building blocks," Appadurai suggests, of contemporary imagined worlds. If the imagination is associated with the individual and with agency, "the individual actor is the last locus of this perspectival set of landscapes.

The imaginary is no longer fantasy, escape, elite pastime, or mere contemplation. Instead, it has become an "organized field of social practices, a form of work (both in the sense of labor and of culturally organized practice) and a form of negotiation between sites of agency ('individuals') and globally defined fields of possibility."

II.1. 1. TECHNOSCAPE

In my research I have been particularly interested in the technoscape dimensions of globalization which involve the dissemination of new technologies and have tremendous impact on the economy, polity, society, culture, and every day life. Some analysts have argued that information has become the most important element of today's world, and that industrial societies, or even non-industrial societies, are gradually being transformed into information societies (cf. Naisbitt1996: 1-33). It seems that countries have no alternative but to embrace that revolution. The new technology compresses time-space allowing people, who live/work/are elsewhere to remain closer than ever with their home country. In this way communications technologies both foster more universalistic identities, as well as enhancing more localized identifications (Hall 1992). Due to this transformation, together with the old technologies, the centralized, homogenizing, standardizing ideal of the modern nation-state is rapidly becoming obsolete. The nation-state however uses information technology to foster its hegemony and to stay on the global stage. To "informatize," a nation still must have the prerequisites of the old paradigm as underlined by Anderson (1983) and Gellner (1983) - literacy and mass media use - plus some more attributes: a better-educated population, a higher propensity to use telecommunications and a greater competence to apply computer technology. Because this transformation is occurring over a relatively short period, it is more severe than the transformation which occurred doing the Industrial Revolution.

On the effects of the informatization and their consequences, two contrasting visions are expressed. According to the utopians[6] - those who see "informatization" (globalization) as positive - countries can best achieve open access and universal service within a framework of competition, flexibility and private enterprise. They also believe that the global village offers vast opportunities for countries to solve national and local problems, and enable students to access knowledge (Rudenstein 1996). Investment in telecommunications, moreover, would produce multiplier effects leading to economic, social, and political development. They assert that the new communication technologies will undercut monopolies on information, curtail censorship, and promote citizen-based democracy (Rheingold 1993, Fukuyama 1996). They also point out that developing countries can leapfrog into the new sophisticated technologies (Irving 1996).

The dystopians - those who see "informatization" as negative - conversely say that the economic arguments for the new technologies must be balanced against the political effects, as well as the social, organizational, and administrative impacts. Countries must pay heed to their security and sovereignty while citizens ought to be concerned with privacy and surveillance. They point out the negative effects of commercialization, privatization, deregulation, and internationalization. They say that the tension between capitalism and democracy will further erode the latter, and lead to commercialization of education as well (Vincent 1996). They point to case studies to document that the new technologies will not democratize communication. They assert that these technologies will disempower people through new forms of dependence (Hamelink 1994). They also say that the large majority of the world's poor cannot bear the cost nor will they have the education ability to access the

[6] I am following the distinction utopians and dystopians used by Gunaratne et al. (1997).

new technologies. The poor will end up further disadvantaged in the new world system. Mody, Bauer, and Straubhaar (1995) skeptically refer to telecommunication investments in the developing world as a "present-day gold rush" (ibid.: xv). They claim that the technologically driven rhetoric fails to address the economic, social, organizational, administrative, and political aspects of communication problems. They point out that the "information highway and other such proposals driven by economics and technology are not socially and spatially neutral" (ibid.: xvii).

The transition toward an information economy involves a sharp shift from traditional labor-intensive industries to capital and technology-intensive industries. And this change is producing its victims Industries need fewer people and people loose their jobs. This is the dark side of globalization. The globalization of production is creating a widening asymmetry in the world market-place: on the one hand, there is an unprecedented volume of capital mobility and of technological transfer across borders; on the other hand, labor mobility is subject to a myriad of restrictions, from visa requirements to occupational licensing. Immigrants flow much less easily than capital and finance.

II.1. 2. ETHNOSCAPE

In the context of time-space distances there is a need to reframe social relations and identities replacing the notions of identities and cultures as stable and grounded in a particular locality. In the increasing flow of meanings and migrants across national borders, there is a growing need to address what may be termed translocal processes of constructing identity and meaning. The landscape of people that comprise this transnational space is composed of migrants, students, refugees, exiles, business people, travelers or in other

terminology transmigrants. Cultural transnationals can be extended to "those intellectuals who are at home in the cultures of other peoples as well as their own"(Konrad 1984: 208-9).

Transnational communities are dense networks across political borders created by immigrants in their quest for economic advancement and social recognition. Through these networks, an increasing number of people are able to lead dual lives. Participants are often bilingual, move easily between different cultures, frequently maintain homes in two countries, and pursue economic, political and cultural interests that require their presence in both. In a pioneering statement on the topic, Linda Basch and her collaborators describe their initial attitude toward this emergent phenomenon:

> We define transnationalism as the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement. We call these processes transnationalism to emphasize that many immigrants today build social fields that cross geographic, cultural, and political borders. Immigrants who develop and maintain multiple relationships - familial, economic, social, organizational, religious, and political - that span borders we call "transmigrants." An essential element of transnationalism is the multiplicity of involvement that transmigrants' sustain in both home and host societies. Transmigrants take actions, make decisions, and develop subjectivities and identities embedded in networks of relationships that connect them simultaneously to two or more nation-states (7-8).

Similar processes of back-and-forth movement and intensive investments and contacts with sending countries also took place before, for example among European immigrants at the turn of the century. The present transnational communities possess a distinct character that justifies coining a new concept to refer to them. This character is defined by three features: the number of people involved, the nearly instantaneous character of communications across space, and the fact that the cumulative character of the process makes participation "normative" within certain immigrant groups (Portes 1997).

The flow of people and the creation of the transnational realm bring new light to questions of identities and diasporization. Issues of diaspora will be examined in a separate section. Here I look more closely at identity. Identities, like ideas, are not created in a vacuum but are historically, economically, socially and politically ingrained. "Ethnic groups" for example should not simply be thought of as reacting to modernism, in ways which are meant to preserve identity; rather they should be seen as forms of mobilization in pursuit of political and economic interests (J. Rex 1995). It seems that politics of identity is replacing ideologies which have collapsed in the last ten years. Politics of identity has somehow shifted the attention from class to group issues creating an atomized scenario.

The term identity was brought into general use only in the 1950s by the psychoanalytic theorist Erik Erikson (1959). Personal identity, according to Erikson, was located deep in the unconscious as a durable and persistent sense of sameness of the self; whatever happens, however traumatic and dramatic the experience might be, the non-pathological individual does not normally consider himself or herself to have become someone else. Over the last fifteenth years, the discourse of identity has spread in the academy crossing disciplines. Identity has became an unifying discourse for many different kinds of inequalities, especially those organized along lines of nationality, ethnicity, race, sexuality, and gender. Identity engages in the processes in which people are made collective and in the stages in which they develop as distinctive individuals (Rouse 1995). Despite the different approaches to identity which are taken by postmodernists, modernists, and essentialists, most social theorists agree that questions of identity are fundamental to the cultural politics that link personal experience to collective forms and actions.

Initially, identity was assumed to be socially created, but this monolithic concept of identity has been replaced by the notion of multiple identities and a de-centered subject defining his/her selfhood only through a belief in personal narrative (Hall 1992). Identity is no longer perceived as static but as a process. The making of identity is a formation that "is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside representation" [production of meaning through language, discourse and image] (Hall 1990). The performative aspect of identity arises in opposition to the naturalized theory of identity as race, and holds that identities are contingent, learned, and historically malleable. A performative theory of culture pays attention to ways in which people portray their identities. The most interesting contemporary theory of performative identity comes from Judith Butler (1990). In looking at gender as performance she challenges the naturalized discourse of sexual identity highlighting the culturally constructed makeup up of gender. It is worthwhile to point out that identity becomes an issue in a situation of crisis (Mercer 1990). No one better than Fanon (1967) captured the clash of the personal identity as consequence of the 'metropolitan' gaze: "Look, a Negro." This constant displacement creates the identity of the Black Man in the White Man's World, what Fanon refers to as the "corporeal schema," as totally dependent on skin coloration. In my fieldwork for instance, I engaged with my informants on questions of identity and how their identity as Mauritians (I am Mauritian) was questioned by an ascribed racialized identity "but you look Chinese, you are Indian...." at the moment they left Mauritius and came to Canada. Concepts of hybridity and construction of a "third space" (Bhabha) disrupted the "order" based on the dichotomous division of slave/master, white and black. Robert Young (1994) underlines how the colonial desiring machine with its dialectic of attraction and repulsion toward the

"other" produced a polymorphous perverse people who, as Bhabha points out, are "white but not quite." Hybridity can thus be seen, in Bhabha's interpretation, as a counter-narrative, a critique of the canon and its exclusion of other narratives. In other words, the hybridity "school" wants to underline first, that the colonialist discourse's ambivalence is a conspicuous illustration of its uncertainty; and second, that the migration of yesterday's "savages" from their peripheral spaces to the homes of their "masters" has "third-worlded" the center, creating "fissures" within the very structures that sustain it. Hybridization is an old issue used in the discussion of racial, political, religious or cultural identity. Robert Park, a sociologist at Chicago University used, in the 1920s, the term "cultural hybrid" in relation to the phenomenon of migration and in relation to the status of the migrant as a marginal individual. "One of the consequences of the migration is to create a situation in which the same individual finds himself [sic] striving to live in two diverse cultural groups. The effect is to produce an unstable character, a personality type with characteristic forms of behavior, this is the marginal man. It is in the mind of the marginal man that the conflicting cultures meet and fuse" (Park 1928: 889).

During the 1970s and early 1980s, most scholars assumed that identities, whether communal, regional, national, ethnic or racial were fundamentally localized. Only two basic trajectories were considered feasible for the new immigrant. The circular trajectory, where the immigrant lived for a short time abroad and yet being oriented toward the home-country and the linear trajectory, where after a first period of adaptation to the new environment, the immigrant both became used to and part of the new country, keeping no more than a nostalgic recall of the mother country and giving loyalty to the new country.

The linear trajectory brings to mind the dark images of uprooted (Handlin 1951) and transplanted immigrants who, in crossing the ocean, became new citizens and cut links with their home country. The growing recent phenomenon of transnational communities and transnational identities disrupts the schema of both trajectories. Immigrants from particular places have not only established new settlements, but they continue to keep constant contacts with their home countries, with return visits as well as the flow of money, goods and information they constitute new kinds of "social spaces" that cross national boundaries.

Beyond the assimilative cultural and economic cliché transmigrants live a complex existence that forces them to confront and rework different hegemonic constructions of identities developed in their homes or new nation-states (Basch et al. 1994). In some cases transmigrants have acquired multiple identities, combining old and new in a wide range of possibilities. In other cases these transnational communities may often be cemented by ethnic ties that go deeper than the formal membership of their members in the country in which they live. Thus, while transnational communities are deterritorialized, they may nevertheless reproduce a traditional ethnic identity in a global world (Martiniello 1998). Time-space compression may in fact also help engender a sense of cultural distinctiveness. Transnational communities can participate more or less directly in the internal affairs of the homeland (Winland 1998) and in different expressions use the country of origin as a way to consolidate their own identity by actively supporting the interest of the mother country or nourishing the myth of return. We can find theoretical tension in transnational studies between two positions well known in the field regarding the nation-state. One of these positions is hold by Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch and Cristina Blanc-Szanton (1994), the second one has been formulated by Michael Kearney (1995). The former authors state that

the continuous nation-building process is responsible for the transnationalization of the members of migrant communities; either because through a politics of "exclusion" the receiving nation-state never fully incorporates them into the new society or, because the country of origin keeps the transmigrants as part of the home-country "nation," despite their being outside of the national territory. Kearney on the other hand, states that we are facing the dying of the nation-state as traditionally conceptualized, and that transnational communities embody what, in a not so distant future, will be the relationship between state-society. These two approaches are not antithetical in so far as both acknowledge the importance of the transnational dimension.

A further aspect of transnationalism must be considered: the concept of loyalty to and citizenship in more than one country. The transnational condition implies in fact social commitments which require political personhood in the transnational space the community inhabits. Dual nationality for this reason results in being of lesser importance for transmigrants than dual citizenship. Besserer (1998) argues in favor of a de-territorialized citizenship that is not bounded to the notion of nationality, and is called transnational-citizenship. Of the same advise is Renato Rosaldo (1996) proposes a cultural citizenship that includes the convergence of diversities, but which also includes their trans-locality. That is, a trans-national citizenship. In other words, a citizenship that exceeds the "borderland" (or frontera) to situate itself in the hyperspaces of transnational community life.

II.1. 3. PROBLEMATIZING DIASPORA

In the current theoretical climate of "prescriptive essentialism," theories of diaspora have mushroomed in all directions. The term "diaspora" comes out of a specific historical

experience. It derives from the Greek, meaning dispersion through sowing or scattering, and referred initially to the "exile of the Jews from their historic homeland and their dispersion throughout many lands, signifying as well the oppression and moral degradation implied by that dispersion" (Safran 1991: 83). This definition, while it has certainly been expanded and reworked, has often held the Jewish experience and the idea of exile and oppression as prototypical. Diaspora has often been used to describe different well-established communities which have experienced "displacement," like the overseas Chinese, the Armenians in exile, or the whole African diaspora. Today, however, it is used increasingly to describe any community which, in one way or another, has a history of migration (Marienstrass 1989). The concept has also been regarded as useful in describing the geographical displacement and/or deterritorialisation of identities, cultures, and social relations in the contemporary world (cf. Gilroy 1991; Hall 1993). Furthermore, it can help to bridge the often artificial distinction between before and after migration. Thus the concept of diaspora is today used to describe the processes of transnationalism, as well as the salience of pre-migration social networks, cultures and capital, in a wide range of communities which experience a feeling of displacement (Clifford 1994; Safran 1991; Tölölyan 1991). Terms like migrants tend not to be used anymore as they refer to individuals rather than the groups, limiting the emphasis on the sense of belonging to a community which is part of the transnational mapping of the world. Recent formulations have not only stressed the complex ties of memory, nostalgia, and politics that bind the exile to an original homeland, but have also sought to bridge the link between the various diasporic communities situated across national boundaries. Different aspects of diaspora are emphasized. The "positive diaspora consciousness" takes into consideration the value of hybridization and the cultural meaning

of cosmopolitanism. The "negative diaspora consciousness" developed as a reaction of the failure of being accepted by the host society. The advent of a labor diaspora arose in the context of indentured labor. During the British colonial period, millions of Indian and Chinese were sent to work on contract in the plantations, filling the gap provoked by the slaves' emancipation. Labor diaspora arose in the opposite case, during the colonial period, through the dispersal of Spanish, Dutch, Portuguese, German, French, and British colonists. This notion is related to the expression, trade diasporas, which describes the networks of merchants, e.g., Chinese traders in South East Asia and Lebanese in West Africa and the Americas, who carried their goods over long distances. A conception of cultural diaspora is drawn from recent postmodern and postcolonial theory and applied to the case of the Caribbean peoples (cf. Cohen 1997).

Safran (1991) tried to define the field of diaspora. He suggests that a broad definition of diaspora can be applied to incorporate the Armenian, Maghrebi, Turkish, Palestinian, Cuban, Greek, and Chinese communities. Specifically, the concept of diaspora should be applied to expatriate minority communities who share the following characteristics: the people are dispersed to two or more foreign regions; a collective memory of the original homeland is retained; the expatriates feel alienated from the host country; their original home is regarded as their true home; they believe in the safety and prosperity of the original homeland; and they maintain an ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity with their homeland. The homeland myth is often exploited for political and social purposes by the triangular relationship between the diaspora, the homeland, and the host society (Safran 1991: 83-84). However, Safran's definition is perceived as reductive and problematic not only in terms of its adherence to the Jewish model but also because it does not provide

useful ways to think about other dispersed communities, or to think about the heterogeneity within the groups. Moreover Safran's definition does not take into consideration the phenomenon of rediasporization and diasporic cases where there is no myth of return, as there is no geographical place to return to. It is important to remember that there is no reason to see diasporas as a solely positive development. As James Clifford points out: "Suffice it to say that diasporic consciousness 'makes the best of a bad situation.' Experiences of loss, marginality and exile (...) are often reinforced by systematic exploitation and blocked advancement" (Clifford 1994: 312). Although diasporas are often defined in relation to nation-states, it must be remembered that a diaspora cannot provide its members with the same services and opportunities that are provided by the state for its citizens.

Robin Cohen (1997) engages further in the attempt to give a specific meaning to the concept of "Diasporas." In defining diasporas, he looks at the macro-level and draws an inclusive list of common features rather than an exclusive definition. His typology of diasporic communities, whose Jewish experience is taken as general example, include the categories of victim, imperial, labor, trade and cultural. Each category is correlated respectively with Africans and Armenians, Britons, Indians, Chinese and Lebanese, and Caribbeans. The diasporic communities although differentiated in time and space, have in common a single past traumatic event that coincides with their dispersal; the creation of imagined homelands; voluntary and involuntary movement of people; collective memories, and common identity with coethnic members in other countries.

Cohen's work is indubitably an important step in diaspora studies, however I find that his attempt in fitting a series of categories to different groups - undermines elements of difference within these categories. Differences and similarities between diaspora groups and

normal migration colonies (refugees, immigrants etc.) still need further theorization. The utilization of diaspora in such diverse realms makes of this term a tool that can be useful but also limited. Using diasporic theories in my study makes my work challenging and induces me to problematize further the concept of diaspora. I accept Safran's definition (1991) and I acknowledge the work of Cohen (1997). Although it is too late to stop the "dilution" of this concept in all kind of discourses, I am against utilizing it indiscriminately to any community, which in one way or another has a history of migration (Marienstrass 1989). The political component embedded in this concept has never to be forgotten. In my research, I have encountered a number of applying problems in using the concept of diaspora. First there is the urge to grasp the meaning of Mauritian identity. This identity always in formation and never static is the historical product of "putting together" many diasporic experiences and giving them a common shape. Can diasporas be formed around multiracial religious communities? My problems with diaspora arise when I address the question if the hypothetical Mauritian diaspora, a term used at least by the home country policy toward her "children abroad," has to be framed in a rediasporized diaspora.

In a situation of migration that started in the 1960s, emigrants moved mainly for economic reasons at the moment when the colonial cash crop economy started entering a crisis of overproduction. They experienced the cruel life of the racist metropolis and in a short time developed a diasporic consciousness because of the impossibility of being accepted and assimilated. The image of the home country would unfold in a nostalgic aura: a place to return to. Will this place be the geographical site of Mauritius: the known, the experienced, the place of affections? Will it be the mythical place of the ancestors? Looking at the religious sphere, would the Mauritian emigrants look at Mauritius as the place whose

culture is receptive to all different religions? Or would the predominant Christian culture of the "metropolis" let Sino Maritians, Tamils, Hindus, and Muslims search for a sense of attachment elsewhere? A dimension of the diasporic identity that is puzzling me is whether diasporic affiliations inhibit or enhance coalitions. Clifford points out how "many Caribbeans in New York for example have maintained a sense of connection with their home islands, a distinct sense of cultural and sometimes class identity that sets them apart from African Americans, people with whom they share material conditions of racial and class subordination"(1994: 315). In answering the questions I have laid out above, I will utilize diasporic theories I try to link the state and diaspora, in a way that offers transnational communities a possible alternative to nation-state loyalty. Is there any difference between diaspora and transnational community?

II.1. 4. GLOBALIZATION AND THE NATION-STATE

The relationship between globalization and the state is an uneasy and ambivalent one. Globalization is changing the very nature of the nation-state from a geographically bounded, centralized entity to an increasingly deterritorializied one. Because nationalism is focused on a specific place or community, it is the perfect counterpoint to the universality that globalization represents. I expect nationalism to adapt to this new age simply by cultivating a larger sense of national self-interest. Recent books have been particularly pessimistic in relation to the future of the nation-state. Kenichi Ohmae argues that the authority invested in nation-states is devolving to regional organizations. For Samuel Huntington (1993), civilization is replacing the state as the primary unit in global politics. Francis Fukuyama(1992) and Benjamin Barber believe that global economic forces are creating a homogeneous world culture, making the state superfluous. Robert Kaplan (1994) is the most

apocalyptic, claiming that demographic and environmental changes will lead to the end of the nation-state and the beginning of chaos. "The cumulative effect is akin to a group of doctors bickering about the specific disease but nodding in solemn agreement that the patient is very sick" (Drezner 1998). It can be argued almost in the same breath both that the state is being or has been weakened by the changes relating to globalization, and it has been strengthened by precisely those changes.

Globalization has not removed the need for strong and efficient states. The spread of market values to all areas of life is breaking up the family, destroying traditional cultures, and provoking the rise of sometimes radical and fanatic localisms. No authority can deal with these disturbances more efficiently than the nation-state. The state is thus a vital and vigorous force in global politics, but their significance may have changed to reflect the realities of increasing interconnectedness and coexistence. Two faces of the state stay in constant tension: the inner-national face where the state is the source of authority, legitimacy, and order and the outer-international face where it is often the source of conflict and disorder.

II.1. 4. a What Is The Role Of Civil Society?

If the state is undergoing revision what is the role that civil society plays in the globalization age? Civil society is a highly political space. It is not always clear to what extent the concept, which has been extensively used in the last years, is located with reference to the state, the market economy, political participation by individual agents, their capacity for political self-organization, or simply everything and everyone not regarded as part of the state. There has been a long discussion about the relationship of state and civil society. In

some analyses, the relationship is depicted as a zero-sum game, so that it is suggested that the stronger the state, the weaker the civil society. This statement of course is reductionist and it is rather more useful emphasizing the reciprocal relationship between state and civil society. It is the mutual impact of either that is significant; in effect it is hard to conceive of civil society functioning or even existing successfully without the state. Nonetheless a global civil society takes shape outside the politics of the market and the state. Traditionally, civil society is conceptualized as a necessary condition of democracy. Once civil society is accepted as a "locus of democratization," democracy can be seen as a "double-sided process" in which the state and civil society "become the condition for each other's democratic development"(Held 1987: 283). I utilize civil society in the way Gramsci did. Before going into Gramsci's thought, I think it is important to explore briefly the evolution and implications of the concept of civil society. This will help us to better understand his theoretical arguments.

The roots of the concept of civil society stretch back into the Middle Ages, and beyond to classical antiquity. For many centuries, theorists did not clearly distinguish "civil society" from "the state," and often used the two terms interchangeably. The idea of civil society as a crucial structure in tension with the state had its heyday between 1750 and 1850, when it underwent a confusing and contradictory series of developments before largely disappearing from European discourse until recent times.

The thinkers of the Scottish Enlightenment, especially Adam Ferguson and Adam Smith, and the great synthesizer, Hegel,[7] as well as Locke, Hume, and Kant, played an important role in the development of the concept of civil society. John Locke, implied in civil society a defense of human society at the national level against the power of the state and the inequalities of the marketplace. For Locke, civil society was that part of civilization--from the family and the church to cultural life and education--that was outside of the control of government or market but was increasingly marginalized by them. Locke saw the importance of social movements to protect the public sphere from these commercial and governmental interests. During this period - between 1750 -1850 - rather than serving as a synonym for the state or polity in its ideal form, civil society came to be defined precisely in contradistinction to the state. Civil society came to represent, in different ways for different theorists, the socially engaged groups and activities that stood between the individual and the family, on the one hand, and the government, on the other. Civil society was the realm of free exchange, the social space where people and firms came together to contract freely, to produce, and to consume. Thus, classical civil society theorists saw the right of private property as a cornerstone of civil society. Civil society was for them the space dominated by the bourgeoisie, the class that drove the development of the free market in theory and practice: the class with power independent of both land and government. The connection between economic elites and civil society remains still contentious today.

The second significant current that led to the opposition of civil society and state was the development of liberalism. Liberalism saw the state as a necessary evil and used it to civil ends. To Marx, the division of life into civil and political spheres was an

[7] Hegel's well-known phrase is "die bürgerliche Gesellschaft."

epiphenomenon of the capitalist mode of production, an alienated division masking the class interests of the bourgeoisie. In *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels remind us:

> The form of intercourse determined by the existing productive forces at all previous historical stages, and in its turn determining these, is civil society... Civil society embraces the whole material intercourse of individuals within a definite stage of the development of productive forces. It embraces the whole commercial and industrial life of a given stage and, insofar, transcends the State and the nation, though, on the other hand again, **it must assert itself in its foreign relations as nationality, and inwardly must organize itself as State...** [My emphasis] Civil society as such only develops with the bourgeoisie; the social organization evolving directly out of production and commerce, which in all ages forms the basis of the State and of the rest of the idealistic superstructure, has, however, always been designated by the same name (1964: 48).

Gramsci never fully abandoned Marx's functionalism, including his notion that civil society must ultimately be done away with through revolutionary means as one class supplants the other on the stage of history. Gramsci's major contribution to the notion of civil society is the development of a tripartite model of social life, which separated civil society not only from the state but from the economy as well. He essentially transferred civil society from the Marxist base (the economic forces) to the superstructure (culture and the state), and breathed into the latter a heterodox degree of autonomous life force. He saw the cultural realm neither as a mere reflection of the economic one, nor as a passive superstructure adorning the economic base, but as an important arena of class struggle. Thus, the sphere of civil society took on some degree of independence for Gramsci, who saw the church, unions and other institutions within society as necessary arenas of ideological control. Gramsci's study of the role of intellectuals in society led him to break down the superstructure into two floors, which he described as civil society and political society. Civil society is composed of all those private institutions - schools, churches, clubs, journals and parties - which contribute in molecular fashion to the formation of social and

political consciousness. Political society on the other hand, is composed of public institutions - government, the courts, the police, and the army -which exercise "direct dominion." It is synonymous with the state. The ruling class exerts its power over society on both of these floors of action, but by different methods. Civil society is the marketplace of ideas, where intellectuals enter as "salesman" of contending culture. The intellectuals succeed in creating hegemony to the extent that they extend the world view of the rulers to the ruled, and thereby secure the free consent of the masses to the law and order of the land. To the extent that the intellectuals, fail to create hegemony, the ruling class falls back on the state's coercive apparatus which disciplines those who do not consent and which is constructed for all society in anticipation of moments of crisis of command, when spontaneous consent declines (Bates 1975: 353). Civil society thus becomes the space where hegemony (moral, intellectual, and political leadership) and "spontaneous consent" are generated. Consent is of paramount importance for the ruling class and for the success of the state. For Gramsci, then, the state includes elements of civil society. According to Anne Sassoon, "the state narrowly conceived as government is protected by hegemony organized in civil society while the hegemony of the dominant class is fortified by the coercive state apparatus" (1983: 74). While the state performs an ethical function in terms of education and law, the forces of custom and habit "exert a collective pressure to conform in civil society without coercion or sanctions." Crucially, Gramsci saw civil society as a forum for resistance as well as control. Groups within the working class can and do struggle to establish counter hegemony. The ruling class seeks to establish a moral and ideological leadership, or hegemony, over society as a whole by instilling its values within the general population. This means, said Gramsci, that a revolutionary movement must be concerned not merely with overthrowing the state,

but also with winning over the oppressed majority to a new set of values and beliefs, with breaking the intellectual and cultural domination of the ruling class. A revolutionary movement must construct a counter-hegemony, he suggests; and this means establishing a socialist movement with its own intellectual and cultural institutions. In order to both weaken the hegemony of the ruling class and to begin building its own political culture within the spaces of the old society, the Marxist movement, according to Gramsci, has to engage in a "war of position" within society. Gramsci believed all that was needed was to engage in cultural and intellectual combat with capitalist hegemony, by building an intricate system of political trenches - newspapers; cultural organizations; trade unions; women's; peasant, and youth organizations

II.I.4-b Global civil society

Local action is linked increasingly to globe-spanning networks of knowledge and practice, in what Lipschutz calls global civil society (1992). The result is a system of governance that is both local and global, to which states and international organizations are turning increasingly for help and advice. The spatial boundaries of global civil society are different, but its autonomy from the constructed boundaries of the state system allows for the creation of new political spaces.

New communications technologies now facilitate communication among and between the world's national civil societies, especially within the fields of human rights, consumer protection, peace, gender equality, racial justice, and environmental protection. In the last decade there a new kind of global community has emerged increasingly. It is becoming a force in international relations circumventing the hegemony of markets and of governments.

This new kind of global community opens up an alternate form of cross-ethnic and interreligious mobilization (Rudolph and Piscatori 1997).

The emergence of a global civil society is still somewhat inarticulate and it is best represented in the global "NGO Movement," non governmental organizations and citizens advocacy groups uniting to fight planetary problems whose scale confound local or even national solutions. Previously isolated from one another, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are playing an increasing role as their power and capacity to communicate grow (Lipschutz 1992). The augmented visibility of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and social movements at the international level invites continuing evaluation of the extent and significance of the role they now play in world politics. While the presence of such new actors is easily demonstrated, international relations scholars have debated their significance.

The continued growth and influence of global civil society faces two fundamental problems: increasing monopolization of global information and communication by transnational corporations; and the increasing disparities between the world's info-rich and info-poor populations. Alternative forces, such as for example, the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), are trying to cope with these problems. The APC has built a truly global network dedicated to the free and balanced flow of information. APC Networks are trying to make an "end-run" around the information monopolies and to construct a truly alternative information infrastructure for the challenges that lie ahead. By providing a low-cost, appropriate solution for non-governmental organizations and poor countries, they are attempting to civilize and democratize cyberspace. In the global society, universal ideas take shape and flow often and they are re-managed to fit into the local. "One hope for civil society lies in the capacity of these ideas to transcend in action ethnic and

other particularistic differences. But, as it has so often happened in the case of so-called "world" religions, "universal" messages, ethics and ideals are co-opted, politicised and redirected in practice to local special needs and interests, hence lose some of their transcendence" (Nagata 1999: 3).

In relation to transnational communities what is the role that civil society plays in fostering the link with the mother country? What is the role of intellectuals inside and outside the nation-state in engaging in a "war of position"? Itzigsohn et al. (1999) suggest the term "civil societal transnationality" as an alternative to the term global civil society as it is related to an entity disconnected to the state (1999: 331).

In mapping Dominican transnationalism, the authors distinguish two levels of civil society. The "narrow" civil society is orchestrated by the state and aims to foster the consent of Dominicans abroad, offering them under some restrictions the right to vote. The second level is the '"broad civil society" composed by associations and community initiatives which keep the contacts between the Dominican abroad and those living in the island. The aim of my research is thus to understand to which degree the spheres of civil society active inside and outside Mauritius overlap and dialogue. An interesting concept of civil society is drawn by Michael Walzer (1992) who underlines the way in which civil society refers to a realm of concrete solidarities. He has described civil society broadly as "the space of uncoerced human association and also the set of relational networks - formed for the sake of family, faith, interest and ideology - that fill this space" (ibid.: 89). These networks include, as pointed out by Gramsci, unions, churches, political parties, social movements, cooperatives, and "societies for promoting or preventing this and that" (1992: 90). The promotion of civic renewal and civil society is often made by way of urging greater participation and "active

citizenship" through voluntary associations and service. This active citizenship expresses itself in social capital. Social capital is a "feature of social organisation, such as trust, norms, and networks, that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating co-ordinated actions" (Putnam 1993: 167). Putnam argues that "networks of civic engagement [such as neighbourhood associations, choral societies, co-operatives, sports clubs, mass-based parties] are an essential form of social capital: the denser such networks in a community, the more likely that its citizens will be able to co-operate for mutual benefit" (1993: 173). Social capital, in other words, can be seen as the dynamic ingredients or mechanisms comprising a thriving civil society.

II.2. METHODOLOGY

In the last decade, world circumstances and new scholarly trends have pushed anthropology to a self re-definition of the discipline. In particular in relation to globalization, anthropologists are questioning how the discipline might/should change methodologically to better meet the new world scene. Concepts of culture, ethnography, the field, and fieldwork, need to be re-adapted. "Our habitual self-understanding as firsthand observers of the diversely 'local' now leaves many anthropologists with a sense of insufficiency" (Lederman 1998: 428).

In analyzing how globalization has changed the way of doing fieldwork, firstly I explore the emergence of multi-sited ethnography and the problematic use of Internet in fieldwork (virtual ethnography). Secondly, I engage reflexively in the difficulties encountered in talking and writing about identities. Thirdly, I will question the local in reference to the

difficulties in doing fieldwork in the city. The importance of this section lies in the fact that I truly believe that theory cannot be detached from methodology. My discussion is not exhaustive at all. I want raise just a few questions to heighten awareness of the problematics that link theory to practice.

II.2. 1. A Multi-sited Ethnography

George Marcus and Michael Fischer (1986) have stressed how innovative forms of multi-locale ethnography may be necessary to do justice to transnational political, economic, and cultural forces that traverse and constitute local or regional worlds (94-95). Multi-sited field seeks to adapt old ethnographic practices to complex objects of study by locating them in multiple sites of observation/participation that cut across local-global and life world-system dichotomies. Marcus (1995) identifies a trend for ethnographies to encompass multiple sites in a bid to follow complex objects through a series of cultural contexts. Rather than locating the "world system" as the context in which ethnographies are set, Marcus suggests that multi-sited ethnographies enable the ethnographer to overcome reliance on context and to escape the idea of a global which forms a context for the local. He highlights ethnographies which are motivated by following people, for example migrants or pilgrims, things, (e.g., commodities, works of art), metaphors, stories and conflicts as examples of approaches which breach the dependence of ethnography on a particular bounded place. Marcus highlights Martin's (1994) work on the immune system in American culture as a prime example of a multi-sited ethnography which tracks a metaphor through multiple sites. Multi-sitedness has found appeal within both media studies (Radway 1988; Abu-Lughod 1997) and science studies (Heath 1997).

The idea of the multi-sited ethnography is certainly a provocative one for a study of a ubiquitous technology like the Internet. What are the implications for methodological adequacy of an ethnographic approach increasingly divorced from reliance on a single bounded field site? Some methodological concerns come to the surface (Marcus 1995). How is fieldwork affected? As the core of anthropology and its raison d'être, fieldwork requires a face to face involvement with a group of people through participant observation. What happens if the participant observation is through the Internet and the community is not only multi-sited but also is virtual? Does anthropology return the armchair or better the workstation?

The Internet is becoming a communications medium by which to do multi-sited ethnography that is increasingly being explored by ethnographers. Reid (1995), Baym (1995) and Correll (1995) are key figures in a growing body of works which pay ethnographic attention to on-line social phenomena. They argue that on-line communications can be analyzed in their own terms for the forms of meaning, the shared values and the specific contextual ways of being which emerge in on-line environments. On-line ethnographers join their chosen field sites for sustained periods, interacting with their informants and building up a richly detailed picture of the ways in which the medium is used to create and sustain relationships. Some authors argue that on-line contexts provide for the formation of communities detached from the need for physical location or co-presence (Jones 1995). Ethnographies of on-line communication are thoroughly provocative in the emphasis they place on the complex and creative uses to which computer-mediated communications are put.

My fieldwork has been a hybrid of, on one hand classical research in the field with participant observation in public settings like, coffee shops, my house, parties, and on the other hand long hours in my office facing the Internet "surfing" and talking with the globally situated Mauritian community. It happened often that I contacted informants through the Internet and if I found out that they were living in Toronto or Montreal we managed to meet. This offered me a good tool to keep in touch constantly with many of my informants for a fairly long period of time. An aspect of the Internet that has to be considered especially in forums or on-line chats is anonymity. It is at the same time a risk and an opportunity which allows "the virtual informant" the freedom to speak openly. Of course the people you communicate with know how to use technology and can afford it. As a result I did not have access to elders and to "subaltern voices." In paraphrasing Hastrup (1994) there is no way to substitute "surfing the net" for fieldwork; as much information is non-verbal and cannot be experienced as performed in the virtual environments.

II.2. 1. b Talking and writing about identities in the field

It is not possible to write about identity without self-reflexivity. I can be quite honest in saying that my interest in identities is mainly due to my search for my own identity. My identity has been created over time, through crisis and with my awareness of belonging to two different cultures. If border identity (La Frontera) is quite a new phenomenon within scholarly discourse (Anzaldua 1987), the reality of "border" identities has been known much longer. I come from Trieste, Italy on the border with the ex-Yugoslavia, the line of the Iron

curtain an area that has had a very difficult and tense history.[8] "Trieste: un identità di frontiera"(Ara-Magris 1982) [Trieste a border identity] grasps the destiny of this city between the "East and the West," between the Slavic, German and Latin world.

This personal annotation is necessary to introduce my fieldwork in Toronto and Montreal and my relation with my "informants." As Tsuda explains, "depending on the identity that the anthropologist engages when interacting with informants, the distance between self and other constantly shifts in productive ways"(1998). The identities that anthropologists bring to the field have a profound impact on the fieldwork process. "The manner in which they present and the manner in which their identities are perceived by the "natives" (through standardized roles) influences rapport, informant acceptance, and access to ethnographic information (ibid.: 110). Uneasiness to speak about identities was overcome most of the time by the interest of the informants in identifying me.

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[8] Trieste was part of the Habsburg Empire till 1918, playing an important role as a free port. This status conferred to the city by Charles VI in 1719 attracted, without distinctions of faith and race, businessmen, entrepreneurs, victims of religious persecutions. It became part of Italy after the First World War. During Fascism any kind of Slovene identification was persecuted. You had to change your last name. At that time, my family last name was Milani (a dubious translation of Miklavcic). Slovene was banished from school. After the Second World War 1944-54, Trieste experienced the worse period of its recent history: ideological (communists/fascists) and ethnic conflicts (Slovenes/Italians) blooded the area which was ruled by the Allies. In 1954 when finally the border between Yugoslavia and Italy was drawn, many Italians (esuli) or people who were against the communist regime of Tito abandoned the border area and took refuge to the West. Many of them just crossed the artificial border settling in Trieste (my paternal family did, and they spent almost one year and half in a refugee camp). Others emigrated to Australia, Argentina, United States and Canada. I still recall my childhood at school when you were easily harassed for having a last name ending with a -"cic," "ch" - or the insult of being called -"Sciavo" (Slave). In order to be accepted easily in the Italian environment, my family did not send me to Slovene schools. Ideological fights have being conducted since the 1960s against the bilingual status of the city. Only in the upper hill of the city (Carso), you have a real bilinguism (signs in both languages).

My accent when I speak English, a slow French speech, an unpronounceable last name that looks in some way Slavic, and in my introduction " I am Italian." A pause. Some perplexity in the air. But... I am Slovene. A relief and finally I was "filed." On the other side, I am Mauritian. A pause. But... It is time to be able to delete the BUT and introduce instead an AND.

II.2. 1. c Fieldwork in the City

I was lost in the city the global city with its numerous kinds of humanity, where every place in the city looks exactly the same. Then I started to look at the people. And the people humanized the space. Although I have lived in Toronto for the past two years, it was only during my fieldwork that I really got to know the city. Mauritians do not live in a certain neighborhood, they are scattered all over. Many live in the new areas of the mushrooming global village of Toronto (Markham, Brampton, Scarborough and Mississauga). Their "dispersed" location makes it harder to build a community in Toronto. A forty-five year old Mauritian man told me that what he misses most from Mauritius is the sense of community. He lives in Mississauga, west of Toronto and many of his friends live in Scarborough, east of the city. Their distance makes daily interaction unlikely and often it is a challenge even to visit one another during the weekend.

Cities started to become an area of interest for social scientists in relation to the arrival of many immigrants, who started to change and being changed by the city. The Chicago School in the 1920s and 1930s started to look at the city as composed of microenvironments through an urban ecological perspective. The city was viewed as made up of adjacent ecological niches occupied by human groups in a series of concentric rings surrounding a

central core. The rings were delimited by class, ethnicity, occupation, world view, and life experiences. Social change occurs through socioeconomic transitions, with each group replacing the next in an outward spiral.

Over time I managed to find few microenvironments where Mauritians work, live and interact. Being a very small number and not knowing the city very well myself made it difficult to try to map out these "niches." A reason why a growing number of immigrants live in the "periphery" far from the central core of downtown is because the rent is cheaper and because with time many small communities have been formed along ethnic and/or religious lines (e.g. the Indians, the Middle Easterns). For instance Muslim people prefer to live in Scarborough or Etobicoke where there is an established community with shops selling *halal* meat and the possibility to worship in the mosques. Many Muslim Mauritians live therefore in these areas.

Through interviews and participant observation I started to delineate that a strong network based on family and ethnicity links many Mauritians. From the 1950s to the present, Young and Willmott (1957), Marris (1962), and their colleagues conceived of the city as a series of urban "communities" based on extended family relations and kinship networks. Bott's (1957) study on the social networks of middle-class English is a reference book for the study of social structure, kin and no kin based. The simple definition of network: "each person is, as it were, in touch with a number of people, some of whom are directly in touch with each other and some of whom are not..." (Bott 1957: 59), is a good starting point for research.

Network analyses are now more elaborate and quantitative, and they still provide an important methodological strategy and theoretical model for urban research. Network

analysis in the late 1960s and 1970s was based on personal network and face to face analysis and frequently tended to be egocentric. Today network analysis remains a useful tool to represent long-distance relationships among people who do not always know each other personally, and who interact through different means such as the internet in the global environment. The city becomes a privileged site of everyday practice where local and global phenomena interact. The city is the center of cultural growth, the place where the interplay of the centralizing agencies of culture - schools and media - and the decentralizing forces of the diversity of subcultures are located. Hannerz (1992a; 1992b) emphasizes the linkages between local experience and these global cultural flows. In his monograph, Hannerz underlines that the distinguishing mark of urban field work consists in the fact that is impossible to cover everybody and map out the total network (cf. Hannerz 1980: chap. 5) From my fieldwork in Toronto and Montreal, I completely agree. Small fragments have been found but I am not sure about the totality of the picture! It is Hannerz again that warns us to abstain, in ethnographic research from an a priori local social relationships which dismiss those social relations operating over greater distances. " We endeavour to close whatever gap we may find between the relatively micro-and the relatively macro - by depicting in some instances the asymmetry of scale in certain relationships and in others the aggregation of parallel although sometimes heterogeneous linkages"(1992: 51).

CHAPTER III.

Before men set foot on the shores of Mauritius, it was only a paradise for countless species The island's contact with mankind gave it another destiny.
Jean Descelles of Denis Piat's book "Sur la Route des Épices, I'île Maurice"

A place in the map is also a place in history
Adrienne Rich

III.1. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

A political history of Mauritius reveals how different people came to the island and struggled with one another, through settlement, colonization under the French, the British and finally independence. The island's history is of course its own. But at the same time, a study of Mauritius has relevance beyond the island because the problems of Mauritius are similar to those of other new nations, particularly small island nations with plural societies (Simmons 1982: 3).

Throughout its history, the island has been given many names: Dina Arobi by the Arabs, Cirne[9] by the Portuguese, Mauritius by the Dutch, Île de France by the French and, Mauritius again in 1810, when the British became its last colonial masters. Because of its cultural attachment to France, Mauritius is also known today, and referred to, as "Île

[9] Cirne appears in the earliest maps, sometimes called Cainas. Apparently Cienos was the proper designation, meaning something like Swan-Island. This name may have been derived from the ground-pigeons, or dodos, as large as swans, which were then numerous on the island.

Maurice." There were no indigenous inhabitants of Mauritius. All Mauritians are the descendants of immigrant forbears who arrived voluntarily or involuntarily over a period of 200 years. It is not certain who the first people to discover the deserted islands in the Indian Ocean were. It might have been sailors from Polynesia, Arabia, Africa, India, Malay or China during the middle ages. Arab sailors discovered the island they named Dina Arobi. They did not settle on it. Mauritius first became known to the West through the Portuguese navigators of the sixteenth century. In the course of their travels to the East Indies, they found three islands that they called the Mascarene Isles in honor of the navigator Pedro de Mascarenhas. They are Réunion, Mauritius and Rodrigues. They did not consider them of immediate commercial interest.

III.1. 1. DUTCH MAURITIUS

Driven by a cyclone, on their way to the Far East, the Dutch, fortuitously, landed an inhabited island in the Indian Ocean in 1598. The island was named Mauritius in honor of their prince "Mauritius Van Nassau," the younger son of Guillaume de Nassau, Prince Orange and founder of the Republic of the Netherlands. Being involved in the spice trade, they found Mauritius, with its two safe ports, quite potent for gaining a strong footing for the consolidation and development of this trade. Full of food and water and free from diseases, Mauritius became a refreshment station for ships of the Dutch East India Company or VOC. In 1638 the Dutch occupied the island, trying to establish a colony. A fort was built at Warwijck Harbour. The Dutch made two separate attempts to settle the island from their colony. They brought slaves from Madagascar to cut down the forestry of ebony and they introduced sugar cane from Batavia, which has become the main crop of the island. Their

settlement suffered from internal dissension, from interference by the company directors and from an insufficient labor force. It is doubtful whether during more than a century of occupation there were ever more than about three hundred settlers. The Dutch are remembered by the Mauritians as those that exterminated the dodo. In 1710 the Dutch abandoned their efforts at colonization daunted by the frequency of cyclones that devastated their harvests. Their decision was swayed by the existence of their base in Cape Town, founded in 1652, which they chose to consolidate instead of continuing to bend to nature's whim in Mauritius.

III.1. 2. FRENCH PERIOD (1715-1814)

The withdrawal of the Dutch from Mauritius gave the French a crucial breakthrough in strengthening their niche in the Indian Ocean where they had been operating, since 1674 in their commercial bases of Pondicherry and Chandernagor. The French re-named the island Île de France in 1715.

Île de France was administrated by the French East India Company who in 1722 brought in French colonists from the neighboring island of Bourbon (now Réunion.). The early years of French occupation were fraught with difficulties. There were revolts, food shortages and quarrels among the administrators, and Port Louis was chosen as the capital of the island and plans were laid for making a naval base there. In 1735 the French East India Company named Mahe' de Labourdonnais governor of both Bourbon and Île de France. Labourdonnais made Île de France his headquarters and set about improving the port. The center of gravity of the sister colonies was soon shifted to the Île de France, and Bourbon had to take second rank. During the Franco-British wars of the eighteenth century Île de

France frequently served as a base for the operations against the British. By the end of the Seven Years War in 1763, the French East India Company found itself in considerable financial and political problems. It was bankrupt by 1767 and Île de France, as one of its assets, was sold to the King of France. A new system of two administrators: a governor as the militar commander and an intendant in charge of finance, was developed to replace the previous system of a single governor. This new system of divided authority brought many disputes, in the time when new colonists came. Many were Frenchmen from India who had left after British conquests. There were many ex-soldiers and sailors who periodically caused disturbances in Port Louis. The American war of Independence brought again England and France into conflict and again Île de France became a base for French operations against the British.

III.1. 2. a French Revolution (1789-1794)

The French revolution had a number of repercussions for Île de France. There was agitation by the colonists for more representation in the government. A colonial assembly was formed, and the governor who opposed the assembly was assassinated. Streets in Port Louis were renamed after revolutionary leaders, the new Republican calendar was adopted, and some Church lands and buildings were confiscated. The first Assembly of the then "Île de France," the General Assembly, was organized even before the French National Assembly gave permission for such assemblies. But the revolutionary fervor evaporated in 1794 when a law was passed in France emancipating all slaves without compensation. During the French Revolution, one of the key issues was the abolition of slavery. On February 4, 1794, in compliance with the Declaration of Rights of Men and Citizens, the

Convention abolished slavery in all French colonies. This law sanctioned the freedom of blacks. They became, in all effects, citizens of the Republic. The Code Noir was abolished. The Code Noir, first codified by Colbert, minister to Louis XIV, sanctioned the slave trade and was concerned with regulations to keep slaves separated from the rest of the population. In Mauritius this law was ignored and from 1794 to 1803 the island was virtually independent. An important point to underline is the distinction between slaves and free coloreds. If the assemblies were against the abolition of slavery, they had a different approach toward free coloreds they considered equal. They were the children of the union of a white man with a black woman who were often freed from slavery and sometimes given some education and a little property. Some coloreds sat also in the Assembly.

Soon after the ascendance to power of Napoleon Bonaparte on May 2 1802, slavery was reestablished by decree in the colonies This decision provoked indignatation among many republicans and provoked the revolt of blacks in many colonies, for example Haiti. In 1803 General Charles Decaen was sent by Napoleon to Île de France. He dissolved the Colonial Assembly and re-asserted the power of the Governor. Only persons of pure French blood were equal and free. Slavery and the slave trade were allowed to continue, and the Code Napoleon was introduced. This law sanctioned the division between whites and non-whites (Benedict 1965: 14). These measures gave legal sanction to a social color bar that was already well established. Free coloreds were not equal any more.

The various confrontations which took place in Europe during the Napoleonic period had a repercussion in the Indian Ocean; the English and the French joined battle to monopolize the Indian commercial bases. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, Mauritius was neglected by "La Mere Patrie" (France), who was embroiled in the

Napoleonic wars. The danger to English supremacy in India, represented by Mauritius and the other French islands of the Western Indian Ocean such as Réunion, Rodrigues and the Seychelles, prompted them to take possession of these islands and get rid of the French. The English set out to test the French forces that were on the island. It ended in failure. That was in August 1810, and the setting for the naval battle was at Grand Port, on the south-east coast of Mauritius. It was to remain the unique naval victory of the French over the English, during the Napoleonic wars.[10] The French conceded defeat and the English took possession of the Island on December 2, 1810. Île de France became Mauritius again, but the French past still plays an important part in the identification of Mauritian people.

III.1. 3. BRITISH COLONY

Under the British, the island was renamed Mauritius. The Treaty of Paris, in 1814, decreed that Mauritius and its dependencies, including Rodrigues and the Seychelles, were to become British, whereas Réunion, which had also been invaded by the British, was to return to France. The capitulation treaty that ensued contained a major clause: Deference for the French culture and language and observance of the existing laws of the land. The English honored that clause. The French language remained the mode of communication although English became the official language. It is interesting to note that Alliance Française opened a branch in 1884 in Mauritius: It was the first branch outside France. Thanks, therefore, to the liberalism of the English, Mauritius became a bilingual country. This bilinguism is proving very useful today in the context of the world globalization process. In the Mauritian

[10] The inscription of this victory against Britain appears at the *Arc de Triomphe*, in Paris: "GRAND PORT."

judiciary system, the Napoleon Code is still called upon in the application of justice. Another aspect that caused the minimal "anglicization" of the island was that the number of British immigrants remained small and neither the civil servants nor the military officers posted to the island mixed socially with the locals. Anglican missionaries operated in the island, often with government support, and in the middle of the nineteenth century serious efforts were made to anglicize Mauritius. Yet most Britons only came to Mauritius to do a tour of duty and not to settle. The dominant European culture remained French. Thus, while the administration became British, the economy remained firmly in the hands of the small group of French plantation owners who did not officially meet the British until 1953.

After less than a century of French rule, there was now a clear gap between all the inhabitants and their new, foreign colonial masters. Whereas previously the French settlers, at least, might have felt some divided loyalties between the colony's interests and those of France, purely Mauritian interests could now emerge to be defended in the relationship with Britain.

British rulers strove to improve the colony's productivity. Within a few decades, the island had been transformed into a major sugar producer and it had begun to experience an unprecedented demographic revolution as existing Creole and European populations were dwarfed by an immigrant Indian community that rapidly gained majority status. The most pressing issue in the early years of British rule was slavery. Britain had abolished the slave trade in its colonies in 1807. In Mauritius, the slave trade was abolished in 1813. But the illegal slave trade continued for some years and more slaves were brought to Mauritius from Madagascar and East Africa. Slavery was finally abolished in 1833 and n Mauritius in 1835. Sugar cane soon became the most important crop on the island. The British encouraged

large-scale production of sugar and the area under sugar cane cultivation doubled within a few years. New sources of laborers to work in the fields were urged, sugar cane growers direct their interest to India.

The Indianization of Mauritius was a deliberate policy of the British who selected the island to be the site of "the great experiment" in the use of "free," rather than slave, labor. Mauritius was chosen because it was perceived to be a new and expanding plantation economy unlike the "exhausted" West Indian sugar producers, and because of her proximity to India. Thus, Mauritius became the first British colony to be allowed to export labor under a government regulated indenture system from 1834. The indentured workers were so called because they were obliged to sign contracts of varying duration, which bound them to serve for a fixed wage. Because the migration was designed to prove a viable alternative to slave labor, indenture was a system under scrutiny. As a result the entire proceedings, from recruitment, through shipping, allocation to estates and employment history was recorded. Individual data were compiled to describe and differentiate migrants, and from the 1860s photographs of Indian immigrants were taken to complete the system of control.[11]

The immigration of Indian laborers to Mauritius had begun in 1829. From 1835 onwards tens of thousands of immigrants arrived from Madras, Calcutta, Bombay and

[11] The registers in which this bio-data was recorded are collected at the Indian Immigration Archives of the Mahatma Gandhi Institute, Mauritius. The Archives contain a unique collection of ship registers, migrant certificates and photographs relating to one of the largest of the modern Indian diasporas; these comprise migrant data recorded at the point of entry, and records of subsequent employment, and settlement patterns of Indians in Mauritius. The size, comprehensiveness, and quality of the database (circa half a million migrants) is extraordinary. In no other territory to which Indians migrated as laborers (for example the Caribbean, South Africa and Sri Lanka) is statistical material available which can enable the historian to match individual bio-data (region, caste, age, gender) with subsequent employment and settlement records (marriage, death or return dates).

neighboring regions to work as contracted laborers. In 1845 Indian immigrants represented a third of the population of Mauritius. There were 56,000 of them out of 158,000 inhabitants. Fifteen years later there were 200,000 immigrants out of 310,000 inhabitants, two thirds of the population. Indian immigration ended in the early twentieth century (Simmons 1982: 36).

The regular immigration of Chinese - mostly merchants and traders - also began from the 1840s onwards. There were 1,500 Chinese immigrants in Mauritius in 1861 and their number doubled by the start of the twentieth century. As a result of immigration the island's population increased rapidly. There had been 75,000 inhabitants when the British took the island in 1810.There were more than 100,000 twenty-five years later; and 310,000 in 1861.
By all accounts Mauritius was not an entirely pleasant place to live during the second half of the nineteenth century. First, disease, in particular cholera and malaria, arrived from India with the immigrants and there were numerous epidemics. On these occasions, many affluent people moved from the capital to the healthier area of Plaines Wilhems. Second, the economic situation was deteriorating with the opening of the Suez Canal, which effectively removed Mauritius from the trade route to east. Third, living conditions for both the Indians and the freed slaves were atrocious. There were a number of people that fought openly against this situation in the face of extreme opposition from the upper class. Pere Laval was one of the most devoted; Remy Ollier, a "colored" Mauritian was another. Adolphe de Plévitz, a plantation owner, who had arrived in Mauritius only a few years before, petitioned the colonial authorities in 1871 for changes to the harsh labor laws and for improvements to workers' conditions. This was eventually done. It resulted in the Labor Law of 1878, which led to significant improvement in workers' living conditions.

Political awareness was growing among the different groups on the island. For the Indians, the visit to Mauritius of Gandhi in 1907 played an enormous role. He encouraged them to a greater degree of self-awareness. The administration started to realize that the Indians among the population could no longer be considered as a group of foreigners with no say in the affairs of the colony: suddenly they were the colony. By 1960, when independence was in the air, political consciousness had reached most of the population. A number of political parties and affiliation emerged, based increasingly on ethnic differences.

The various political parties aligned themselves either for or against independence. The Labor Party consistently sought independence and set the dialogue with the British government, which was predisposed to grant it. The Labor Party, led by Seewoosagur Ramgoolam, had a strong base among the Hindu members of the population. To these negotiations a series of conferences in London paved the way to independence. All the ethnic constituencies of Mauritian society participated in these negotiations. Strategies vacillated between trying to stop independence and trying to find the most favorable outcome for themselves in the constitutional arrangements. The fear many minorities had, was that they would be disadvantaged in any Mauritian government dominated by the Hindus. This was the reason why the *Parti Mauricien* led by Gaetan Duval and composed mainly of Creoles, strenuously opposed the independence process.

III.2. THE PEOPLE

Mauritians are the product of immigration from three continents: Europe, Africa, and Asia. The proximity of these different people, in some cases forced, produced a highly

creolized culture. The Mauritian population today is composed of four major ethnic groups and a few major religious groups: the Franco-Mauritians and Creoles who are Catholic; the Indian community, Hindu and Muslim; and the small Chinese community, either Buddhist and/or Catholic. How does the state operate in the construction of ethnic identity? Through "state-istics" and censuses, the state counts, controls, and rules its population. However the use of census is a very old practice.[12] From the age of mechanical reproduction this powerful institution, in combination with the map and the museum "profoundly shaped the way in which the colonial state imagined its dominion" (Anderson 1991: 165). In the census, individuals were divided into categories, arbitrarily chosen in which citizens, colonial subjects were agglomerated, disagreggated, recombined, intermixed, and reordered (ibid.: 164). The use of census goes beyond a headcount to include the changing categories of racial definition.

Excellent census records have been kept in Mauritius since the middle of the nineteenth century when, under the British, coolies coming from the Indian peninsula were recruited by the plantation system. Although the censuses in Mauritius are not strictly comparable, census figures from 1846 to 1952 were presented in three categories: the Indo-Mauritian population, the General Population and the Chinese population. In the 1962 and 1972 censuses the Indo-Mauritian community was subdivided into Hindu and Muslim populations, but in an effort to reduce the focus on ethnicity, in the frame of nation-state building, any ethnic identification was banned since the census 1983.

[12] "Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar August, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth [the Roman empire]" (Luke 2, 1).

The General Population category is a term introduced in the Mauritian Constitution and identifies any person, who "does not appear from his way of life, to belong to one or the other of these three communities [the Hindu, Muslim and Chinese]." The person could be Franco-Mauritian, Christian, Colored and Christian Tamil, and as well Creole, who is Catholic of mixed African-European, Indian or Chinese ancestry. This category at least constitutionally, allows people to shift from an ethnic group bounded by religion, language and customs to another category which, is not racial but characterized by "way of life": the Christian faith, overwhelming Catholic, the French language, and the Western customs and values. This "way of life" has been hegemonically constructed through French colonialism and the French legacy. Within the General Population, there are both shared identities and profound racial and cultural distinctions. The sharpest division is the "amount of milk in the coffee" i.e. skin color which often leads to sharp differences in class and social and cultural practices (Eriksen 1991: 109-110).

Table 1: Census Mauritius

Census Date	General Population	Indo-Mauritian	Hindu	Muslim	Chinese	Total
1846	102,217	56,245			----------	158,462
1881	107,323	248,993			3,558	356,316
1901	108,422	259,086			3,515	371,023
1921	104,216	265,524			6,745	376,485
1944	143,056	265,247			10,882	419,185
1952	148,238	335,327			17,850	501,415
1962	203,652		344,587	110,322	23,058	681,619
1972	236,867		428,167	137,081	24,084	826,199
1983*	277,490		500,835	160,499	28,039	966,863
1989*	309,960		559,440	179,280	31,320	1,080,000

*The 1983 and 1889 breakdown by population is approximate.

Source: Bowman, Larry *Mauritius Democracy and Development in The Indian Ocean* 1991, 44.

It is important to bear in mind that the cultural differences within a statistically defined "population segment" or any "ethnic group" may be of greater significance than any systematic differences obtaining between the categories. Ethnic folk taxonomies tend to diverge from the official one which was originally designed by the British in the late 1940s to ensure that all the main ethnic groups where fairly represented in the legislative Assembly

(Indo-Mauritian, Chinese and General Population). A Mauritian will identify his/her countryman as Hindu, Muslim, Tamil, Franco-Mauritian, Chinese or Creole.

A short view of the evolution of the term Creole is necessary before engaging in an analysis of the different groups that comprise Mauritius. Through three hundred years of history, the term "Creole" has seen several uses. In eighteenth century Mauritius, as in the French-speaking Caribbean, Creole meant a son or daughter of Europeans who had been born in the colonies. What the eighteenth or early nineteenth-century Frenchman would have called a Creole is today a Franco-Mauritian. Later, the word came to substitute for 'person of color' and even to mean persons classified by their mixed racial origin (Haring 1991). Ethnic anomalies therefore tend to be classified as Creoles. "Creole" as an ethnic label in Mauritius is actually a "catch-all" label, a residual category absorbing everyone who does not fit well into the other categories, which are legitimized through references to notions of purity and descent. The children of Chinese-Muslim marriages tend to be categorized as "a kind of Creole" despite the fact that Creoles were initially defined as Mauritian of wholly or partial African or Malagasy descent (Eriksen 1997: 250-276). If we make a comparison between the General Population and Creole categories, we can notice that both are residual categories. However, General Population is used in the context of official classification such as the census and turns around the ethnic substratum of the Franco-Mauritians as the model to whom other people conform in language, religion and values. "Creole" is used in everyday practice and denotes entirely a different range of "colored population." In fact the Franco-Mauritians are not included among the Creoles.

III.2. 1. THE FRANCO-MAURITIANS

The first permanent inhabitants of Mauritius were French. Franco-Mauritians differed from many Europeans in British colonies in two ways. They have had no home other than Mauritius and somehow they resemble the Boers in South Africa or the French in Quebec, in that they have lived in Mauritius so many generations that they no longer have personal ties with their original home. They did not feel any special loyalty to Britain, yet when there was a movement to return Mauritius to France in 1919, they failed to support it for economic reasons. On the other hand, as late as 1950, as a form of protest, they refused to meet the British governor. They may have felt themselves to be French in spirit, but economically they wanted as much autonomy as possible. At the moment of independence they turned to Britain for help, but unlike other British settlers they were not offered any compensation. They were British subjects but not British citizens. They made no attempt to reach out to other communities until their own self-interest forced them to deal with the wealthy Indian community. The Franco-Mauritians were envied and emulated by a small portion of the island's other groups and hated and distrusted by the rest (Simmons 1982: 23). Also in this community, stratification is present. Class is an issue and we have wealthy Franco-Mauritians as well poor ones.

III.2. 2. THE CREOLES

Descendants from the union of slaves - imported by the French from the east coast of Africa and Madagascar, Europeans, and Indians, the Creole community is the most heterogeneous and the most factionalized in Mauritius. Although non-Creoles tend to view the Creoles as a single group, the social and economic differentiation within the community

is really sharp. Stratification resulting from differences in color, education, and wealth impeded both mobility within the community and the formation of group consciousness. The Creole front has only been united on one occasion: before independence, they supported Duval's party *Parti Mauricien* fearing that independence, would without a doubt, lead to Indian hegemony on the island.

Slavery had left them without roots or traditions, so like Creoles in other countries they took on those of the most prestigious and influential community. This meant adopting the Franco-Mauritian language and religion and participating in Franco-Mauritian politics on the Franco-Mauritians' terms. The Creole elite, who during French colonialism were called free coloreds and placed between the French and the slaves, were not recognized legally by their French colonial fathers. They had as a goal a white skin, wealth, and classical education. And toward the history of Mauritius they had a conservative political attitude that resembled the Franco-Mauritian one, avoiding any contacts with the Creole lower classes.

After a century of British rule, Mauritian Creoles had learned that although equal before the law they were not in fact equal in any other respect to the Franco-Mauritian elite or the British administration. As the governor, Sir Hesketh Bell, pointed out, "in Mauritius Creoles were British subjects. In Réunion they would be French citizens" (cit. in Simmons 1982: 30). Regarding their strong affiliation to France, the Creole elite formed, in 1919, a retrocession movement, whose aim was the return of Mauritius to France. After the abolition of slavery, the lower Creole classes, "petits creoles," worked as dockers and artisans. Although they were no longer cane cutters, they shared with the Indian coolies the low wages and the terrible working conditions. At first these Creoles transcended ethnicity, sharing a class interest with the Indians. Realizing that the number of Indians was much

greater than that of Creoles, and as the Indian population began to dominate the political life of the island, the Creoles turned toward their community.

Being chronically at the bottom of Mauritian society; they are always struggling economically and are politically disadvantaged. The concept of "Malaise Creole," used for the first time by a creole priest called Fr Roger Cerveaux, underlines the plight and marginalization experienced by the creole community in Mauritius. As late as December 1998, Father Patrick Fabien attracted attention with the contents of the sermon which he delivered in St Louis cathedral in Port Louis. Fr Fabien said that the Creoles of Mauritius were "hurt" and "frustrated" at being excluded from many civil service jobs (L'Express December 18:1998). In February 1999 riots in Mauritius erupted after the mysterious death in prison of a popular Creole *sega* singer, Kaya. These riots were an open confrontation between the Creole population that is constantly marginalized and the police that embodied the Indian power of the state that Creoles resent (The Economist 27Th February 1999). Cardinal Jean Margéot, who officiated at the funeral of Kaya explained, that he does not judge people but he reported injustices happening in the country. "Quel est le pourcentage des créoles dans le gouvernement?" [which is the percentage of Creoles in the government?] asks cardinal Margéot (le Mauricien 25Th February 1999).

The case of Creoles shows how globalization in Mauritius brings inequality It seems that class and ethnicity overlap increasingly in Mauritius. Mauritius, a country generally portrayed as a model of economic success and social harmony in the global economy, has to be able to solve its "Malaise Creole."

III.2. 3. THE INDIANS

Under the Indian group, many distinctions have to be made. First of all, although the majority of Indian Mauritians are descendants of the indentured laborers, there is a tiny community that has lived in Mauritius since French rule, and also Indian traders established themselves in Mauritius at about the same time Indian indentured laborers were being introduced into Mauritius. They came mostly from the Gujerati-speaking areas of West India and Bombay. Many arrived between 1829 and 1865. Most were Muslims from the states of Kutch and Surat. They settled in Port Louis and their numbers increased greatly after the First World War. The coolie trade, a new experiment of the colonial economy and a substitute for slavery brought a radical change in the composition of the population of Mauritius. In time this group came to dominate Mauritius demographically, then politically.

The Indian group is in no way homogeneous: it is quite a stratified community that includes: Hindu, Tamil, Telegu, Marathi, and Muslim who were foreigners to each other, have different traditions, different languages and religions and have never formed a united community in Mauritius. The main division was and still is between Hindu and Muslim. Ancient differences between Hindu and Muslims were reinforced by modern events, such as the creation of Pakistan in 1948. Muslim Indians played an important role in politics in the pre-independence period. "Poised between the economically powerful Franco-Mauritian population and the populous and often poor Hindu community, the Muslims and the Creoles held the political balance for the two decades prior to independence" (Simmons 1982: 44). Claiming Urdu as ancestral language and looking to the pan-Islamic world, they distinguish themselves from the Hindu. In the census they defined themselves as Muslim Mauritians. A number of other linguistic and religious minorities also divide the Indian

community Tamils, Telegus, Marathis. Tamils straddle the way between Creoles and Indians. Because many of them converted to Catholicism they can move easily from one community to another. On the other hand the Telegus are closer to the Hindu as they worship the same religion. Color is also a factor here, in that people from the north of India are generally lighter skinned than those from the south. A hot and not openly discussed issue in the Indian community is the system of caste. A student of diplomacy in Toronto, an Indo-Mauritian, told me that she was asked to run in the local election in Mauritius. A convention among the Hindu electorate is to belong to a middle caste. She was planning to marry soon another Indo-Mauritian by an arranged marriage.

Although the caste system had to be adapted in the Mauritian situation because the economic and political systems in which immigrants found themselves were not conducive to supporting it, caste is still very present in the political arena as a basis of local factions.
If mysteriously, untouchability seems to have disappeared during the passage across the Indian Ocean, the Vaishya, a caste below the Brahmins, have preserved virtual hegemony at the highest levels of governance. Successive governments in Mauritius have appealed to unifying concepts such as multiculturalism; yet all three prime ministers have hailed from the same caste, religion, and ethnicity (Vaish/Hindu/Indian) (Miles 1999: 93).
Unlike the Creoles, Indians did not assimilate or adopt European ways. They continued to live in rural areas. Until World War II, the Indo-Mauritian community was removed from the mainstream of Mauritian social and political life. The Indo-Mauritian population has found strength in its overall social and cultural homogeneity in spite of the above mentioned differences and has pursued during several decades a difficult but quite effective struggle to

obtain normal social and political rights. Since independence, Hindu Mauritians have represented the politically hegemonic ruling class.

III.2. 4. THE CHINESE

Some eighty percent of the Chinese in Mauritius are descendants of Chinese immigrants of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The rest are recent immigrants from Mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. English, French and a local dialect (Creole) are commonly spoken by the younger generation. About seventy percent of the new immigrants and Mauritian born Chinese are Hakka, and thirty percent are Cantonese. A typical Chinese Mauritian may learn French at school, speak English in the market, hear his/her parents speak Hakka to him/her at home and reply to them in Creole. About seventy percent of the Chinese are engaged in commerce and local retail stores. Recently, about 300 people arrived from Hong Kong to start small factories. Although among the Chinese community in Mauritius, a mixture of Confucian, Buddhist, and Taoist religion with animistic rituals is practiced, Catholicism plays an important role. The local government subsidizes individual Catholics and the Catholic Church permits ancestor veneration.

The ethnic Chinese in Mauritius are numerically weak but economically strong. "No one denies that Mauritius is better off for the fact that there are Chinese around. Its Export Processing Zone owes much to the Sino-Mauritians with their Hong Kong connections" (Pan 1992: 33). Sino Mauritians could be easily fitted into the definition of pariah merchant-capitalist, an interstitial class ethnically distinct from both the indigenous (in this case the Afro-Creole) and the politically dominant minority (the Franco Mauritians) (van den Berghe

1971); and into the theories of "middlemen minorities" (Bonacich 1980) with a relative degree of commercial success and lack of political power.

The exodus from the Chinese outside the Empire of Sun was a phenomenon of considerably importance, particularly in the last century. Chinese emigration was characterized by being mainly composed by males and by the emigrants' tendency of flux and reflux from and to China. The kind of emigration changed according to the area a Chinese man was emigrating to, and the historical moment. Most of the Chinese who went to Australia, the Mascarenes, Africa and the United States and Peru were free coolies.

In the context of Mauritian society, the Chinese were the last to arrive in Mauritius. They tried to find a niche in the highly dichotomized society composed on the one side of the colonizers, descendants of European migrants, and on the other side of emancipated slaves who started to move from the rural areas of the island to the capital, Port Louis. Despite the strict Imperial Chinese policy toward emigration, many Chinese started to travel on board Western boats. This is why the first Chinese in Mauritius were sailors and carpenters. An embryonic Chinese community in Mauritius goes back to the time of the French administration, when Chinese traders came to Mauritius. Milbert, who visited the island in 1801, attempts a description of the Chinese he encountered:

> Les Chinois que j'ai eu l'occasion de voir à l'Île de France m'ont paru réservés et peu communicatifs. Ils sont libres, ne fréquentent point les esclaves et recherchent la societé des Blancs. Ils passent dans les cafés, à fumer leurs pipes, tous les temps qui n'est pas reclamé par les affaires. Ils sont naturellement doux et enclins a la mélancolie (1812: 200).

> [The Chinese that I had the opportunity to see in the Île de France are in my view reserved and not very communicative. They are free and do not mix with the slaves preferring the company of the whites. Besides their business they spend all their time

in the coffee shops drinking coffee and smoking their pipes. They are naturally gentle and melancholic.]

The real step in order to establish a conspicuous Chinese settlement was made by Robert Townsend Farquhar, Governor of Mauritius from 1810 to 1823. Before becoming governor of Mauritius he worked as a representative of the British government in Amboine and Molucass and he saw how the Dutch had "successfully" introduced into colonial society Chinese agricultural laborers. From this experience he wrote a book in 1807 entitled "*Suggestions arising from the abolition of the African Slave trade for supplying the demands of the West Indian colonies with agricultural labourers*" in which he pointed out how the Chinese were the right people to fill the gap the emancipated slaves had left in the plantation system. Farquhar gave a mandate to a Chinese living in Mauritius, Hayme, to recruit artisans among his people. Among the measures to protect the new Chinese and encourage others to come, Farquhar recommended tax exemption, the provision of land for constructing a pagoda, hospital, and a cemetery; and most important a provision which would make it possible for Chinese immigrants to purchase land. Hayme returned to Mauritius in 1826 with 5 men. It was up to them to build the foundation for a stable community.

If at the beginning, the Chinese coming to Mauritius had been sailors, in 1847 the composition of Chinese migration changed. They came directly from inland and few of them were seafarers. They were small traders who left China as they had a hard time surviving with the Triades harassing them and conducting smuggling. Contrary to the expectations of the governor Farquhar, Chinese did not become farmers; they took the position of traders in Mauritian society. At the end of the century, 585 Chinese retail traders controlled food supply trade serving a population of 371,000 people.

The Chinese entered Mauritian society at the moment in which the emancipated slaves were trying to free themselves from the paternalist authority of the plantation masters, and had to find a new position in the country. The first exchange between the Chinese and the Creoles was rice for fish. When money started to circulate, the Chinese adapted to the needs and financial possibilities of their clientele. With the arrival of the Indian coolies and the total dependence of the economy on sugar cane, Chinese traders adapted the system of selling on "circulation of sugar manufactures (Ly-Tio-Fane Pineo 1981: 74). The economy took the rhythm of the growth of the sugar cane. "La coupe," the cutting of the sugar cane, marked a period when cash was circulating, while the period between cuttings was when money was rare. Chinese introduced the system of credit payment to meet the needs of the population. The new formula of payment was known as "roulement" and it started to create an inter-dependence between Chinese retail traders and their clientele. The "roulement" was actually extended from the retail trade to the whole economic system of the island. Usually Chinese retail traders would get their supplies from Chinese wholesalers. Owning a shop allowed the owner and his family to survive. At the end of the century 81,3% of the Chinese population was engaged in business activity, this percentage diminished in the 1930s with 40,1% (Ly-Tio-Fane Pineo 1981: 75). The Chinese are the island's retail traders and nearly every village, however remote has a Chinese shop. Creole women married to Chinese played an important role of middlewoman in the Mauritian society. Marriage to a woman of the place helped business and helped to enhance friendships with the local population.

In a letter written by Lord Kimberley on July 27, 1871 to the governor of Mauritius, Arthur Gordon, Kimberley mentioned the positive impact of Chinese males on Creole women and he compared the adaptation capabilities of Indian and Chinese people:

> The Chinese are the real citizens of the world, they do not have prejudices toward colour, they can adapt rapidly to the manners, habits and religion of their countries in which they live (ibid.: 277).

The unions with Creole women were stable, although many Chinese were always thinking of returning to China. The shop and the household of the Sino-Mauritian couples were influenced by the two cultures. The best consequence of the union was in relation to the education of the children who were influenced by Western and Chinese cultures and languages, skills that helped them to become key figures in the business sphere. Another characteristic of this union was the baptism of the children and the conversion to Catholicism. The cultural symbiosis started from the very first generation. A Mauritian identity was in progress and in the late nineteenth century the children of a mixed union were regrouped separately in the census under the category Creole. Most of these cases of Chinese and Creole marriages can be labeled as "double family," as many Chinese migrants before going overseas married women chosen by their families according to their tradition. Subsequently, they could not bring their spouses with them. In the new environment under enforced celibacy, they started to have extra marital unions with local women. The Chinese society permitted a man to have concubines in order to be helped financially. Moreover, in the documents the status of the Chinese migrants was marked as single because the marriage was held religiously without a secular notification. There are examples of Chinese men that brought the Creole women with them to China and once there, they were not accepted by the in-laws. Many Creole women and children were abandoned in China and repatriated to Mauritius.

In Mauritius Chinese men feared that mixed marriages would bring about a dissolution of the Chinese identity. As a result they urged the British administration to revise the immigration policy in relation to women. Chinese women contributed later to the development of the community in Mauritius. The first Chinese woman who arrived in Mauritius was Bway in 1860. It seems probable she traveled clandestinely. It was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that a conspicuous migration of Chinese women started. They were wives of established Chinese men in Mauritius. Their coming emphasized a division that was slowly forming between the Chinese who tried to keep the traditional values and marry a Chinese, and those who established themselves within the Mauritian society, many who went with local women and adopted bourgeois and colonial values. The Chinese traditional group was trying to marginalize the other group. This marginalization was strengthened as the children of mixed marriages attended public schools instead of Chinese schools. The definitive split from the Chinese community was marked by the loss of Chinese patronymic. The fission was fortunately stopped in 1949 with the establishment of the communist regime who distanced, for some time, the Chinese community from the motherland. Having lost their hope to return to China, the traditional Chinese made an effort to be integrated into Mauritian society.

Starting from the 1860s, a change of events negatively impacted upon the Mauritian economy pushing a lot of Chinese to migrate again to other places of the Indian Ocean (Madagascar, Seychelles, South Africa). This according to Ly-Tio-Fane is the first diaspora of the Chinese in Mauritius (1981: 86). In the 1860s malaria spread in the city of Port Louis. The middle class moved to the healthier Plateau, the sugar cane market was unstable and the crop was affected by disease. Moreover, in 1869, with the opening of the Suez Canal,

Mauritius was isolated from the trading routes. The difficult economic situation on the island provoked many reactions against the growing presence of the Chinese. Continuous attacks on the Chinese led the community to realize that they had to protect themselves and they had to control the emigration stream grew considerable as soon as Port Louis became a free port. To improve the British immigration control and avoid the entrance of undesirable individuals, the Chinese community started to organize a network system through which every Chinese sailing to Mauritius would have to provide a certificate of morality issued by their local pagoda in China.

The system worked quite well until 1895 when a massive group arrived from China. The majority of these Chinese were Hakka coming form Mei-Hien a district on the north-east of Guandong. Their arrival changed the face of the local community. The first tension inside the community came in 1900 when the Cantonese leader Affan Tank Wen died. The role that the chief of the community played was to keep the traditional religion intimately linked to the political sphere. There were distinct pagodas in Port Louis depending from the geographical area of origin. Just one was common for all the three different groups (Ly-Tio-Fane Pineo 1981: 90). Among these groups there were many incompatibilities of language of status, the Hakka people were perceived as half-caste, coming from a low status. The Hakka group that meanwhile became the majority claimed to appoint a Hakka member as a chief. The tensions in China between the pro revolution and pro imperial political parties were reflected also in the fight for power in Mauritius. Cohan-Tai was elected as president of the pagoda, but the fight among the different groups for that position now continued since 1906 when the Supreme Court decided to form a Committee composed of 15 members, representatives of the three groups. Every year a group (Cantonese, Hakka and Foukan)

would have been appointed. This decision that seemed "finally" to solve the tensions, in reality provoked constant divisions among the clans.

Until recently there has been considerable turnover within the community as traders come to Mauritius, make money, and then go back to China. In turn their relatives or friends came to take over the island business, so that most of the older Chinese were born in China. The younger generation, however, consider Mauritius as a permanent home. Because of their small numbers, the Chinese cannot be a strong political force and must depend upon the good intentions of the government for their survival (Simmons 1982: 6). Strategically they tend to remain externally as invisible as possible (to keep out of politics) and they tend to reproduce internally ancestral culture and forms of organization (Eriksen 1998: 103).

III.3. LANGUAGE

The languages spoken in Mauritius constitute one of the best reflectors of the complex social structure of the island: 15 languages offer a diversity that can be found virtually no other African or Asian country. As well, given the small size of the island, the variety is amazing. Beaton was right in forecasting the interest that Mauritius would play for linguists. "We are certain, that the future language of Mauritius will puzzle the philologists of coming ages" (1859: 16). Languages stand as historical record because each wave of settlement brings with it an addition to the linguistic field. The persistence of so many languages in Mauritius can partly be explained by the fact that the racial groups in Mauritius have been so endogamous. A diglossic situation has been developed in Mauritius where people from every class and ethnicity, master at least two languages used in different contexts within the Mauritian life. Codeswitching is quite the norm. Kreol, a French based-patois, is the language

of interethnic communication. English is used in government, the judiciary, and education, and it is also the official language even if it remains less spoken in Mauritius, with French being the dominant language of economic and cultural power. Without analyzing all the languages, I want to underline the importance of Bhojpuri which became the lingua franca of the Indo-Mauritian coolies. Bhojpuri is the name of a group of dialects closely related to Hindi.

In the Mauritian's "Babel," Stein (1982) grouped languages as *supercommunity* (Kreol, French, and English) and *intracommunity* (Indian and Chinese languages). Baker (1972) argued that English, French and Kreol have become associated with "knowledge, culture, and egalitarianism," while other languages are largely identified with what may be termed "ancestral languages." In informal conversation, "egalitarianism" is generally a more important matter than culture, "knowledge" or ancestral heritage, and thus Kreol is usually adopted. In formal situations French, English, and in some cases, oriental languages are seen as more appropriate. The newcomers from India and China, for example, soon realized that the road to promotion was through English, the status language of the colonial masters. English therefore became a language that gave the possibility of jobs in the civil service and access to higher education in British universities. With the emergence of India as a political and economic force, many Indo-Mauritians re-discovered the mother tongue (e.g.: Hindi/Urdu) utilizing it as political symbol no longer marginalized in the religious domain. Sino-Mauritians as well are studying Cantonese to better foster the business relation with Hong Kong. It is interesting to note that the majority of them are Hakka people who traditionally speak Hakka, a language that is very different from Cantonese. There is a different usage pattern for written and spoken languages in Mauritius. Kreol and Bhojipuri

writing are not standardized. When it comes to writing, Oriental languages suffer from their complex scripts and Bhojipuri from the lack of a writing parameter. Kreol as well suffers from lack of a standardized orthography and low social status. As a result, French and English are the languages in which Mauritians usually read and write.

According to the official census some fifteen languages are spoken daily on the island; however, the relative importance of these languages varies greatly. Since 1982 when the concept of ethnic classifications was removed from the census, the concept of ancestral language has taken its place. Language is above all an obvious normatively charged marker of ethnic and status identity. Choosing Hindi (or Bhojpuri) as the language spoken at home may be correctly interpreted as a political meta-statement about group membership rather than one about actual language-use. An interesting comparison can be made between this phenomenon in Mauritius and a similar impetus among Haitians in New York. Haitian parents, for example, register their children at school as French speakers who need French bilingual instruction, even when neither they nor their children can speak French (Basch et al. 1994: 199). When identifying the language of their forefathers, Mauritians identify their ethnic heritage. Those who identify their forefathers as speaking Kreol or French are almost entirely in the General Population; those identifying Hindi, Bojipuri, Tamil, Telegu, and Marathi are largely Hindus (and some Muslims); those specifying Urdu, Arabic, or Muslim are entirely Muslims; and those indicating Chinese languages (Cantonese, Hakka) are entirely Sino-Mauritians. When asked to reveal the language spoken at home, Mauritians reveal a strong trend away from ethnically based language use. Kreol emerges as the dominant language of the country. With the exception of Bhojpuri, all Oriental languages (Hindi, Tamil, Telegu, Marathi, Gujerati, Urdu) have suffered a sharp decline in home use when

compared with the language spoken by the forefathers. In both the Muslim and Chinese communities, Kreol has become the main language used, and Kreol is widely acknowledged as the *lingua franca* for the entire island.

Kreol has its origin in eighteenth-century slavery, where it emerged as the language used both among slaves brought to Mauritius from various parts of the world and between the slaves and their French masters. A hybridization process forged this new language, which though born as a language of command, of slavery, has become a symbol of Mauritianness. Bakhtin defines hybridization as "a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation, or by some other factor" (1981: 358). The Indian and Chinese people who arrived in different streams in the course of the nineteenth century used Kreol as a medium. This is Beaton's description of the difficulties a hypotethical British traveller in finding someone who understood English in Mauritius in the 1850s. He is astonished to discover that in a British colony no British subjects understand English.

> He addresses himself to the Coolies, British subjects à double titre, and is answered with "Main nahin junta" [I do not know] by the more recent arrivals; by the old immigrants, with the ever recurring "N'a pas conne'" varied by all the harmonies of oriental articulation. Is it credible that the Coolies even are taught the **barbarous jargon** [my emphasis] known as Creole, and that an Englishman standing in an English colony should discern no traces of the English language, of English manners, and of English civilization?(Beaton 1859: 23).

The Chinese as retail shoppers started to speak Kreol to have business with the population. Philip Baker (1972), one of the leading students of Mauritian Kreol, has identified 4 types of Kreol:

1. ordinary Kreol as spoken by all Mauritians.

2. Bhojpuri-influenced Kreol, spoken by Indian Mauritians.

3. French-influenced Kreol.

4. Refined Kreol as a medium for literary expression.

Pidgin languages are hotly debated political topics. By some they are regarded as "bastardized" or "corrupt" forms of standard French or English which should be eliminated. However, because these languages evolved naturally from an inherent need to communicate they are strongly identified as native languages belonging to the people. The increase of Kreol usage has opened up a debate that goes to the very heart of what it means to be a Mauritian. Kreol is sometimes dismissed as "nothing but French badly pronounced and free from ordinary rules of grammar" (Eriksen 1991: 110-111). Moreover it is ethnically connected to the Creoles, population of the island, the slaves, and therefore it is perceived as a low status language. Fanon exposed the acculturating power of language in the colonial context. Asserting that "to speak is to exist absolutely for the other"(1967: 17), Fanon criticized the inferior status attributed to Creole in favor of French as the "language of civilization" in the Antilles. He also demonstrated that the denigration of the local language as "inferior" was a key to understanding the dehumanization inherent in colonization. Saying that every colonized people "finds itself face to face with the language of the civilizing nation, the culture of the mother country," Fanon observed that to speak the language of the colonizer was to carry the (imposed) weight of an entire civilization, and to bury one's own traditions and history. Yet it is paradoxically necessary to use the "master" language (langue maîtrise) to communicate in the context of poly-ethnic society. The Mauritian writer Dev Virahsawmy saw in Kreol a unique cultural symbol that could bring together the entire

population. During the 1970s, Kreol was promoted by the opposition political party (MMM) as a possible National Language, but the reaction of the population was clear. Kreol is not a language that promotes the island in the global economy. Kreol is a sign of marginalization. I will speak more extensively on this topic in Chapter IV.

III.4. RACE AND COLONIALISM

Mauritius presents a very interesting case by which to study how French and English colonialism left an indelible mark on the histories of the areas they colonized. In analyzing its colonial past, it is possible to grasp the importance of "communalism" as imposed system of divide et impera and to understand how colonial racism is still embedded in Mauritian society.

Colonial authority was constructed on two powerful yet false premises. The first was that the Europeans in the colonies made up an easily identifiable and discrete biological and social entity. The second was the related notion that boundaries separating colonizers from colonized were self-evident and easily drawn (Stoler 1989). Both premises showed their weaknesses and soon between the racial division of white and black a new hybridity disrupted the colonial order. South America has always been cited as the prime example of the degenerative results of racial hybridization. Paradoxically it was the very desire of the white for the non-white, and the proliferating products of their unions, that "dislimned boundaries" (Young 1995: 181). The colonial desiring machine with its dialectic of attraction and repulsion toward the "other," produced a polymorphous perverse people who, as Bhabha points out, are "white but not quite" (Bhabha 1990). Homi K. Bhabha's theory of cultural difference, and, in particular, his notions of hybridity and the Third Space, have

become a staple in contemporary cultural discourse. The idea of a Third Space "ensure[s] that meaning and symbols of a culture have no primordial unity or fixity." "The third is that which questions binary thinking and introduces crisis - a crisis which is symptomized by both the overestimation and the underestimation of *race* (Garber 1993: 11). A race is defined not by its purity but rather by the impurity conferred upon it by a system of domination that means "the overestimation of the impure and the underestimation of the pure" (Deleuze-Guattieri 1988: 379). The privileged colonial gaze towards the non-Western subject brought the subsequent construction of the "other." In colonial discourse, Western eyes construct the other's body as a fixed entity, as black skin,[13] as a fetishized sexual object, as something that is just the white prerogative to identify.[14] The other has been denied the right to look at the white;[15] the other is visible-invisible. The anthropology of colonialism has tended to conflate the makers of colonial policy with its local practitioners, treating them as a seamless whole with self-evident political agendas.

Distance from the mother country and the peculiar environment in which the colonizers lived produced a colonial culture that was the unique configuration of European customs given new political meaning in colonial social orders. A growing interest in postcolonial studies is the study of how Europeans in the colonies imagined themselves and constructed communities built on asymmetries of race, class, and gender. The asymmetries that originated in the metropolis took a different shape. Strict regulations were deployed to

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[13] "Skin as the key signifier of stereotypical cultural and racial difference, is the most visible of fetishes, recognized as 'common knowledge' in a range of cultural, political, historical discourses" (Bhabha 1983: 30).

[14] "for not only must the black man be black; he must be black in relation to the white man (Fanon 1967: 110).

avoid contacts among the colonizers and the colonized, as for example in the French case the *Code Noir* was developed. The *Code Noir*, promulgated by Louis XIV "was intended to control existing and future relations between blacks and whites in the areas of social intercourse, judicial proceedings, slave rights, and religion" (Breathett 1988: 3). The law specifically established Catholicism as the only religion sanctioned for slaves and determined the legal status and responsibilities of both masters and slaves. The Code forbade marriages between Europeans and slaves, yet many French settlers took Black women. In the early years of settlement, European men greatly outnumbered white women, and this no doubt encouraged sexual relations between colonial masters and those they subjugated. The children of these sexual relations belonged to a new section of the society: the free coloreds. The strict boundaries were not anymore so clear. Status, and not cultural affinity, caused this class to grow and prosper, creating a three-tiered society: white, free colored, and slave. The children of the unions between the colonizers and the colonized were often freed from slavery and sometimes given some education and a little property. Until 1803, when the *Code Napoleon* sanctioned the division between whites and non-whites, they were equal to Europeans. "These measures gave legal sanction to a social colour bar that was already well established" (Benedict 1965:14).

European women in the colonies were caught in two different and ambiguous positions: they were both subordinates in colonial hierarchies and active agents of the imperial culture in their own right (Stoler 1989: 634). The arrival of large numbers of European women coincided with an embourgeoisment of colonial communities and with a

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[15] The politics of slavery, of racialized power relations, were such that the slaves were denied the right to gaze (bell hooks 1992:15).

significant sharpening of racial lines. The following will better illustrate the racist and imperialist assumptions of the colonial era:

> In order not to lose their national characteristics by the admixture of foreign blood the first colonists applied to the mother country with the request to send young women from France to the Mascarenes. A number of Parisian orphan girls had the courage to go out[...]
>
> They laid the foundations of many vigorous families, and from them comes the touch of aristocracy which distinguishes the French Creole women, and also the harshness of the social ban with which they visit intermarriages with people of colour.
>
> The Creole women are with justice looked upon as beauties; their external appearance has received something of the distinguished grace of the women of Paris. They are said to be peaceable wives and careful mothers (Keller 1901: 173).

Women, Stoler points out, otherwise marginal actors on the colonial stage, are charged with dramatically reshaping the face of colonial society, imposing the racial will on African and Asian colonies "an iron curtain of ignorance" replaced "relatively unrestrained social intermingling" in earlier years (1989: 640). The colonial morality was established. Racial degeneracy was thought to have social causes and political consequences. Metissage (interracial unions) in general and concubinage in particular, represented the paramount danger to racial purity and cultural identity in all its forms. Probably no subject is discussed more than sex in colonial literature and no subject is more frequently invoked to foster the racial stereotypes forged in the West.

An Anglican pastor who lived for 5 years in Mauritius wrote in his memoires:

> The negresses appear to have always had stronger attractions for them [the colonists] than the females of their own race and colour, and as soon as the passions begin to manifest themselves in the young men, connexions are formed which result in increasing the coloured population.

> The numerous half-castes of all shades are lumped together under the name of mulatto. As being the result of crossing two different races among whom the moral qualities do not always stand high, the mulatto is nowhere looked upon by the creoles as an equal, and the European hold himself as distant from him as possible. A French Creole who marries a Mulatto woman from pecuniary considerations is excluded from good European Creole society (Beaton 1859: 17).

He further explores the pseudo-scientific characteristics of the mixed blood:

> "The Mulatto is darker or fairer according to the amount of Negro blood. There are Mulatto girls of startling fairness and great beauty, who are, however, easily recognized as half-castes by the crinkled hair and the shape of the head."

The Anglican pastor is wondering what will come out of this continuous mixture of race and fears the worst:

> who the coming man of Mauritius may be, we cannot tell, we only hope that from elements so diverse there may not come forth a Frankenstein" (ibid.: 16).

As the overwhelming majority of Indian coolies and Chinese at first were men, this disproportionate sex-ratio led to sexual relations with Creole women. In 1888, the Honorable deputy of Plaines Wilhems, C. Antelm expressed his concern about the flow of celibate Chinese to Mauritius. He felt these men constituted a danger to the morality and prosperity of the state (Ly-Tio-Fane Pineo 1981). In the first census held in 1921, 207 children of a union between a Chinese man and a creole woman were listed as were 148 children born to Chinese-Indian couples. According to statistics, in 1883 there were 415 cases of mixed unions in the Chinese community. Racism, treated frequently as a critical part of the social construction of illegitimate access to property and power, varied greatly in intensity and quality among colonial cultures. More than justification for European rule,

racist ideology was treated as a class-based logic that kept potentially subversive white colonials in line. Internal divisions among colonials intensified racist ideology. Impoverished whites and white women were two categories that threatened the boundaries of white male control.

There is a little sense in making a comparison between English and French colonialism in Mauritius, as the different historical moments during which each power controlled the island necessarily resulted in different societies. It does however make sense to compare British colonialism in Mauritius with French colonialism in Réunion, Mauritius' twin island. The British in Mauritius carefully revived ethnic, religious, and racial particularism in order to maintain their domination based on indirect rule of the different communities on the island. By contrast, the ideology and procedures of French colonialism was based on an egalitarian Enlightenment assumption of the fundamental sameness of all human beings and of the unity of the human race designed to assimilate colonial people to French civilization.

In summary, Mauritius is the product of these two colonial ideologies. From the French, Mauritius inherited its "civilization." from the British, its strong emphasis on communalities.

III.4. 1. IDENTITY IN BECOMING: THE COMMUNALIST AND HOLISTIC IDENTITY

Ethnicity, race, nationalism, class, gender, and sexuality are deeply entangled in the formation over time of Mauritian identity, which is never ethnic or supra-ethnic, communalistic or nationalistic. Two main perspectives on ethnicity have been central to the scholarly literature. The primordial perspective stresses the historical continuity and often

blood connection of ethnic community as a determining factor for personal identity (e.g., Geertz 1963; Isaacs 1975). However, while primordialist models point to an array of potent symbols they fail to explain what elements of commonality are embodied in particular symbols, such as name, descent, language, religion, and in particular settings (Bentley 1987: 26). The circumstantialist perspective challenges this notion in asserting that ethnic identities are not necessarily fixed and permanent, but malleable at least in some circumstances. The theoretical focus here is on how members of a particular ethnic group go about manifesting themselves while in full view of the opportunity structures in the wider society. The human being is now seen as an active agent selectively and strategically presenting and displaying his/her ethnic emblems.

According to Barth, ethnic boundaries depend upon the situation in which they are operating and ensure both the persistence and the flexibility of the group. It is not the cultural content enclosed by the boundary, but the boundary itself and the symbolic "border guards" (language, dress, food, etc.), that perpetuate the community. Hence these boundaries are permeable. Barth's theory of ethnic boundaries brought a shift in the focus of ethnic studies from group characteristics to properties of social progress. Recent trends in ethnic studies replace static with dynamics, property with relationship and structure with process. An ethnic identity is not necessarily an all-nothing, permanent thing. One may claim one identity in one situation and a different identity in another situation, depending on the relative advantages. Nagata (1974) argues for the plausibility of a model of "ethnic oscillation" whereby individuals, with no single or fixed reference group, interpret situational requirements, adjust and display themselves for, among other reasons, social affinity, expediency and concern with social status and ability. In this way they may engage in a

double identity and lead a double life. Patterson (1975) sees ethnic identity as a conscious expression of short-term economic interest.

Differences in the primordialist/circumstantionalist-situationalist approaches reflect fundamentally different assumptions about human action. Circumstantialists view action as rationally oriented, towards practical goals and stress manipulation of identities; while primordialists view action as value-oriented and point to the emotional power of primordial symbols. I see this primordialist/circumstantialist dichotomy as a sterile *querelle*. Ethnic groups can neither be defined solely in cultural terms nor as purely situational/instrumental phenomena. At this point, what is an appropriate way to study ethnic identity in Mauritius? Which theory effectively grasps the complexity of ethnic identities and social identifications in Mauritius? Barth's theory of ethnic boundaries is appealing for its focus on social relations. Of particular importance is the ways in which an ethnic category, especially in a poly-ethnic society like Mauritius, is perceived not only by group members but also by those outside the category, through various stereotypes. The limits of the theory however lie in its ahistoricity which dismiss the wider historical framework where the interpersonal relations take place. As we have seen in the second section of this chapter, the number of ethnic groups and ethnic identification in Mauritius varies according to the situation, to the observer and to the historical moment. There are for example categories such as "general population," which were "invented" for census purposes, or categories which changed through time, for example "Creole." Tapper states:

> The essence of ethnonyms and of conceptions of ethnicity is that they cannot be pinned down 'scientifically' by maps, by lists of traits and attributes, but that are essentially ambiguous and shifting materials for the construction and manipulation of identity, by actors, by others, by administrators, and by social researchers (1988: 21).

Ethnicity, a complex and multifaceted term, refers to aspects of relationships between groups which consider themselves, and are regarded by others as culturally distinctive. Ethnicity is socially constructed and it is not a static element. An ethnic group is about boundary maintenance, ethnicity is a way to structure interaction which allows the persistence of differences. Ethnic "communality" is, therefore, always an artifact of boundary-drawing activity: always contentious and contested, glossing over some differentiations and representing some other differences as powerful and separating factors (Barth 1969: 9-38). What is the difference between ethnicity and race? Race exists also as a cultural construct whether it has a biological reality or not. It could be seen as a special case of ethnicity (Van Den Berghe 1983), or autonomously. In Banton's view, race refers to the categorization of people "them," while ethnicity has to do with group identification "us"(1967). I think that in many cases ethnicity and race are so strongly entangled that a distinction between "us" and "them" is difficult to draw. Ethnic groups are not monolithic entities, but within them there are class cleavages. Theories of social class always refer to systems of social ranking and distribution of power. Ethnicity, by contrast, does not necessarily refer to rank. However, in many poly-ethnic societies, ethnic groups are ranked. The criteria for ranking differ from class ranking as they refer to imputed cultural differences or races, not to property or achieved status, but ascribed status. In this case there is a high correlation between ethnicity and class which may overlap. Status is intended in the Weberian sense, as the way in which social honor is distributed in a community between typical groups. In contrast to the purely economically determined "class situation," Stand (status group) is determined by a specific, positive or negative, social estimation of honor. A specific style of life distinguishes the people belonging to that status. Classes, status group

and parties are, according to Weber, phenomena of the distribution of power within the community (Weber 1978).

The tension of the ethnic and supra-ethnic poles characterizes Mauritian society. It is dialectic between boundary maintenance and bridge-building. One pole divides the population in ethnic groups with assumed opposed corporate interests, in the economic and political domains. This is the classic model of plural society in colonial time, when following the hierarchical organization of the sugar cane plantation, ethnic boundaries were instrumentally exacerbated to solidify stratification. Mauritian hierarchical society, in colonial times was structured as following: the small but powerful Franco-Mauritians elite stayed at the top; next came the light skinned Creole professional and middle class; at the bottom were the dark skinned Creoles and the Indian labors. The Chinese were outside the plantation system's hierarchy. Pigmentocray (Lewis 1987) ruled, and to a certain extent rules. The quantity of "white" blood in the "black" blood could change the rank of the person in the society. Although Ethnicity/Race/Class partially coincide in the Mauritian case, human agency was always able to find an open space where the ability of the individual could "cut and mix" from a variety of ethnic and cultural ranges available.

The colonial heritage and the smallness of the island have enhanced communalism. The communal aspect of Mauritian identity has been well portrayed by Benedict:

> The separateness of each of the five main groups can be seen in their stereotypes of each other. Each regards the other as undifferentiated. The Franco-Mauritian refers to 'les indiens' and is scarcely aware of the main social gradation among 'les blancs.' Both groups regard the Chinese as similarly undifferentiated. The tendency of each group to look on the others as undifferentiated appears to be a function of lack of communication between groups (1961: 33).

In multiculturally diverse societies it is normal for people to stereotype groups of people outside of their own category and deny these outsiders the range of diversity one sees among their own. In a poly-ethnic society Barth (1969) stated: "the status cluster, or social person, of every member of the group must be highly stereotyped - so that inter-ethnic interaction can be based on ethnic identities (1969: 19).

Language and religion have served on the whole as strict barriers enhancing the stratification which has been for so long typical of the island. In this situation communal loyalties dominated. Nothing can ingrain stereotypes people hold better than language toward people. "Reality, as Smitherman (1991) pointed out, is not merely socially, but sociolinguistically constructed. Language plays a dominant role in the formation of ideology, consciousness and class relations (ibid.:117). In every day practice, Kreol speech - the French based patois spoken by the entire population - still reflects the racial classification system of the colonial era. For example, the following definitions came out of a meeting with a few Mauritians in Toronto and these categories appear constantly in the messages of the "virtual Mauritian community." Muslims are referred to, pejoratively, as "lascar." "Lascar" is the Mauritian way of pronouncing "Lashcar" (like "dimance" for "dimanche"). The definition of "Lashcar" refers to a body of Muslim soldiers (army) in India; thus every one belonging to the Islamic faith became "lascar" in the Mauritian context. In the same manner, "Catholics" are called "Cathwa" or "catwa" which is mainly associated with Creoles in Mauritius.
Hindus are called "Malbar" is associated with a place in India. It probably originated in the mind of someone whose knowledge about India was somehow restricted to the name of that place (Malibar). Tamils are referred as Madras, Moundor, Carri-poule, Tambi, Madras calin.

Chinese are called as Sinwa, Sintok, Kong, Ti-lizyé "Sinois macow." *I Guess that this was given to people with small eyes coming from Macau, a Chinese territory* - commented my informant. Creoles/Mulatoes/Metis are called Creole, Nasyon (nation), Mazambik, [from Mozambico] Kreol ti-sévé. Whites are defined as *Blanc*, [white] *Fesse-blanc*, [white face] *Missié gran-blanc*, [mixed, metis] *Gran blan, ti-blan. The whites are not really considered as such in Mauritius People tend to treat them as mulatoes, not as, say, white Westerners.* My informant was referring to the Franco-Mauritians. In Mauritius *bla* (white) is used to designate whites of any social class. Insults for example, take the form of *ra bla* (rat white) or *bla koma la lep* (white as leprosy). *Kler* (clear) is used with mixed bloods. *Nwar* (black) is usually pejorative. *Fer le bla* (to make as a white) also takes on a meaning different from the same Mauritian term: instead of pejoratively meaning to pass for white, it means to be the boss, because of the social connotation of *bla* as designating a patron or owner. The Mauritian system of language (e.g. Kreol) displays signs of racial tension more strongly than those of the neighbor islands, such as Réunion and Seychelles. On all the islands white is seen as superior, and black as pejorative. *Bla* [blanc/white] denotes not color as such but a strictly defined socio-ethnic group, most tightly defined on the island of Mauritius. On Réunion the ancient, extensive mixing of blood has resulted in *bla* losing some of its racial denotations; it is more a social than a racial term. The classification of Creoles in the Indian Ocean is quite different from that of the Caribbean, where very numerous terms exist for mixed bloods. It is the socioeconomic structure that determines the racial classification system, "a rich black is white and poor white is black"(Chaudenson 1974: 75-94).

Mauritian identity consists of variability and adaptability as is illustrated in the course of slave and colonial history with the phenomenon of name-changing, as well as caste and

status changing (Haring 1991:84-85). There was a provision in the *Code Noir* that prescribed a single name for a slave. This provision stimulated slave-owners to find the strangest, most sarcastic names they could - Clever, Indifferent, or even The Queen of Carthage (Moutou 1989:203). Many Indian coolies used the opportunity of working in Mauritius as a channel to upgrade their caste or as a way to hide their past/identity. After the Sepoy revolt in India (1857-9) some of the rebels and deserters carefully concealed their identities and signed on at the Mauritian agency in Calcutta and Madras as agricultural laborers under new names (Ly-Tio-Fane Pineo 1981: 81). Thus Mauritian name-changing was never mere word-play: it always signaled status change. Variability is evident also in the religious context. In the new environment many converted to Catholicism as a way to gain status or to escape the strict frame of the caste classificatory system. A characteristic of Mauritianness is the ability to manipulate cultural symbols, not having a problem participating in another's religious festivities, or being Catholic and continuing to be Buddhist as in the case of many Sino-Mauritians. It is a dynamic process of participation in other's traditions.

The other pole which characterizes Mauritian society builds in, non-ethnic fields through everyday informal interactions which include the extensive use of Kreol as language of communication across communities, the urban space such as shopping malls, fast-food, restaurants, discos, the work place, in the textile and tourist industries, and the educational system. The media and the state stay at the crossroads of the two poles as a sort of balancing force. In the post-independence period, the Mauritian state has promoted supra-ethnic aspects of social relations to forge a national Mauritian identity. The ethnic foundation of politics, although still strong, has been challenged. Principles for recruitments to the labor market are no longer ethnically based. The textiles and tourist industries are owned by

foreigners, expatriates and Sino-Mauritian, who hire outside the communalistic logic. Women have increased their presence in the working place since the 1970s with the settlement of Export Processing Zone, especially in the textile industry. The factory opened to women a further space of public interaction giving them the possibility of becoming less dependent. The factory experience was particularly important for Indo-Mauritian women, whose sphere of interaction was limited to the family network. The gender contribution to the formation of Mauritian identity, the role of women has not yet been studied extensively. Yet more than the male counterparts, who have succeeded better economically, the Mauritian women personify the island history. Instead of imposing the past on the present, the Mauritian woman can choose which traditions to participate in, personifying the essence of Mauritianness (Haring 1991: 90).

> L'évolution des mœurs dans le pays ancestral la libère des pratiques d'un temps révolu, ses contemporaines d'ascendance différente lui offrent une palette si variée d'où choisir sa façon d'être, de s'exprimer, de se comporter qu'elle se retrouve sans remparts et sans repères (Seetulsing 1989: 6).

An aspect that better grasp the overcome of ethnic boundaries is intermarriage. Although it is still feared by the ethnic communities, intermarriage starts to become more visible and widely spread. "Nearly 10 percent of Mauritian marriages are ethnically mixed" (Eriksen 1997).

Expressive culture of oppressed groups who have been thrown into proximity, and the socio-cultural interactions have generated trough time new identities and new forms of "creolized" culture. Small in size, lacking external contact, yet strongly differentiated internally, Mauritius possess characteristics of its own that produced a "new island civilization." The first characteristic of this "new island civilization" is variability. There are

many different cultures, and religions in Mauritius, each of which is both situationally shared and also kept separate to enhance its boundaries. Multiple identities, situational identities are not discovery of postmodernity. They have always been part of human social behavior.

> Notre identité [est] forcément multiple" Plus peuple que race, nous addittionnons nos fidélités à l'Orient, à l'Occident et à l'Afrique, pour fonder une symbiose, certes difficile, mais seule capable de nourrir notre quotidien plus sûrement que le plat de riz, la rougaille de poisson salé ou la fricassée de lentilles rouges. Nos aïeux venaient tous de quelque part, nous avons pour mission de continuer leur exil dans un lieu devenu pays natal (Maunick 1989).

> [Our identity is necessarily multiple. More people than race, we add our loyalty to the Orient, the Occident and Africa in order to forge a symbiosis, not easy at all, but able to nourish our everyday life more than with a plate of rice, the rougaille of salt fish or the fricasse of red lentils Our grandfathers came from all over. We have to embrace the mission of continuing their exile in a place that became our home country].

Maunick proclaims in this way his hope of a true Mauritian identity that does not stop at the aesthetic level (festivities and food) but runs through the population at a much deeper level.

CHAPTER IV.

MAURITIUS : AN ISLAND - A NATION- STATE

IV.1. ISLAND AS A METAPHOR

It is intriguing dealing with the idea of " island." I was captured by the idea of living in an island as opposed to living on terra ferma, but this is more related to the romantic and idealized imaginaries that mainland people have of the island than an idea derived from the images that islanders have of their own place. On the other side islanders imagine the mainland in the same way. You posit your desires in a distant place as an escape place. Many questions arise in trying to deal with such shifting dimensions of island imaginaries. Do "island cultures" display specific attributes typical of and shaped by their locus on small land masses encompassed by sea? And, are metaphorical "cultural islands" a product of given factors such as spatial location, terrain and other ecological circumstances? And how much does the historical aspect play in shaping an island culture? Looking at the meaning of the word island [insula] the aspect of isolation becomes its main characteristics. But "islands" are in fact rather inappropriate analogies for isolation. The geographical focus gives preeminence to the concept as applied to "actual" islands, that is, smaller land areas encompassed - and connected - by sea. Many "islands" are metaphorically defined, such as allegedly isolated human societies characterized by linguistic specialization and usually, but not necessarily, remote and inaccessible locations. In anthropology islands have historically been depicted as

self-sustaining societies and it is interesting that the discipline was born on an island Kiriwina, in the Tobriander islands with Malinowski's dictum of participant observation. In recent years, many scholars (Wolf 1982, Sahlins 1985) demonstrate that the seemingly isolated island societies have always - before Columbus, Magellanus, captain Cook - been involved in extensive networks of communication and exchange with their neighbors. In literature, islands, especially deserted islands have always been an object of fascination. Much has to do with the Western cultures interest in "going back to nature."

Mauritius is definitely geographically an island - it was a desert island and the people gave her its destiny. Her location in the Ocean, point of connection with the Route to the East: gave her the name: *L'Étoile et le Clef* -the star and the key of the Indian Ocean. Exploring the literary dimension of the island Mauritius, I take into consideration some of the images of Mauritian poets regarding their island. *Voyage a l'île de France* (1773) and overall *Paul et Virginie* of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre are considered the founding texts of Mauritian literature. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, a French man who spent two years in the island, describes the island through the looking glass of an outsider drawing the island and his inhabitants with an exotic aura. The Mauritian literature starts really only when the Mauritians react to the images coming from the outside (Western, colonial metropolis) of their island and of themselves. Malcom de Chazal, (1902-1981) a great poet, philosopher, painter celebrates Mauritius as the cradle of an original humanity.

He follows the myth of Lemurie.[16] According to this myth, Mauritius is the remaining part of an ancient continent, Lemurie, which tied together India and Africa. In the island, Indian people and people form African descent start to recognize their fraternity, nourished by the same ancestral blood. The earthly paradise is situated in Mauritius, where human beings invented '"civilization" or in other words established a dialogue with the invisible world of gods sculptured in the mountains.[17] The theme of mystery of the genesis of the island is a constant in many Mauritian literary productions. (Jean-Georges Prosper, Jean-Claude d'Avoine). Although De Chazal comes from a family of French descents: colonists, plantation owners, he is deeply part of the Negritude movement.[18] He becomes also very interested in the Indian Ocean area as unique area which he explores in both its literal and sociological dimension. Looking at Mauritian society, Chazal projects an image very different from the mythical paradise: "Enfer tropical où règnent les préjugés raciaux" [tropical hell where racial prejudices rule]. Chazal points out how the society is still embedded in a colonial order that distinguishes people along racial lines. Island as exile and island of metissage are

[16] This myth was introduced by Jules Hermann from the Reunion (Les Révélations du Grand Océan (posthumous, 1927) was further developed by Robert Edward Hart and Malcom de Chazal. The Mascarenes are the last remnants of a continent, Lemurie, keep the traces in their mountains of a vanished race which was aware of the world secrets. Cit in De Rauville, Camille, Chazal des Antipodes.

[17] Chazal, de Malcom "Petrusmok: mythe" Port Louis: Standard printing establishment, 1951.

[18] Once Léopold Sédar Senghor met Malcom Chazal and he told him: "La première fois que j'ai lu *Sens plastique*, votre chef-d'œuvre, j'ai cru que vous aviez du sang noir' Et lui, souriant, de me réponda: "Rien ne pouvait me faire autant plaisir. L'art s'est réfugié, est revenu à ses souces: en Afrique et en Inde". In Senghor "post-face" De Rauville, *Chazal des Antipodes*: 111-112.

the images underlined by the poetry of Edouard Maunick[19] and Raymond Chasle. Maunick speaks about the important mission of continuing the exile of the forefathers: "Nos aïeux venaient tous de quelque part; nous avons pour mission de continuer leur exil dans un lieu devenu pays natal." [our ancestors came from different places; we must as mission continue their exile in a place that has become our home land](1989). Raymond Chasle in the first issue of the journal *l'Etoile et la Clef* in 1975 defines the island as île de sang mêlé et de sang à mêler" [island of blood mixed and blood to be mixed] where hybridization (Bhabha 1995) takes place. The island is also solitude (insulaire solitude) and distance (île distance).

Mauritius is not at all an "island" in the sense of an isolated spot in the middle of nowhere. The multiple relations carried on in the course of time have connected her with the world and the world has been connected to her. The image that Mauritians have of their island, has to be framed situationally with the outsider: neighboring countries, and significant others (the colonial metropolis Great Britain, the "mythical" France, the link with the ancestral homelands (India, China, Africa), the new sites of Mauritian diaspora in constant process of redefinition (for example France, Great Britain, Belgium, Switzerland, Australia, Canada).

[19] The themes of Maunick's poetry are Ile Maurice (Mauritius) and Negritude. He writes ÎLE with three capital letters and he often mixes the theme of *île* with race, earth, woman and *palabre*. In other words Poetry.

In a small ray Mauritius is in contact with neighboring islands whose history although different, has joined them in a common destiny. Experiences of colonization, of slave trade, the importance of the French language and Creole.[20] It is interesting to analyze the Indian Ocean area in the same way Braudel did the Mediterranean "carrefour de système où tout se mélange et se recompose en une unité originale [crossroads of systems that mix and recompose in an original unity] (1977: 10). In relation to the sister island of Réunion, which is a French *département*, Mauritians stress their independent status. On the other side the peculiarity of Réunion makes of her the closest link to France and Western Europe. Réunion is the stepping stone for handling all the bureaucratic procedures related to work and study in France. In relation to Comoros,[21] Mauritians emphasize their politically and ethnically pluralist position. Various peoples have settled in what is now Comoros over the last 1000 years, including early migrants from Madagascar, followed by Muslims from various areas. Early in the nineteenth century more settlers arrived from Madagascar, along with slaves imported from Mozambique. Most Comorians are Muslims, except for resident Indians and

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[20] The Commission of Indian Ocean (Commission de l'Océan Indien) is an organ that regroups all the francophone countries of the Indian Ocean - Maurice, Madagascar, Comores, Seychelles and the Département Français de la Réunion and has the aim of:
1 Strengthen political and strategic dialogue.
2 Prepare the region and its actors to face the challenges of globalisation
3 Affirm and enhance Indian Ocean identity
4 Represent the specific interests of the Indian Ocean islands in regional and international fora.
5 Encourage and facilitate sectoral cooperation through the participation of 1) populations and 2) economic and social operators in regional cooperation.

[21] Comoros, is a country comprising three islands in the Indian Ocean. The islands, located northwest of Madagascar in the Mozambique Channel, are Njazidja, Nzwani, and Mwali. The total area is 1865 sq km (720 sq mi). The capital city, Moroni, is located on Njazidja, the largest of the islands. Comoros claims sovereignty over a fourth island, Mayotte, but Mayotte is a dependency of France with the status of a territorial collectivity.

French Creoles. Many Mauritians have different feelings toward Comoros because of the strong Muslim influence. The Seychelles are perceived as not cosmopolitan and sophisticated at all, probably due to the fact that Kreol is the official language and the state does not promote any kind of multiculturalism. Madagascar is described as poorer than Mauritius although bigger. In the 1970s, many left wing Mauritians looked at Madagascar as an example of a Marxist state.

Although the link with the ancestral land is strong, emotionally and practically (this is true basically for Indians and Chinese through trips, cultural production such as music, movies, food), the general image of the ancestral land is depicted as chaotic, poor and underdeveloped, at least on the economical level. In relation to Europe (in particular France) Mauritians see themselves as a small nation, peripheral and relatively unsophisticated, with a an inferiority complex that has to be analytically situated within the framework of the colonial heritage. France appears to Mauritians as a mythical place.

Another way to position Mauritians to the "outside," is through their tourist destinations. In the last decade there is a growing interest among Mauritians in tourist travel. During my fieldwork, a question that I posed constantly in order to have an idea of the connections that Mauritians have with the world, was :"where did you travel abroad before coming to Canada? What was the reason? " Their answers suggest that, for tourist reasons, Mauritians traveled to Rodrigues, an island that is part of Mauritius, not yet touched by unbridled tourism and with a relatively uncontaminated nature. Other destinations were South Africa, Kenya and Singapore. The connection with Singapore is quite strong due to the fact of particularly cheap flights and the lure of duty free shopping. The national air

company "Air Mauritius" plays an important role in the choice of the destinations A return to "roots" has persuaded many Mauritians to visit their ancestral lands at least once.

IV.2. ISLAND AS A MICRO-STATE

There are many more countries today than there were at the start of the twentieth century. The reasons can be found with the end of colonial rule and more recently the collapse of the Communist Bloc. A recent survey pointed out 22 microstates that have a land area of less than 1,000 square kilometers and a population of less than 500,000. The majority of these are small island in the Pacific and Indian oceans or in the Caribbean, with one in the Mediterranean. Most of these were former British colonies. Unquestionably it has been the collapse of British empire which has bequeathed most microstates to the New International Order. French decolonisation followed a different strategy of political incorporation, making similar tiny territories into *départements* of the homeland. The British followed the contrary strategy of disincorporation: getting rid of them by making them independent.

Fragmentation is growing at the same time as many parts of the world are trying to band together to capture the advantages of scale, through a single market and common currency, for example Europe. Fragmentation and unification are not mutually exclusive they can actually coexist and it is the proof of the global economy in which we live. In *The Age of Extremes*, Hobsbawm pointed out how the world economy of the post-war boom period (1950-1975) remained an international or home-centered one in the old prewar sense, however significant signs of change emerged in the late 1960s. It was at this time that a "transnational" economic system began to emerge - a system of economic activities for

which state territories and state frontiers are not the basic framework but merely complicating factors.

The new global cultural economy has to be understood as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order, which cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models as portrayed by Wallerstein (1974) and world systems theory. The ideal nation-state is brought under revision. Small states however, are not a new phenomenon - witness the city-states of ancient Greece, the city-states in Renaissance Italy. Small states went out of fashion in the nineteenth century with the spread of "nationalism." According to the *Dictionnaire Politique* of Garnier-Pages it was "ridiculous" for Belgium and Portugal to be independent because they were too small to be economically self-sufficient (lebensfähig). Mazzini had the same approach thinking that a dozen states were enough for Europe, dismissing the nationalistic aspirations of Scots, Welsh and Irish. The concept of lebensfähig was essential for the formation of a state. The theoretical assumption was ingrained in practice. The League of Nations in the 1920s viewed Liechtenstein and Monaco as unworthy nuisances, feudal vestiges, capable only of provoking conflicts among serious nation-states. In 1920 the League of Nations refused to accept as members what it referred to as the "Lillputian" states, most of which were islands. The Wilsonian norm did not question when a state is perceived as "too big." Most theorizing about nationalism since World War II debated endlessly on the ideal-typical "nation'state" taking into consideration the concept of viabilité, "chances de succès" and came to the conclusion that it might resemble something like France. This made several assumptions (size, self-sufficiency, and military forces) as to what were the necessary conditions for a statehood: as a respectable and serious building-block of the modern international order (Gellner 1983).

The modern theorists of nationalism see microstates as "syntethic" as they have no armies or missiles, relying upon artificial conventions of sovereignty maintained by international law and treaties. The miniature nation is also a symbol of the future (The Economist 1998). Hobsbawn concludes his book provocatively: "The most convenient world for multi-national giants is one populated by dwarf states or no states at all." Smallness does not necessarily mean poorer (the striking example is Singapore, which manages to have three million people providing food and water from outside was able to grow a per capita GDP of $1,000 at independence to $24,000 today, it hosts 500 multinationals. A bigger country faces management complexities while a small country can offer a good possibility of investment, of settling electronic activities. The Mauritian state is an example. After independence, the Mauritian state worked out new strategies to participate in the global economy. Overpopulated, relying totally on sugar cane and with a very high unemployment rate, Mauritius was able to intensify its effort in new sectors such as the Export Processing Zone established in the 1970s and tourism. In a globalization paradigm, Mauritius is presented to the world as a model of economic success and social harmony.

In the last few years Mauritius has been exploring another aspect of globalization: the knowledge economy. 1994 Mauritius established its Informatics Park south of the capital, Port-Louis. Companies setting up there get tax breaks and the use of cheap-rate, high-performance telecommunications systems. One British firm has its software written there. Another runs a telephone answering service for Americans. This new interest in technology gives to Mauritius the name of "the Indian Ocean's digital tiger" (Poche 1998: 28). Many small nation states are following the same direction, e.g. in the South Pacific and in the Caribbeans.

From the political point of view microstates are perceived on one side as vulnerable to a variety of ills, including instability and coups d'état (Harden 1985), and/or economic disadvantage (Robinson 1960). On the other side, their smallness may be beneficial because it brings feelings of political efficacy and participation (Dahl and Tufte 1973), less political protest (Powell 1982), and better elite communication (Lijphart 1977). The size of the state can have a significant impact on the construction and maturation of a political system. One variable that emerges as being of central importance is the presence of multiple-role relationships in small states. Multiple-role relationships can best be defined as those situations in which members of a society interact with each other in a variety of social roles (Benedict 1967). What makes these relationships important in small states is their dominance as the primary form of political interaction in the society. As Benedict notes:

> Whereas, in a large-scale society, political relationships are only partial relationships, they are much more inclusive in a small-scale society. Closely knit family organization, particularistic ties within the community, traditional bonds of clientage or servitude [...] all mitigate against social mobility whether in the political or economic sphere (1967: 53).

Benedict did not appear hopeful for the prospects of small states politically and in the possibility of a Mauritian nation-state.

IV.3. MAURITIUS AS A NATION- STATE

> The state is invisible; it must be personified before it can be seen,
> symbolized before it can be loved,
> imagined before it can be conceived.
>
> Michael, Walzer (1967: 194)

In this section I trace the nation-building of Mauritius. From a colony where all the ethnic groups were divided, Mauritius is building a nation based not on ethnicity but on the interplay of differences, which make Mauritian nationalism unique. The challenges for Mauritius was to make a nation out of a colonial bricolage; to make Mauritians out of a varieties of crossed/crossing destinies. In this effort the state could have chosen different possible approaches. Of the many available approaches to nation building from assimilationist[22] to pluralist,[23] Mauritius engaged in a project of multiculturalism, *pluriculturalisme mauricien* embodied in the concept "one people, one nation."

During my fieldwork, a Mauritian living in Toronto was commenting which political strategy Mauritius could choose in order to become a nation. The comment was in relation to the riots which exploded in February 1999. These riots have deeply affected the

[22] The dominant ethnic group, the Indians, could have imposed their ethnic vision on the state to create a state identity which could be imposed in turn, on all the ethnic groups in that territory. Without consensus, the mounting complexity of the state weakens its operation. An assimilationist approach would have easily led to strong resistance from the other sections of the society: instead of coherence there could be confusion as society resists actively or passively (also as we will see through emigration).

[23] The state could have continued the plural approach used during colonialism, of allotting power along ethnic lines.

Mauritians abroad who are scared that the still fragile cohesion in Mauritius can be jeopardized.

> *We* [Mauritians] *either move and work towards a society which becomes a melting pot and where all cultures merge into one dominant influence like in Réunion, Seychelles.. where 90% + have become one religion and have one culture ....or we try to achieve the more difficult task of maintaining our cultural diversity in mutual respect and tolerance and where we try to learn as much as we can of other cultures... i.e. promoting a multicultural and multiethnic model like in some of the more advanced societies like Canada. One vision is a melting pot where everybody is assimilated into one dominant culture, the other is a multicultural one where a Hindu feels at ease with Moliere, the opera, a Muslim dances the sega, the Chinese and Creole feel at home in a Hindu wedding ....*

A short excursus on plural society and multiculturalism theories will help us better grasp the shift of Mauritius from colonial mechanism to a sovereign state.

IV.3. 1. ON PLURAL SOCIETY: THEORIES

Mauritius has both been labeled as a plural society - in the framework of colonialism, and as a multicultural society, in the current epoch of postcolonial nation-state building. During the colonial era, plural societies were characterized by inegalitarian pluralism, a coercive equilibrium monitored by the colonial power. In many areas, Mauritius included, the pluralistic character of the society was indeed a product of colonialism. The majority of people were subjects and not citizens. Racist ideologies promoting beliefs in the innate character of group differences were the philosophical underpinning of inegalitarian pluralism. Basically, it was only in the impersonal context of the economic and political systems that group members interrelated, and these relations were limited to purely

instrumental contacts. As Kuper and Smith point out: "economic symbiosis and mutual avoidance, cultural diversity and social cleavage characterize the social basis of the plural society" (1969: 11).

The idea of a "plural society" was formulated by a British student of the political economy of Southeast Asia, J. S Furnivall (1944). He defined Java in the last half century of colonial rule as a "plural society" in which Europeans, Chinese, and natives each held by their own religion, culture, and language, met as individuals only in the market place. It was only through the market that indigenous people and immigrant groups imported to the region by colonials, co-existed under the umbrella of Pax Britannica or Pax Hollandia. Pluralism according to Furnivall, was not a prerogative of integration. This approach has been criticized as "misleading because it concentrates attention upon differences in race and custom and upon group conflict while at the same time directing attention away from the processes making for unity and integration in the society" (R.T Smith 1958). But the very nature of colonialism was based on the strategy of *divide et impera*. Furnivall's concept has largely been accepted in varying degrees although it is as much a descriptive as a theoretical construct, which describes a varied class of complex and heterogeneous societies which face problems of inter-group adjustment and interaction at all social levels (Nagata 1975: 115). In particular it was utilized in the Caribbean, and African context. This concept can be applied to any society which possess sections differing with respect to basic institutional systems, defined as activity spheres. The basic institutional systems are "kinship, religion, property and economy, recreation and certain solidalities" (M.G Smith 1960). Smith argues that the forces which produced and maintained slavery, the slave economy and slave institutions in the areas of the Caribbean, fostered cultural differences, antagonisms and identities marked

by the legal statuses free and slave, white and non-white, owner and owned, wealthy planter and poor employee, colored and black.

Benedict (1962: 1237), in his analysis of Mauritian society just before independence, draws attention to the need for studying plural society as a single social system and not as separate social systems, which make contacts only in the economic sphere. In showing the weaknesses of the division of plural societies along: ethnic, linguistic, and religious lines, he introduces class to crosscut these traditional categories. Despite Benedict's attempt to consider class, the usefulness of the pluralist "theory" is limited by a failure to consider ethnic hierarchies as well as the internal stratifications within religious/ethnic/linguistic groups.

IV.3. 1. a MULTICULTURALISM

Policies designed by the state to support pluralism encourage group diversity and the maintenance of group boundaries. Unlike assimilationist polices, pluralistic policies are founded on the principle of group, not individual rights. The concept of multiculturalism was developed in the 1970s as ideology and policy particularly in Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. In Canada, the federal government in 1971 announced the policy of "multiculturalism within a bilingual framework." The purpose of this was to assist ethnic minorities in maintaining their cultural integrity, promote ethnic equality in access to social and economic institutions, and defuse ethnic discriminations at all social levels (Berry et al. 1977).

In addition to demonstrating the discrepancies between its principles and practices, critics have argued that multiculturalism concerns only the most superficial aspects of ethnic

relations, namely the retention of cultural traditions and heritages. Left untouched are the more significant issues of ethnic inequalities and access to political and economic power (Kallen 1982). In the context of multiculturalism policy also the Mauritian experience should be considered. At the same time as Canada, Australia and New Zealand, Mauritius likewise started a political project of forging a nation based on recognition of cultural, religious, linguistic differences and on ethnic identity. This project is still in formation and risks of inter-ethnic conflicts like the recent Mauritian riots in February 1999 could jeopardize the fragile and complex equilibrium.

IV.3. 1. b TOWARD A *PLURICULTURALISME MAURICIEN*

The island gained independence from Britain in 1968. Independence was feared by many and it was reached by a slight margin. Forty-four percent did not want independence. In the years preceding independence, the political climate was tense. Communal divisions became strongest in Mauritius before independence, unlike the populations of most colonies who put aside communal differences to join the independence movement. Communal attitudes toward independence were directly tied to the place each community could expect to have, politically and numerically in a future independent state. Minorities felt threatened by the majority.

Political parties were divided along ethnic lines. Minister Seewoosagar Ramgoolam and his Hindu dominated *Parti Travailliste* (Labor Party), which enjoyed a close working relationship with the Colonial office, fought for the independence. The main political opposition, *Parti Mauricien* composed of Creoles of African and mixed descent headed by

Gaetan Duval wished to remain colonial. Duval once claimed, during his campaign, if Mauritius were to become independent, then Black and Franco-Mauritian would have to wear saris. He was referring to the numerical majority of the Indian population and to the fear that once in power they would impose their way of life. Soon after independence the focus from ethnicity shifted slowly, if never entirely, to mobility based on meritocracy. Following the formation of the independent government political dissent or factionalism within the parties took place. Factionalism had a stabilizing effect, because it induced intra-ethnic (rather than inter ethnic) conflict, thereby weakening those political bonds based on ethnicity while potentially strengthening political interests based on "the perceived material rewards to be gained" (Mukonoweshuro 1991: 203).

Mauritius retained the Westminster parliamentary structure government and politics inherited from the colonial power. That model, based on the principle of "winner takes all," had to be readapted to allow for a sharing of power by the various communities. Thus, the Constitution of independent Mauritius contains provisions to ensure that each of the various communal groups that constitutes the Mauritian nation obtains safe and adequate representation in the National Assembly. Mauritius' constitution ensures, in fact, fair representation of the communities through the allocation of the Best Loser seats, by determining the most underrepresented community through mathematical calculations. This is the concept of power sharing, under the banner of consociational democracy, developed by Ramagooloam by which the leaders of the various groups meet and agree on common policies to present to their supporters. That is perhaps one of the best legacies of the Ramgoolam era, which the country would do well to preserve (Mannick 1989: 160).

The various groups of people who have flowed into Mauritius in course of the time have not combined into a coherent group of Mauritians. As such, from independence on, there has been a conscious effort on the part of the new state to mould/shape the Mauritian. This results being a very common characteristic among many nationalisms. The unification of Italy could be taken as an example. In 1861, inhabitants from Italy who lived for so many centuries under different powers found themselves united: under the same Kingdom: sharing the same administrative, financial and legal systems. To quote Massimo d'Azeglio: "fatta l' Italia bisogna fare gli Italiani." [Now that we made Italy, we need to make the Italians themselves] And it was not an easy effort! What Benedict wrote in 1965 is significant to understand what it meant being Mauritian at the eve of independence:

> 'Mauritian' in some contexts means only those people of French descent. In other contexts it means Creoles of light skin-colour (gens de colour), but almost never refers to Indians or Chinese. The term 'Indian" on the other hand usually refers to Hindu rather than Muslim, and even the term 'hindu' usually refers to those descended from Northern Hindus rather than descendants of the Tamil and Telegu-speakers of South India. But if the descendants of immigrants from France, Africa, India and China have not amalgamated into a single Mauritian people, neither have they remained separate entities unaffected by each other (1965: 22).

Certain constituents of Mauritian society, as Benedict underlined, were not considered "Mauritans," in view of the strong opposition toward Indians and Chinese. Jean Marrier d'Unienville (1953), Franco-Mauritian supporter of the Action Français wrote a book entitled *L'Oeuvre étonnante des Mauriciens*, in which he denied the Indian and Chinese communities the right to be considered Mauritians. A few years later, in 1955, he reedited the book renaming it with the alarmist title *L' Île menacée* [island under threat]. The danger was the growth of the Asian communities. He proposed to introduce a politics of apartheid as in South Africa. But the Mauritian was already enhanced. Maunick wrote this in 1970:

L'homme blanc qui prit ma grand-mère
dans son lit refusa de donner son nom a ma mère
ainsi ma mère put épouser
mon père lui-même petit-fils de coolies venant
des Indes
que voulez-vous que j'y fasse
qu'ai-je à corriger de tout ce qui se perpetra avant moi.

[The white man that took my grand-mother
to his bed he refused to give his name to my mother
so my mother could not marry
my father, he himself nephew of coolies coming
from India
what did you want that I do
in order to correct what it was perpetuated on me.]
(1970: 24)

The first problem that the multi-ethnic state of Mauritius had to cope with, was how to manage ethnicity and nationalism, or how to create a nation out of the myriad ethnic groups. The nation as an invention, and paraphrasing Anderson (1983), as an "imagined community," is not at all a natural phenomenon, despite the fact that the object of every nationalism is to present a particular image of society as natural. The creation of national identities involves a process in which people become not just the subjects of history but active participants in its making. The fundamental project of the state- the inward task of the modern nation-state - is to elaborate and resolve the contradiction of differentiation and unity. The disciplinary power of the state must facilitate the reproduction of social and cultural differentiation within the nation while at the same time perpetuating natural unity (Kearney 1991: 55). The state remains the crucial manager of both ethnicity and nationalism. The state is the encompassing arena within which various groups establish and fight over symbolic conventions, strive for legitimacy, and fix inter-group relations and the distributions associated with them (Williams 1989). "The ideologies we call nationalism and

the subordinated sub-national identities we call ethnicity result from the various plans and programs for the construction of myths of homogeneity out of the realities of heterogeneity that characterizes all nation building" (ibid.: 429).

The Mauritian state is using multiculturalism as a way to build a nation, in an attempt to find a compromise between centrifugal tendencies and to avoid inter-ethnic conflicts.[24] This multicultural policy is a kind of nationalism orchestrated by the state and informally reinterpreted by the civil society. Eriksen defines it as nationalism "Mauritian style" (1994). Since independence, the Mauritian state has been promoting *Mauricianité* as a homogenizing discourse of national identity in order to counteract the colonial heritage of "communalism,"[25] which perpetuates a division in ethnic groups among the population. This state-generated national identity is often challenged from below, with common people producing examples of a national "communitas"(Turner 1969) or "informal nationalism" (Eriksen 1993a).

In trying to achieve a balance between differentiation and homogenization, the state has banned from the political discourse any ethnic configurations and is promoting the

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[24] Violence is particularly feared in Mauritius because once violence starts in one part of the island the whole island is involved. The small size of the island, as well as the organization of its economic structure, further ensures that communities regularly come into contact with one another. The only notable interethnic conflicts were the riots in the years 1967-1968 between the Creoles and the Muslims just few weeks before independence. Recently in February 1999 riots sparked by grief and rage over the suspicious death while in policy custody of a popular Rastafarian "seggae" singer (sega influenced by raggae music), Kaya. Kaya, a Creole of African descent, was put under custody for having smoked marijuana at a demonstration for the drug's legalization. Demonstrations turned to violence as rioters attacked symbols of the state: police stations, traffic lights and government owned buses as well Hindu shops and factories. It was a direct confrontation between the marginalized Creole community and the state, e.g. the Hindu.

[25] Communalism is the promotion of the sectarian interests of a particular community regardless of the harm that may be caused to the national interest.

concept of *un seul peuple un seul nation*[26] *inscribed* in the *pluriculturalisme mauricien*. A popular slogan of independent Mauritius has been "unity in diversity." Eriksen in analyzing this slogan proposes the following framework. In Mauritian society there is a sharp division between PUBLIC/PRIVATE life. On the public side there is a demand of inter-ethnic/non-ethnic at all UNITY; DIVERSITY is constrained to the private sphere where ethnic identification can be expressed (Eriksen 1991: 148). If theoretically, in the Mauritian political arena, there is no space for ethnicity, most of the political parties[27] from the postwar period have been organized along ethnic lines, and have derived their support from an ethnic base. The above-mentioned parliamentary system with the role of best loser still follows the ethnic divisions. Although there are important contradictions between ideologies of ethnicity and ideologies of nationalism at the level of individual action, the contradictions are to a great extent reconciled on the national political level, where compromise, justice, equal rights and tolerance are emphasized. Ethnically based systems of segmentary oppositions are encouraged outside of the educational, political and economic systems, where the virtues of meritocracy are continuously stressed. Education, media, politics and workshop are the channels through which the homogenizing national ideology can operate. Gellner (1983), Anderson (1983), pointed out, how print capitalism played an important role in the spreading of nationalism. In 1982, in order to forge cross ethnic Mauritian identity, the state

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[26] We can find similar national projects and slogan in other postcolonial states with a multi-ethnic and multi religious population. For example in Jamaica the slogan is " Out Of Many, One People"

[27]There are numerous parties in Mauritius. Parti Travailliste is Hindu dominated; Parti Mauricien Sociale Democrate (PMSD) is supported by the whites and creoles (Duval); Muslim Action Committee (CAM) is based on Indians whose religion is Islam; Mouvement Militant Mauricien (MMM) is the anti-ethnic party of Marxist tendency.

eliminated from the census any ethnic classifications (cf. Anderson 1991: chp.10). The same policy has been applied to sport teams, which can not be formed along ethnic lines. In this connection, an informant, was telling me the important role that soccer plays in Mauritius and he was a little bit nostalgic of the times in which there were soccer games between two ethnic teams:

> *I remember the days when we had football teams like Hindu cadets, Muslim scouts and dodo. It was more of an aggressive way of playing. Players not only played for their club but also for their community. Us as fans enjoyed it more. Fights among rival fans were minimal. 'competitiveness' is being healthy and good'*

Lingayah (1987) sees in the games played by "ethnic" teams a confrontation that goes beyond the mere play:

> In my time when the Fire Brigade, a mixed black team, played the Dodo, an all-white Franco-Mauritian team, feeling ran high and the atmosphere was simply electric, with the non-whites overwhelmingly supporting the former and threatening to off the latter like the dodos. United in their support for Fire, even the Hindus and Moslems, sworn enemies since the partition of the subcontinent of India in 1947, called a truce until the Hindu Cadet and Moslem Cadet confronted each other in a football match. When this happened all hell was let loose in terms of tensions not infrequently articulated in physical violence and civil disturbance (1987: 57).

IV.4. NATION BUILDING: How To Choose The Right Symbols

The idea of a modern nation-state is one which, in its most totalizing form, sees the culture of a society, its political boundaries and apparatus, and its collective identity as reflective of one another, forming one imagined, homogeneous socio-cultural-political whole

(Anderson 1983; Gellner 1983). In conjunction with the construct of the nation-state, national identity - a sense of belonging to that whole - is both stimulated by and expressed through symbols (including flags, anthems, heroes) and secular rituals, such as remembrance day, independence day (Kertzer1986).

The social bond of "deep horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 1983) invoked by "the nation," is nationalism, the socio-psychological element or "ideology that produces and reproduces nations." More than just some sort of political rhetoric or occasional collective practices, however, the most common manifestations of nationalism, what Michael Billig (1995) calls 'banal nationalism," are embedded in consciousness through day-to-day activities, routine symbols and habits of language.

IV.4. 1. THE NATIONAL SYMBOLS

The Mauritian state has chosen carefully the symbols[28] to "imagine" the Mauritian identity. The symbols do not carry any particular ethnic marker and have to recall common experiences and invent as well a sense of belonging. As a young nation, which as I have demonstrated, does not have a shared past, Mauritius has to direct its national symbolism towards the future.

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[28] Symbols are distinguished by: Condensation (condensation refers to the way in which individual symbols represent and unify a rich diversity of meanings. The symbol can be verbal or iconic, that is, can manifest in a physical form such as a bible or a flag); Ambiguity (The symbol has no single precise meaning. For the same things mean, or one made to mean, different, things for different people); Multivocality (it is very close to the ambiguity concept, where the same symbol can be understood by different people in different ways. Kertzer (1988) suggests that this trait is especially important in the use of ritual to build political solidarity in absence of consensus. Manipulability Symbols are nearly always manipulated, consciously or unconsciously, in the struggle for, and maintenance of, power between individuals and groups.

This is evident not only in Mauritius but also in many other post-colonial states. What is Mauritius to use in creating of itself a nation? There has been competition and outstanding negotiation in choosing the national symbols; a paradigmatic example is the choice of national language. I will analyze this after having taken into account the state strategies in the 'selection' of the symbols and rituals and the counter-rituals (informal nationalism) that the "lay" people find more suitable as spaces of shared nationhood.

In order to avoid symbolic identification with any particular ethnic group,[29] Mauritian nation-builders have followed two strategies: they have chosen uncontroversial national symbols and have sought to depict the Mauritian nation as being identical to the "mosaic of cultures" that makes up the country (*pluriculturalisme mauricien*). Many of the "uncontroversial symbols" came from colonial times: historical persons, sites, and situations. The use of colonial symbols has never been hotly problematic. The island's independence was negotiated and never fought for. The political continuity throughout the colonial and the post-colonial period is often stressed in official accounts of Mauritian history. Sir Seewoosagur, the first Prime Minister of independent Mauritius had served also as First Minister in the last seven years of British rule. A way to build a national "feeling" is looking into the country's common past. In the case of Mauritius it is the colonial time.

Although differently experienced, colonialism has provided an indelible link between the people and the island. An example of the positive approach the Mauritian state has towards the colonial period is the display in front of the parliament of three statues one of

[29] Overtly ethnic strategies are seen as illegitimate in public discourse, and they must be presented as something different - usually either as nationalist strategies or as "minority rights movements."

the eighteenth century French governor Mahé de Labourdonnais, the second of the nineteenth-century British governor Sir William Newton, and the third of Queen Victoria. "Nobody would dream to remove them"(Eriksen 1993: 556). The national motto chosen for the new state is "The Star and the Key of the Indian Ocean" (*Stella et Clavicus Maris Indici*) hearkening back to the heritage of eighteen-century French imperialism. The national coat of arms depicted on bank notes, coins, postage stamps, and official publications consist of a key, a star, a ship, and a small cluster of palms. Until 1986 Queen Elizabeth I of Mauritius (Britain's Elizabeth II) was represented on all Mauritian currency. Since then, images of local politicians, in most case the first Prime Minister of independent Mauritius Sir Seewoosagur, have taken her place.

Other symbols utilize natural characteristic of the island such as animals and flowers. The national coat of arms is adorned with a deer and a dodo and the symbol of Mauritius is also a flower. The postage stamps mostly depict images of the natural characteristics of Mauritius. Another important symbol to create a nation is the flag. The Mauritian national flag consists of four horizontal stripes: red, blue, yellow, and green. Officially, the colors symbolize (from below) the crops of the land, the tropical sun, the ocean enclosing Mauritius, and the struggle of the people. A popular interpretation holds that starting from above the red stands for the *Parti Travailliste* (Hindu dominated), the blue for the PMSD (general population), the yellow for the Sino-Mauritians, and the green for the Muslims.

Like every nation-state, Mauritius has instituted annual public holidays celebrating the emergence of the nation. An important holiday is the emancipation Day, which is the day commemorating abolition of slavery. It was decided in the 1980s that this celebration should be supplemented by a public holiday - the same day - commemorating the arrival of the first

indentured laborers. The Creoles feel that they are being deprived from their own celebration, and from their point of view this stresses once more the overwhelming power of the Indian community. The name of the holiday has become *the abolition of slavery and the arrival of the first Indian indentured* laborers.

But perhaps the most important celebration for the emergence of national identity is the Independence Day, on March 12,th called republic celebration since 1992. The celebration, monitored by the state, consists of large-scale public events at sports stadiums and procession of uniformed musicians at the *Champ de Mars*. In addition the political parties also organize their supporting celebrations. A cultural show is orchestrated by the state to celebrate its multicultural body: Indian songs and dances, Chinese dragons, European songs and *segas* (the musical genre created by the slaves) are played in symbiosis. Media broadcast the event underlining its importance for the strength of the Mauritian national identity. According to Eriksen (1993), the nationalism orchestrated by the state through flags, public celebrations the use of the language of nationalism: flags, flowers and decorations has not been particularly appealing to the population who sees these rituals as empty. Attendance of the celebrations is poor and without patriotic overtones. "This is just another holiday" is the common feeling. Such symbols may be perceived as empty and sterile, as they do not resonate with the real-world experiences of citizens. This year in particular, the ceremony did not attract much support and although this was interpreted as a consequence of the tensions of the previous weeks (riots of February), it was ascribed also to the crisis of civic [civisme] -

what Machiavelli called "virtu civile" - that Mauritian society is experiencing.[30] Media and politicians asked for a reflection on the attachment of the citizens to the mother country (patrie) and on the sense of their independence.[31]

On the other side, Independence Day is a very important celebration among the Mauritians abroad. In fact nationalism becomes pervasively relevant in the diaspora.[32] Eriksen affirms that a Mauritian, living outside will begin to gather with other Mauritians through informal networking that transcend ethnic divisions and empower the sense of belonging to the same "place." In chapter V, I will analyze the Independence celebrations held by a Mauritian association in Toronto and my findings will diverge slightly from Eriksen.

IV.4. 2. TIME AND SPACE: Mauritians Find Their Own National Identity

The state has become a more and more contested space. As Appadurai notes, the "nation-state is a battle of imagination with "state and nation seeking to cannibalise each other"(1990: 304). Groups with ideas about nationhood seek to capture or co-opt state-power, and states simultaneously seek to capture and monopolize ideas about nationhood.

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[30] La cérémonie protocolaire du 31e anniversaire de l'indépendance du pays a été marquée hier par la modestie alors que certains estiment qu'une fête populaire aurait dû être organisée. La grande foule n'était pas au rendez-vous hier à Port-Louis. La sobriété aura marqué la cérémonie du lever de drapeau qui s'est déroulée hier à la place de l'Indépendance pour marquer le 31e anniversaire de l'Indépendance du pays et sa septième année d'accession au statut de République. (L'Express March 13 1999).

[31] Putnam (1995) highlights a recent decline of civic values within the United States taking as a symbol the decline of bowling leagues.. His thesis from "Bowling Alone" is that "the vibrancy of American civil society"--the magic variable--"has notably declined over the past several decades."

[32] In Europe, Mauritians are found notably in Paris, London and Strasbourg. Mauritians are as well numerous in Australia, Canada, and South Africa.

Certain aspect of nationalism, which are necessary for its mobilizing potential, originate elsewhere. It is through the roles of citizenship -informal as well formal - that civil society finds expression. The civil society is competing with the state in representing the nation state through different political symbols (Eriksen 1993, 1994; Kertzer 1986).

Civil society is not a static entity, a state of affairs that has been reached and is then established for good, but is fluid, shifting, conflictual, responsive to changes in politics and vulnerable to hostile pressures. The much-discussed relationship of state and civil society shows at least an interconnection between the two spheres. The state plays an important role in providing the necessary integrative framework within which civil society operates (Gramsci 1971). Outside the political arena, *Mauricianité* is an everyday construction that takes place in the civil arena, in the public sphere (Habermas 1989), - a communicative space in which democratic practices and values evolve. In Mauritius there are around 4119 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and only one-quarter of these are identified by ethnic and religious provenance (Miles 1999: 99). These associations with different goals and interests forge consent and contribute to the formation of *Mauricianité*.[33]

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[33] A conference was organized by the Mauritius Council for Social Service, on "Mauritianism in its daily construction." The participants underlined the urge to make the political class aware of the few steps taken towards the formation of a national identity. "Le symposium a été l'occasion pour les différents intervenants de rendre la classe politique responsable du peu de chemin parcouru par les Mauriciens vers une identité nationale propre, qui défierait toute tentative de mettre en avant des considérations ethniques." (L'Express December 7, 1997). In an official dinner of the association of Chinese Business Chamber (CBC), the president, Dr. Charles Yip Tong, affirmed. "We, Mauritians of Chinese origin, intend to continue to strive for a better tomorrow so that future generations, irrespective of their ethnic origin, can be proud of what Mauritius has achieved, proud of the fact that Mauritius stands out as a flagship and a model of social harmony and economic well-being in a multicultural, multireligious and multilingual community" L'Express April, 5 1999).

Caught between different, sometimes conflicting ideological orientations, Mauritians choose situationally between the universalistic ethics of nationalism and the particularist ethics of ethnicity. Nationalism in Mauritius does not come at the expense of ethnicity; rather common notions of *Mauricianité* are negotiated in ways that embrace all subcultures without demanding that they shed their own particular familial and private customs. As Jonathan Friedman suggests: "The constitution of identity is an elaborate and deadly serious game of mirrors. It is a complex temporal interaction of multiple practices of identification external and internal to a subject or population. In order to understand the constitutive process it is, thus necessary to situate the mirrors in space and their movement in time (Friedman 1992: 853).

IV.4. 2. a TIME

Looking at the mirror in time, there have been important national moments in the young history of the state that created a perception among the people of a common sense of belonging, with ethnicity glossed over. For an instant, the search for connections with distant and vague ancestral lands was no longer necessary for identity formation. The Mauritian homeland offered the chance to "feel" and not just "to be" Mauritian. The major strikes of the 1970s mobilized for the first time Muslims, Creoles and Hindus who joined forces against local and foreign capitalists. It was class conscious.

Another intense moment of sharedness was Ramogoolam's Funeral in 1985. All Mauritians were united around the founder of the Mauritian state. Seewosagur Ramgoolam was an important figure in the political life of Mauritius, and virtually everyone acknowledges him to be the founding father of the nation. He was a clever politician of Hindu origins, who

was able to reach compromises between the various groups within, Mauritius and was respected by all the different ethnic groups within the country. He succeeded in persuading the leader of the anti-independence bloc, Gaetan Duval, to join his first government.

Ramgoolam's funeral was a significant shared moment for the country. It forged *Mauricianité*. "The funeral defined Mauritianity as a quasi-religious, self-sustaining cultural system transcending the underlying mosaic of cultures" (Eriksen 1994:565). The people's participation was impressive. The ritual utilized many symbols in such a way to erase differences. His Hindu ancestry was present, but not too striking: He was cremated (orthodox Sanatanism); his son wore a white dress, the Indian representatives occupied a position much higher than the English and French among the foreign guests. The ceremony consisted in a long procession through the city. Churches rang their bells in approval of what was primarily a Hindu ceremony. The music for the ceremony was also strategically chosen from Chopin and Handel to avoid ethnic music (*sega*, Indian music, and show the "Occidentalism" of the Mauritian state. The Kreol language, a potential symbol of national unity, was used at the funeral only in combination with Hindi, English and French.

IV.4. 2. b SPACE

Mirrored in space, Mauritians find non-conventional common spaces of sharedness in religious,[34]communal feasts and sport events. Among communal feasts, *Diuali* plays an important role. *Diuali* is the annual Hindu "feast of lights" devoted to the goddess *Lakshmi*.

[34] There are three main religions: Hinduism (several denominations, altogether 52%), Roman Catholicism (30%) and Islam (largely Sunni, 17%). Buddhism is also professed by many Sino-Mauritians, who tend also to follow Catholicism.

If it initially represented only a particular ethnic segment of the population, *Divali* assumed national importance, attracting all Mauritians without distinction. The choreographic scenario is very appealing. In and around private homes and public places - no matter the ethnic group of belonging - there are lights and lit decorations. The omnipresence of lights presents an image of the authentic unity of civil society. Also in the *Hosay* annual celebration a Muslim celebration, the participation of Mauritians is impressive. It sounds strange to believe that the *Cavadee*, an annual Tamil celebration has great popularity, although Tamils are just 6% of the population.

Father Laval memorial day is another important celebration that transcends religious differences. Father Laval, affectionately known as "The Saint of Mauritius,"[35] was a missionary priest, who carried out his Ministry in Mauritius between 1841 and 1864. He helped the newly emancipated slaves, and it was thanks to his devotion and engagement that the transition from slavery to liberty went smoothly. For this reason the non-Christians also recognize him as a great Mauritian. Mauritians share the event, enjoy celebrating together, and often the religious meaning of the event becomes less important. All these festivals have in common the presence of a dominant esthetic dimension. Is the participation of the entire society in a specific ethnic/religious celebration a new syncretic religious practice or is it a form of cultural renegotiation, or religious pluralism?

In contrast to the national symbols and practices associated with the state, such as the flag and national anthem, *Divali* and other informally constituted cultural institutions have firm roots in the immediate experiences of people and can therefore more easily contribute to the production of shared meanings. The nationalist formal ideology fails in fact, to

resonate with experienced needs and aspirations of the population and its symbolism therefore lacks credibility and is ultimately impotent. A practical way to conceptualize national sentiments is at international sports events. Sports have frequently been invoked in Mauritius as legitimate focal points of ethnic unity. But since 1982,[36] as we discussed above, the state has encouraged non-ethnic and denominational sports. In 1985, Mauritius hosted for the first time an international sport event *Jeux des Villes de l'Ocean Indien*. The participation was spontaneous and huge. In this context many Mauritians experienced, transcending their ethnic boundaries, a national identity. Eriksen quotes a Mauritian schoolboy's essay, which stresses the importance of that event as a central moment of sharing a common sense of national identity. "Mauritius was born in 1968, but the miracle, which is Mauritianism, was born between August 24 and September 4" (1993: 557).

Historically, a sport that has shaped the Mauritian identity, is without doubt, horse racing: one of the most popular sports in Mauritius. Horse racing was the first public leisure, secular and free, opened to everyone without distinctions of race, class, and gender. People of Mauritius: English administrators, French colonies, slaves and coolies shared for the first time the same space: the racecourse. The British introduced horse racing - a very popular sport in Great Britain - in Mauritius in 1812, founding the Mauritius Turf Club. They thought it would help to ameliorate the relationship with the French population, which after the coming of the British isolated itself in its plantation. On the 25th June of the same year, the *Champ de Mars* racecourse (Port Louis) was inaugurated and, on that day the first organized race meeting took place in the history of Mauritius. Draper, a British army colonel,

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[35] He was beatified in 1978.

participated in the race with his horse "Anti-Racial" a symbolic name to demonstrate the openness of this kermesse. An annual three-day race tournament, which was held in August (the Great Week of August), soon, became a popular festival. People from all over the island gathered in the Champ de Mars. Indentured laborers were given particular permission to go to Port Louis to assist at least at the last race day on Saturday.[37] The atmosphere of Port Louis was characterized by much shopping and happenings such as picnics, games, e.g. "Mat de Coucagne." Nowadays, the most important race of the year, "la Maiden" is a civil holiday. Every year thousands of Mauritians assemble at the *Champ de Mars* and in "la plaîne" to watch the race. The entrance is free.

IV.4. 3. KREOL: A CONTESTED SYMBOL

An important confrontation on national symbols between the Mauritian people and the state came to surface with the introduction of Kreol as national language in 1982. After independence the state chose English as the national language. It was thought of as a good compromise to escape from ancestral languages that could have jeopardized some segments of the society.

When the MMM (*Mouvement Militant Mauricien*) won the election in 1982, they decreed Kreol the national language. Already in the late 1960s, however, there were attempts at breaking with the ethnic logic of Mauritian politics, when the MMM was formed by a group of young students and immediately became an important political force. The MMM, was the first truly national - in the meaning of supra-ethnic - force in post-independence Mauritian politics.

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[36] In 1982 the MMM came on power and banned any ethnic connotation both in the political and non-political arena.

[37] The Saturday race is still called "jour des Indiens" [day of Indians] because in this day they used to come en masse.

This new political party wanted to break the ethnic logic of Mauritian politics and wanted to replace communal struggle with class struggle. Mauritians studying in Europe in the late 1960 founded it.[38] And they were the first to imagine a Mauritian future beyond communal ethnic conflicts. Their nationalism depicted Mauritius as a unitary cultural system based on shared idiom (Kreol) and equal opportunities.

The ideological nature of the party attracted a number of various sectarian and ethnic groups including Hindu, Creoles, and Muslim movements. The new party, officially, launched in September 1969, had as its platform represention of the working class, and to that end they lobbied the trade union movements (Mannick 1989: 37). The early image - dominant in the 1970s Mauritius, can be described as *the proletarian nation*. Its impact was based in its appeal for social justice and solidarity between oppressed workers in different ethnic groups. From about 1970 they have used Kreol in their internal meetings, and press conferences. It has the objective to forge a national consciousness and to bridge the ethnic differences (anti-ethnicist movement). Moreover, it was also an attempt in seeking to create a Mauritian nation independent of the colonial heritage. Their main slogan is" *En sel lepep; en sel nasyon* (One single people, one single nation).

The reaction of the people to the introduction of Kreol as national language was very hostile. Although everyone spoke Kreol, they did not want to be officially-internationally labeled as Kreol speakers.

[38] The leader of the MMM, Paul Berenger was trained at University College, North Wales, Bangor and Paris. His use of Kreol was seen by many as an inverted snobbery. But it is to be noted that as yet, few of the MMM leaders married outside their own ethnic group.

Even working-class Creoles were against it because they felt they were being patronized when, say, the television weatherman spoke Kreol 'as if we didn't understand French" (Eriksen1990: 18). The fact of utilizing Kreol as national language was perceived as inferior and linked to the slaves, the first to speak Kreol in the island. The phenomenon of promoting Kreol as national language has to be inscribed in the larger scenario of the Indian Ocean area, where at the beginning of the 1980s a pan Indian-Ocean movement aimed to give to the Creole language a political status. The *Banzil Kreyol* [Creole Islands] movement was officially launched during a Creole week sponsored by the Seychelles[39] government. The *Banzil* experience led quickly to an understanding that the creole-speaking world was very complex and not uniform at all. On the local level, such as the case of Mauritius, language and ethnicity were too deeply entangled (Hookoomsing 1993). Mauritian government policy led by the MMM party had to be abandoned. Rather than unite the diverse population in a nation, the decision aroused latent conflicts and accentuated popular awareness of cultural differences. The unsuccessful attempt to introduce Kreol, as a national language in Mauritius is a reminder that neither national identity nor national languages can be created by decree.

IV.5. MAURITIAN EMIGRATION

Migration belongs to a sphere of studies that is both multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary. Marxism frames immigration, historically, in the emergence of global capitalism and in the sustained demand for an elastic supply of cheap labor. According to the

[39] In the Seychelles, Creole is the official language of the state.

neo-classic theories, migration is seen as a voluntary individual movement, which is based on demand-pull and supply-push factors. Usually the "push" factors are demographic, economic, social, or political pressures such as overpopulation, unemployment, changing in agrarian economies. On the opposite, "pull" factors are any opportunities which are any perceived opportunities such as economic benefits, education, higher living standards and political, religious and personal freedom (Kallen 1982: 21). The individual is given the choice between the advantages and disadvantages of staying in the area of origin or migrating. Yet this approach fails to take into consideration the role that the state system plays in the origins and control of international migration flows (Zolberg et al. 1986; Zolberg 1989). States must be willing to open their borders for exit and entry, and such openness is not simply a function of interest group politics or cost-benefit analysis.

Recent immigration theories have not only sought to understand the fundamental forces driving the process, but have also analyzed them in order to explore how migrants themselves create, across political borders, a microstructure of support through kinship, international networks and household strategies (e.g. Basch et al 1994; Nonini and Ong 1997). This microstructure of support modifies and, at times subverts the structural determinants. Migrants have learned, in fact, to use the "transnational spaces" as a way to get around national regulatory obstacles to their social mobility (Portes 1997).

So far I refer to immigration theories: but who are the im/migrants? Until the first half of the twentieth century, aristocrats, rich people, the bourgeoisie, educated professionals of all kinds, anyone who considered themselves as migrants, and even class-conscious merchants and traders would not have considered themselves as migrants. They traveled, visited or sojourned, sometimes in the service of science and discovery, sometimes merely for

adventure, sometimes out of boredom, and sometimes for profit. And if it suited them, they decided to settle down and make their home abroad. Among them, there were many eccentric and restless individuals. They were also refugees from persecution, tyranny, discrimination of one kind or the other. Many were also hiding from the law. But until recently, "they colonized or moved around and settled, but did not migrates as did the poor, the hungry, the desperate, the landless and the unemployed" (Sinn 1988:16-17).

Mauritian emigration has to be viewed in a larger scenario of international emigration that historians place at the beginning of the nineteenth and the mid-twentieth century. The destinations were Great Britain, France, Australia, Canada, and South Africa. The migration was motivated by a confluence of economical forces, political circumstances, national and individual histories. The industrialized countries and the colonial metropolis welcomed these immigrants as a source of cheap labor that placed a determining role in the economical growth of the industrial production in the 1950s till the 1970s. In the 1980s in order to cope with a socio-economical crisis new legislation was passed to reduce the access of immigrants.

Mauritian people, themselves a product of in/voluntary immigration started to emigrate numerously from the island at the end of the 1950s. Previously, going abroad was circumscribed to the Mauritian elite who went to study overseas, and to Mauritian young males who served in the British army. The Mauritian elite went to study abroad as early as the opening of the twentieth century. For their education, Franco-Mauritians chose France which was perceived as their "deuxième patrie", their second home country. After the First World War, a small Indian elite, owners of small sugar cane plantation, managed to send their sons to Great Britain in order to complete their education. Their aim was to achieve a position in the colonial administration back in Mauritius.

During the Second World War a large contingent of Mauritians enrolled in the British army overseas. This was the first time that lower class Mauritians confronted the world outside the island, seeing in it new possibilities (work, better style of life), as well as blatant racism. Serving in the army was the only possibility at that time to escape from misery. Lingayah (1987) affirms that apart from the experience of the Army, emigration was due more to misery and adventure than to patriotic links with the colonial mother country, Mauritians were trapped in the island through the submissive colonial mentality. Those Mauritians in the army, who decided to remain abroad and settle, represent the forefront of the emigration flow of the late 1950s.

IV.5. 1. THE 1950S-1960S: THE END OF THE BRITISH ERA.

Post Second World War Mauritius is characterized by a population explosion, which led to fears of overpopulation and unemployment: two recurrent and intertwined aspects of Mauritian history. Population soared after World War II largely because of the eradication of malaria and generally better health care. The population grew at over 3 percent per annum throughout most of the 1950s, and over 2 percent in the 1960s (Bowman 1991: 50). The overpopulation started to be part of the political discourse in 1958. The myth of overpopulation as Lehembre (1984) called it, led to the conviction that the constant growth of population would lead the island to misery and famine. An economy based totally on cash crops was endangered in those years also by the catastrophic effects of two terrible cyclones.

The spectrum of overpopulation was emphasized also by Franco-Mauritians: the sugar-cane oligarchy, who by stressing this aspect, thought to avoid any reform or economic revolution. In their mind it was better to claim that there were too many mouths to feed

than focus on the necessity of producing something to feed the population with. Behind the overpopulation fear there was the desire of many to contain the most numerous community: the Indians, who following independence, would become the leading political force.

The British discussed publicly the problems Mauritius were facing just once. A research group investigated the social and economic problems confronting Mauritius' mono-crop economy and wrote pessimistically about the options available for the small island to escape its Malthusian trap of high population growth and unemployment. The Meade Titmuss Reports, issued in early 1961, that resulted from the research, suggested that economical improvement, migration and birth control campaigns were the solution of the demographic revolution. In the Meade report it was underlined that "the impact emigration could make on the population problem - even in the most favorable circumstances - is no more than marginal" (1968: 5). Meade forecast that Mauritius would have a population of 3 million by the end of the century, if the fertility and mortality rates of the 1950s would have continued. Emigration to Great Britain was suggested yet only for "intelligent" and skilled people. Overall Britain as a place to emigrate was discouraged due to the difficulties of language and cold weather. In any case "the Government of Mauritius should continue to investigate all possible opportunities for emigration and we recommend that it should itself approach the governments of countries to which emigration might be possible, for instance Brazil and British Honduras" (ibid.: 5-6). Various attempts were made to find states willing to accept Mauritians. A project for emigration to British Guyana did not succeed because Afro-Caribbeans were scared that this immigration would, from the viewpoint of the receivers, add more strength to the Indian group supporting the Indian dominated People's Progressive Party lead by Chedi Jagan. An approach to the Australian state was made in 1959

to send people from Rodrigues (a small island off Mauritius, part of the Mauritian state). The Australian government declined the request because Rodriguens, as mixed African and European descendants e.g. not white, were not eligible.

IV.5. 2. THE PASSAGE TO INDEPENDENCE

The spectrum of unemployment, the fear of overpopulation, the vision of an uncertain future and the social tensions on the eve of the British departure produced at the end of the 1960s an emigration of 100,000 Mauritians (Cadervaloo 1998). Many Franco-Mauritians and middle-class coloreds left both out of fear that their economic privileges would have no future in an Indian-led Mauritian state. They strongly opposed Mauritius negotiation for independence. They believed that independence would lead to an exodus of the members of the white community and other enterprising individuals. In addition they expected that the rich and the businessmen would not invest and as a consequence the country would be exposed to economic dislocation. They were horrified at the idea that their offspring could sit in the school desk with Indians and mixed people. The push factors were significant, especially the uncertainties created by the coming of independence in March 1968. When opposition leaders created an element of fear among certain Mauritians regarding the indianization of the island, many skilled workers and experienced civil servants and businessmen and those with financial ability left the country for France, Australia, Canada, Great Britain while others went to the republic of South Africa (Mannick 1987: 10). After independence, the government of Mauritius worked hard toward a solution of unemployment trying to improve three different economic areas: establishing an export processing zone (*zone franche*), developing tourism and diversifying agriculture. It took several

years before the economy showed a positive trend. During the 1970s, emigration still remained the only solution. A minister of emigration was appointed. Numerous Mauritians left in 1979-1982 when the unemployment rate became unsustainable. Nowadays emigration is still present in the life of Mauritians. The reason to emigrate is not singular nor simply ascribed to economical need. The economy of Mauritius is so good that labor is imported from China. But emigration has to be framed in the complex dynamics that characterize transnationalism. In the next section I focus on the main destinations of Mauritian emigration. Canada will be separately analyzed in chapter V.

IV.5. 3. DESTINATIONS

IV.5. 3. a Great Britain

Great Britain, the colonial mother, was the first destination of Mauritian emigration. As British subjects, Mauritians had easier access to Great Britain at least till 1962 with the introduction of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act. In the late 1950s Britain experienced a recession. Economic depression brought out a search for scapegoats and racism started to flourish. The media in Mauritius did not make the population aware about the economic depression in Britain, but at the same time they urged Mauritians to emigrate before Britain would change its policy. In the 1960s, Mauritians who went to Great Britain were mainly young males with a good education and with no money. They fit into the lowest rank of the society doing jobs that no one wanted to do (Lingayah 1987; Mannick 1987). The nursing profession in Great Britain was an area which the English avoided in the 1960s, and

thousands of college leavers from Mauritius found nursing in this country to be a good opening for a career.

IV.5. 3. b South Africa

The uncertainty of the independence eve pushed many Franco-Mauritians and "sangs-mêlés" to emigrate to South Africa where since the last century a colony of Mauritians have already established profitable plantations of sugar cane in the sugar cane belt. The immigration policy was extremely strongly biased against color people. A certificate of pure European descent was required. This racist policy prevented a conspicuous migration to South Africa (Lehembre 1984: 147).

IV.5. 3. c Australia

Compared to South Africa, Australia showed a more open immigration policy. Entry was allowed to "mixed peoples" of the Commonwealth as long as they were Christians with a vague European descendant and a not too dark color of skin. Family immigration was encouraged. The Catholic Church in Mauritius played an important role as an intermediary for emigration to Australia; behind the Catholic Church there was the *Parti Mauricien*. Strongly opposing any birth control plan, the Catholic Church viewed in immigration the solution to the problem of overpopulation. The link with Australia was very old - it dated from the time when between 1820 and 1834, the Catholic Church in Australia was administered from Mauritius. Emigration to Australia was perceived divergently. Many non-Indian Mauritians saw emigration as a dramatic event, and as a sacrifice to avoid living in an

independent Mauritius; the Catholic Church gave a more optimistic view about Australia as a place of possibilities. The Catholic Office for Emigration organized English courses to better prepare the emigrants for their new environment. The peak of emigration was reached between 1967-69 but from 1972, it became harder as Australia adopted discriminatory measures toward emigration of colored people. Institutionalized racism was further reinforced with the election of P.M. Caldwell. Today, at least 25,000 Australians are either Mauritian-born or are of Mauritian descent (Duyker 1988).

IV.5. 3. d France

France has been a constant referent in the life and identity of Mauritians. France was not a fascination that affected just the educated elite who studied and were engaged in the French literary circle, but it was a phenomenon that was ingrained among ethnic groups of different classes. During the decolonization period many Mauritians turned their hope toward France. The most nostalgic or irrational hoped that Mauritius could become part of France, the more realistic hoped that at least France would have been more open than Great Britain in its immigration policy. In the first years of the 1960s, in order to start or better to avoid the decolonization of its territories, France offered citizenship to "*les amis de la France.*"[40]

[40] The law was voted in December 22 1961 and it was based on a previous one issued in 1945 "Cette mesure sera réservée aux amis de la France, ressortissants de territoires sur lesquels a flotté le drapeau français (Cameroun, Ile Maurice, Tunisie, Liban, Maroc" cit. in Lehembre 1984:164.

Many Mauritians were persuaded to receive the citizenship but this euphoria was quickly ended by a dispatch from the French embassy in which it was pointed out that naturalization was not a right but a favor that can be given or refused.

Emigration to France followed many paths: by the direct involvement of the two governments and by less regularized means that produced in France the widespread phenomenon of illegal immigrants. To get around the immigration rules, many Mauritians came to France as tourists remaining there with illegal status. In Mauritius "the tourism to France" flourished with the charter flights, which brought Mauritian "tourists" to France with just one way tickets. Following many cases in France and Italy of Mauritian "clandestins," the Mauritian government had to pose an end to this indiscriminate mushrooming of charter flights and legislate on the matter. Another kind of emigration to France was the "wedding emigration." Research conducted by Perrot-Martyne (1986), it showed that between 1968 and 1981, more than 700 women emigrated from the island of Mauritius to France as mail-order brides to marry French farmers aged 40-50.

IV.5. 3. e Arab Countries

At the beginning of the 1980s, an increasing number of Mauritians went to the Gulf countries, many of them were Muslim Mauritians. When the job contract expired, they moved to other destinations. Some problems arose over terms of service of these Mauritians. One ongoing concern was the treatment of young Muslim girls who took household jobs in Saudi Arabia (Bowman 1987: 152).

CHAPTER V. FIELDWORK

I started to conduct my fieldwork in March 1998 mainly in Toronto with few visits to Montreal. After sporadic contacts, I realized that most Mauritians, because of the tiny population, knew each other and that continuous links between Montreal and Toronto were held. I contacted a student association in Montreal and one association in Toronto. All of my informants came to Canada in the last ten to fifteen years. I did not have the chance to meet any Mauritian arrived previously. Most of the students I contacted plan to return to Mauritius after gaining a degree in the university; others are thinking of finding a job here and postponing their return. The knowledge of both English and French - Canada's official languages, offers them a good possibility to find a job. Most of the students I interviewed are doing their BA in computer science.

Starting the fieldwork in Toronto was very difficult, as it was hard to map out a community in this huge metropolis. Lately, after occasionally meetings with few Mauritians I realized that in Toronto there was no such thing as a community and many Mauritians were not aware of the presence of others. I managed to get in touch with an association and a submerged Mauritian community came to the surface. It was striking for me to discover that the majority of the Mauritians I had access to, were of Chinese origin. This ethnic group in Mauritius constitutes just 3% of the population and despite the small number they are economically strong.

V.1. LITERATURE ON MAURITIANS IN CANADA

I can affirm that a literature on Mauritians in Canada does not exist at all. There are some references to Mauritians in relation to Indian-Mauritians and Sino-Mauritians. In the social history of South Asians in Canada, Buchignani et al (1985) assemble South Asian Mauritians (e.g., Indian and Muslim Mauritian) with South Asian Fijians and Caribbeans because of the similar experiences they shared, such as indentured labor and British rule. However, in comparison with them, Mauritians have some unique characteristics: the French language and culture that have been maintained throughout British colonialism and the historical context that brought the Indian component to be the majority. Mauritius is the only place where after independence the Indian group had the political power. Moreover, the postcolonial transition in Mauritius did not cause any major ethnic riots. South Asian Mauritians are less numerous than South Asian Fijians and Caribbeans in Canada. Buchignani explains that it is probably due to a synergy of factors, among which their political and numerical power plays an important role. South Asian Mauritians in fact, in 1985, did not exceed 3,000 individuals. Johnston (1984) and (Kanungo 1984) in exploring the geographical origin of East Indians in Canada refer also to Mauritius, without adding any further information. In a study on the Chinese community in Montreal, Sino-Mauritians have been briefly mentioned in some census data (Chan 1991).

The work of Ellen Oxfeld (1993) has added to my understanding of the Hakka dimension in the Mauritian community. The book analyzes the Hakka Calcutta community in India and its transnational contacts with the people who emigrated to Toronto. A literature about Mauritians as a whole, not divided along ethnic/religious lines exists in Great

Britain. Some sociological work has been done in the city of London (Mannick, 1987-Lingayah, 1987).

V.2. HISTORY OF MIGRATION

Regarding the Mauritians in Canada not many statistical data are available. From the census 1996 it can be noticed that the current population of Mauritians in Canada (not counting international students) is 6, 395: quite well divided between males and females (see appendix). Although the first Mauritians arrived in Canada in the 1950s, it was not until the 1970s that the immigration became significant. The immigration is mainly characterized by young people coming from urban areas and with a high level of education. They immigrate as independent or through family reunification. Many Mauritian workers, especially women, have jobs in the administrative sector, thanks to their bilingual status. Most of the Mauritians, according to Rey[41] (1997) are from Port Louis, the capital. However, in my sample just a few come from this city.

Between 1974-1976, immigrants include young people coming from urban areas and with high level of education. They immigrated mainly as independents and there are cases of sponsored immigration and family reunification. Almost one third of workers was absorbed in the administrative sector with a predominant female presence. High-skilled workers were mainly hired in health care, mathematical and technical fields and as administrators and managers. Others worked in manufacturing, assembling, in sales and services.

The period 1980-1986 is characterized by an increased number of immigrants admitted in the frame of family reunification and a slight increase of a number of immigrants who

were entering for the first time into the job market. 1987-1991 marks an increase of immigrants in relation to the previous periods. More immigrants with professional qualifications also arrived.

Ethnically, Mauritian immigrant population in Canada is very diversified: Chinese, Indians, Muslims, and Creoles (Rey 1997). However, my experience with Mauritians in Canada has been confined primarily to the Sino-Mauritian community. Mauritians live mainly in Montreal, Ottawa and Toronto. In the last few years, due probably to the political and economical instability of Quebec, an increasing number of Mauritians from Montreal has moved to Toronto. Montreal is the seat of the oldest Mauritian community. It was chosen for the French environment and also for the bilateral agreements between Mauritius and Quebec as members of French speaking countries. In the Montreal area, Mauritians are mainly concentrated in Montreal and in the suburb of Brossard. Within the city, the major concentration neighborhoods are Côte des Neiges and Notre Dame de la Grâce. In Montreal there are several active associations, which underscore a common Mauritian identity or a particular sector of the Mauritian society such as for example a Hindu Mauritian association. They are however all connected in an umbrella of associations. At the university level, two associations are active at McGill and Concordia which give a first help to new students just arrived from Mauritius offering a friendly environment. "It is very hard for the young students to suddenly be independent and on their own in a huge city like Montreal sometimes, we refer to it as the 'Overshadowing grasp of Culture Shock'" the president of the Mauritian association at Concordia explained. It is interesting to notice that Mauritian students prefer being enrolled in English universities, even though French is the language

[41] Rey analyzes the census 1991 and draws a picture of the Mauritian community in Quebec.

they are more fluent in. One reason for this choice could be that education in Mauritius is based on the British system. Moreover, a degree from an English speaking university plays an important role in the job search. Montreal is also the seat of an honorary Mauritian consulate held by a businessman from Quebec, who organizes job fairs for Mauritian students. In Ottawa there is also a Mauritian population, this city in fact is preferred by many for its "real bilingual" atmosphere and for the governmental jobs that require the knowledge of French and English.

In Toronto the Mauritian population is growing and the nature of the city makes hard at this stage to map easily a community. The population is scattered and besides those who live in downtown but without relevant concentration in any particular neighborhood, there are many who live in Scarborough, Markham, Richmond Hill and Mississagua. A Report of the Toronto French Committee (1996) found that 788 Mauritians live in the Greater Toronto contra 198 who live in downtown (ibid.: 70).

V.3. IDENTITIES UNDER REVISION?

Mauritians who left the island brought with them the complex interplay of communalist and national identities further complicated abroad by the imposed racialized identities of being categorized as Chinese, Indian, African, Black. These different identities however are continuously integrated in manners, which depend on the individual and on the circumstances. Mauritian identity/ies are in fact relational. They appear in response to situations and compromise several possible responses. Stuart Hall (1989) highlights the importance of narrative in the construction of identities. He describes two forms of identity.

The first is fixed and closed, often expressed through racialized myths of origin. The second form of identity is more open, constructed through differences, where identities do not exist, but are formed in the prospect of the future through positioning in the narratives of the past. The tension between the closed and the open form of identity is the constant component in the everyday life of the transmigrant.

Sam, a twenty-two year old student in engineering in Montreal, affirms that he introduces himself as Mauritian. When he goes out with a bunch of Chinese-Mauritians and they speak Kreol, people gaze at them, wondering what kind of language is that: is it Hindi? Is it Chinese? What kind of people are they? People are even more puzzled when they notice their phenotypic characters. Because people's scarce knowledge about Mauritius, Sam is "classified" as Indian, as colored: shifting from black to brown. "I am Mauritian. I am Indian. I am Hindu. I am African as well. When I look at the mirror I see in front of me just a tall man." Sam laughs of this constant need of labeling people, things and emotions. He overcomes his identity crisis by means of emphasizing the performative aspect of his social self (Butler 1990). "I am as you wish me to be and I can be also the opposite."

A performative approach to identities pays attention to the ways to which people portray their identities. In other words, it looks at social enactments. This includes not only what are traditionally thought of as performances" (e.g., theater, music), but also more quotidian portrayals of situationally appropriate behavior (e.g., rituals, manners, social roles). It focuses on how, at an everyday level, people's actions - relating to others and to themselves - determine who they become. Rather than "natural" embodiment, it is "performance that matters–pacing, economies, juxtapositions, aggregations of tone, the

whole conduct of the shaping presence"(Poirier 1971: 86-87). A person is not incidental to his or her own identities; instead, he or she is actively engaged in constantly portraying them.

Patterson (1975), following a Marxist approach, underlines the utilitarian component of ethnic identification, which besides being multiple, it is situationally framed. Ethnic identity changes by changing social context in which the individual lives:

> In Puerto Rico a black person might belong to the black ethnic group of that society, whereas in New York he belongs tot he Puerto Rican ethnic group. Furthermore, there are cases of highly Americanized black Puerto Ricans who consciously choose and manipulate different ethnic identities to serve their own interests. In certain contexts (for example, running for local office or applying for a job in which Affirmative Action has created a black bias) he will emphasize his blackness. In other contexts (for example, personal relations with whites) he may choose to mute the impact of his dark skin by emphasizing his Latin background, especially his Spanish accent (ibid.1975: 307-308).

In a study of Caribbean youth in Toronto, Yon (1995) points out: "One can be West Indian in a variety of different ways and with a variety of other identities simultaneously. The differences that are asserted are not necessarily in opposition to but rather within cultural identity"(485-486). The color "barrier," the loss of identity are the significant aspect of the "rite of passage" of many migrants who are exposed to the racism of the colonial metropolis (Fanon 1967). It was an evening afternoon, late summer in Montreal. I was sitting with four Mauritian students at the table, one of them just freshly arrived from Mauritius. It was our first meeting. In the discussion I asked if they had ever experienced any kind of racism in Canada. They said "no." Their answer was fast and short. There was a sudden silence. Veronique- the only woman of the group started to talk:

> *One day I was walking on the street in an upper class neighborhood of Montreal, when one fifty-year old man coming in my direction, gazed at me and yelled "Rentre dans ton pays Chinoise, rentre en Chine." He had a very strong Quebecois accent. I felt petrified. I could not understand: China is not*

my country. It was my first time that I realized that people could see me as a person from China. The anger, the fear made me speechless.

Mario intervened: "If I were you, I would have answered back. He had no right to treat you in that way and you should have said something." Besides this episode, the discussion around racism did not go any further. The difficulties in talking about racism were partially due to the fact that this was the first time we met. Moreover this sensitive topic involves a lot of self-consciousness and capabilities to interpret many distanced and 'minor' events which lie in various corners of the subconscious. It seemed to me that there was a certain reserve in admitting that there is racism in Canada as if this would somehow damage the image of multicultural Canada. It took a long time for a Mauritian in Australia to express his immigration experience in these terms:

I emigrated to Australia in my late teens in the early '70's with my mother and sister. I experienced a loss of identity at first because I was not recognized as a Mauritian. I could have been any nationality of the darker kind. I was only nineteen. I was alone. All my school friends were in Mauritius but one who was not really a close friend became in this situation close friend I suppose through sheer necessity to be with somebody who felt like I felt. The mind refused to adapt at first the homesickness. The difficulty with language, the alien environment dare I say a nagging feeling of inferiority complex.

Generally Mauritians abroad define themselves as Mauritians without adding any further labels such as Indian, Muslim, Franco, Chinese. This trend is also confirmed in my fieldwork. All my informants, at least when I first met them used the term Mauritian to introduce themselves. One possible reason is that they want to promote to the outside the 'nationalist', image of Mauritius: multicultural and supra-ethnic. Another possible reason is

that often Mauritians who identify with their ancestral land have been interrogated by the people coming from that land. The link to the ancestral country belongs more to the mythical sphere of emotion and nostalgia than to practice. Many Mauritians who "returned" to visit their ancestral places were not recognized as Indians, or Chinese but as Mauritians. Dinan (1986) remarked that because of their original status of "being immigrants," Mauritians have cultivated to a high degree the feeling of belonging somewhere else than Mauritius. But when abroad they are not recognized by the ancestral people and they turn to Mauritius as their place of belonging: the only place which gives them a real sense of identity. In looking at the South Asians in Great Britain, Anwar (1998) grasps the fact that most Asians coming from the Indian subcontinent do not have a functional contact with other groups, such as Indo-Caribbean and by extension Indo-Fijians and Indo-Mauritians, except for some young people who participate in general British Asian youth culture.

Sam is Hindu and everyone recognizes him as 'colored' Indian, but when other Hindus see that he does not behave like them and he does not speak or worship in the "orthodox way," he is immediately isolated. This is the reason why he identifies himself as Mauritian more than as a Hindu. Similar patterns are encountered by Sino Mauritians who feel rejected by the "Chinese community as a whole," because of their lack of knowledge of Chinese, even if in many cases this is overcome on the ground with the formation of Chinese subgroups linked for example, to religion (Catholic Chinese community). Anne-Marie, for example, a fifty-year old Sino-Mauritian personally feels more comfortable with other Mauritians. She has no contacts with the Chinese community in Toronto. From her fieldwork in Toronto, Oxfeld (1993: 253) finds that the same kind of strangeness to the Cantonese majority was expressed by the Hakka Calcutta residents in Toronto. Among the

Hakka Calcutta people she interviewed, no one worked in a "Chinese" owned company or was connected with business around Chinatown.

Muslim Mauritians emphasize their link to the Muslim world: religion plays an important community role. In the Canadian context, it has drawn them to associations with other Muslims, in particular with Pakistanis with whom they share the same ancestors. The relation with Pakistanis however, is not always smooth and it brings to the surface strong cultural differences (see case studies: Murad), as well as affinities.

In the kaleidoscopic images of identities that turn around *Mauricianité* - being Mauritian, the African image does not play a secondary role. Although the island is a spot in the Indian Ocean, nonetheless it is officially part of the African continent. After independence, Mauritius has joined the Organization of African Unity and has remained active in that regional organization (Bowman 1991: 151). The World Bank and other international organizations list Mauritius as an African country. But what about the people? Do Mauritians identify themselves as belonging to Africa? When they live abroad, what kind of connection do they form with other groups? My fieldwork shows that Mauritians have a good understanding of belonging at least geographically to Africa. In the context of getting together with other people from Africa, some Mauritian students at York University, Toronto not having yet found an autonomous association, are active members of the Association of African students. It is interesting to point out however that none of them are of African or Malagasy descent.

Informal relations occur in school and the work place with other French-speaking people, from Africa or outside. Many informants found more desire to strengthen ties within their own ethnic/religious community than with other Mauritians once in Canada. Social

relations around kin and family play a paramount role among the Mauritians abroad. Others are more interested in creating linkages with the wider Canadian society. However one aspect does not preclude the other. Friendships become a matter of individual choice. The description of migrants' friends ethnic background is obviously quite subjective and related to individuals' owns background. Thus, it is not easy to draw a typology of the people most likely to be identified as friends by Mauritian migrants. A common point is that all my informants have friends outside the Mauritian community. In the following, I emphasize a few themes that emerged from my interviews. They are not thought to be exhaustive or to represent the whole Mauritian community in Toronto and Montreal. An Indian Mauritian in his early thirties affirms:

> *My friends. I wish I would have Mauritian friends. Besides my family I did not know any Mauritians at all. When I started to go to high school in Toronto I felt terribly lonely. I got closer to other Indian and black students from the Caribbeans. Our friendship probably arose from our affinities of being black and being marginalized and coming from islands.*

Another interviewee, Bruno (see case studies) makes a distinction between friends and acquaintances:

> *Probably, I am too old to make new friends in Canada. I consider my best friend my brother in law. We grow up in the same neighborhood in Port Louis; he is Chinese like me. He helped me a lot when I moved with my family to Canada. I have many acquaintances here, Mauritians and Canadians, but they are not friends. A friend is someone that is there unconditionally, an acquaintance is someone to share some time with, but if you need he is not always there.*

For a forty-year old very elegant Sino-Mauritian woman her friendships turn around the French language:

If you want a list of my friends' provenience, it would cover the entire world. I have a lot of white friends. My best friend is from France. For me it is important to talk with someone that understands you, I mean it is important for me to talk in my language.

When I asked what she meant for white friends, she said Europeans. Another interviewee, Murad (see case studies) a Muslim Mauritian, utilizes "Canadian" to mean white and anglophone:

I do not hang out with Canadians, among my friends there are some Pakistani, a Senegalese and one from Congo. We play soccer on Sundays with other Africans, mainly from Congo. I feel more comfortable with people with whom I can be myself, people to whom there is not need to explain why I do not eat during the day [he refers to Ramadan], or where I come from.

In these examples it comes out that friendships arise around a few themes: the shared experiences of marginalization (school); the same provenience, in macro terms, the same continent; the same religion (for example Islam); and the same language (French).

V.4. MONTREAL - TORONTO: IS THERE A COMMUNITY?

Is it possible to speak of a Mauritian community in Montreal, in Toronto? If on the island existed and still exists despite the wide invasion of outside influences what Tönnies defines Gemeinschaft "the general character of living together," or to put in one word community (Tönnies 1957: 42), an overseas community is much harder to build. In the early 1960s when the first Mauritian came to Great Britain, the exposure to the same difficulties and the shareness of similar expectations, which were to do well and return home, forged a sense of community that lasted for the short period of "adaptiveness." The liminal space, the communitas (Turner 1969) finished in the moment when Mauritian emigrants moved in

different areas of Great Britain, changing strategies of adaptation and changing goals as well (Lingayah 1987: 97).

In the case of Canada, the nature of its territory and the relative small numbers of Mauritians make it difficult to build a community in Tönnies' sense. The term community however is still useful to mean a contact at least symbolic with a group of people with whom you share something, "a sense of belonging to," in this case to Mauritius. This sense of belonging has to be expressed through social interaction of some kind that in the best situations produce civil society. Montreal and Toronto are two different realities as far as the Mauritan communities regard, they are however very well connected to each other through kin and social networks. Usually Mauritians have some relatives and friends that live in the other city. Many Mauritians went first to Montreal and then moved to Toronto in search of work. If we can speak about Mauritians in Montreal as a community linked through a web of various associations, the same is not easily applicable to Toronto. Mauritians in Toronto rely on informal and kin networks, they have few poles of aggregation gravitating around the Francophone world. Associations as a place to gather and where the civil society can be expressed are still hard to take a structured and institutionalized shape. So far there is one openly Mauritian association in Toronto (Club Mauritius), but speaking with my informants - especially those who are not Sino-Mauritians - there is a strong need and will to create other Mauritian spaces to better express the multifaceted ways of being Mauritians. Newcomers to Toronto still need to know the city better and many are not even aware of the fact that in Toronto there are other people from Mauritius.

V.5. ASSOCIATION: CLUB MAURITIUS

The Mauritian association that I contacted (so far the only one that I am aware of in Toronto)[42] is a non-profit social, cultural and sports association. It "*aims at enhancing the Mauritian cultural heritage, fostering unity and friendship among Mauritians in Toronto and contributing to the development of a Mauritian community.*" It is composed entirely of Sino-Mauritians. The association was founded in 1987 by a group of Mauritian friends, mainly students who used to gather on Fridays to play some sport. The need to construct a space where Mauritians could meet was so strong that soon social activities were organized to give the possibility to Mauritians to stay together and socialize. The first Mauritians who joined the initiative were friends and relatives. The activities of the group were co-ordinated by a small group of dedicated volunteers but soon it became too big to be run solely by a group of volunteers. It became apparent that the group should re-evaluate its objectives and organizational structure. Out of this reflection an Executive Committee was formed.

In 1990 the association was officially registered in the Province of Ontario and it is incorporated under the Francophone associations (*associations francophones*). So far it has not a permanent office.

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[42] While writing my thesis I just found on the internet a Christian Mauritian association which is based in Toronto and Brossard, suburb of Montreal. It presents itself as "a group of Mauritians who share in a common belief that Jesus Christ is our personal Lord and Savor". From the pictures which appear on the web site, it seems to be composed mainly of Sino-Mauritians.- It would be interesting to discover the connection with the other associations and as well understanding what kind of Christian denomination it is. Their statement is: "To know God and to build each other in love, for the purpose of bringing others, especially Mauritians, to Jesus Christ, both locally and globally."

During the year spaces are rented from public schools, usually Catholic schools in Scarborough and for the social gatherings halls or restaurants are contacted. The activities take place mainly on Fridays and Sundays. Sunday especially is the day when recreational activities (basketball, volleyball, and badminton) are combined with social activities aimed in particular to children and family. "There is a need to teach to the children about their origins and to instill in them the love of our motherland" one committee member told me. For this reason French classes are held on Sundays. Mauritians feel that Toronto does not offer much to the French speaking people and for this reason they felt the need of these classes. Interesting to note is that they give more importance to French as part of their Mauritian identity than to Chinese languages as part of their ancestral identity.

The association organizes during the year some social gatherings in occasion of Christmas, the New Year Eve, the Chinese New Year and Independence Day Celebration. This year there was also a Dinner for Valentine's day. Mauritians are used to celebrate religious and cultural festivities that transcend their ethnic and religion belonging. In this case, Mauritians in the association are Chinese and the majority of them are Catholic. Social events are important for bringing a little bit of Mauritius in Toronto and especially to let the children know what being Mauritian means. In asking what it means being Mauritian, I was answered "it is the typical food, it is the Kreol and the island party spirit." The association keeps contact with its members through a Newsletter, which is sent by mail and lately also, published on the net. The Newsletter contains all information about the upcoming activities and offers some insights about Mauritius (Mauritian jokes) and about Chinese tradition. In particular a short history of the Hakka people extracted from the Encyclopedia Britannica was published. However, no personal reference was made and it was not even mentioned

that the Sino-Mauritians are Hakka. This shows that the Newsletter is thought of as only for Mauritians of Chinese background. Hakka identity will be taken into consideration in the next section. The association is making the effort to keep contacts with other associations in Montreal. There is an annual Inter-City Tournament one year held in Toronto the other in Montreal where in the frame of sport activities family and friend connections are fostered. The association is trying to map out the Mauritians who live in Southern Ontario in order to have an idea about the real number and make them part of the activities of the club.

In asking why the association is composed only of Sino-Mauritians I received different answers. "We are the majority" "This association is opened to everyone" "We do not represent the whole [Mauritian composition]." Why don't other Mauritians in Toronto join this association? This question puzzles me. Even within the same group of Sino-Mauritians there are many who marginalize themselves or are marginalized. A young informant told me that she does not want to participate in any Sino-Mauritian gatherings, as she would feel under scrutiny because of her 'snob attitude' in preferring to hang out with white men.

A Sino Mauritian who married an Anglo-Canadian man in the 1970s said at that time intermarriage meant being isolated from her community in Mauritius. In Canada she experienced the same kind of 'rejection' among the Sino-Mauritians. "It is hard to be accepted in a society so traditionalist and patriarchist" she commented with anger. "Coming out" marked, for a young gay man, the exclusion from the Sino-Mauritian community. Other Mauritians of different ethnic background such as Indian Mauritians, Tamil Mauritians, Muslim Mauritians, do not want to be involved in this association as it is not perceived as true Mauritian. "I do not feel very comfortable with Sino-Mauritian they are a close group they have a different kind of food." This was the comment of an Indian Mauritian young

woman. Mauritians who arrived in Toronto in the last couple of years are not all aware that a Mauritian association exists. Nevertheless Mauritians even if they not congregate into the same association, traverse common spaces where the *Francophonie* finds its expression.

V.6. MAPPING A FRANCOPHONE SPACE

If for the Mauritians in Montreal there is no need to find a Francophone space[43] - my fieldwork in particular showed that many Mauritian students choose anglophone universities - for those in Toronto, the need to find a French environment is almost a priority. It was hard for me to find a Mauritian community in Toronto, so I started to map few common spaces where Mauritians gravitate more or less directly. These spaces belong to the broadest Francophone community. According to census Canada, 50,000 people in Toronto choose French as first language. To this number however around other 50,000 have to be added.

The Francophone community in Toronto is not merely composed by Franco-Ontarians but is quite multicultural. The multicultural aspect creates the exigency of equal representativeness[44] and arises in some occasions frictions.[45] The organ that represents the

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[43] It would be interesting however to analyze how Mauritians in Montreal position themeselves in relation of the Quebec quest of independence. This realm transcends the objectives of my thesis and it is also important to keep in mind that the Mauritian informants in Montreal were students and most of them newcomers to Canada.

[44] In last year's forum held by ACFO-CUT Association Canadienne Francaise de l'Ontario-communite urbaine de Toronto (28 February) emerged the necessity to represent equally all the various components of the multicultural francophone community. The ACFO-CUT in that occasion recognized the multicultural groups as its partners emphasizing that despite differences, they are united by the language they share.. "Ce qui nous unit, c'est la langue, travaillons ensemble en ne perdant pas cela de vue" (L'Express 1998 mars).

different French speaking associations in Toronto is the ACFO - CUT (Association Canadienne Française de l'Ontario- Communauté Urbaine de Toronto). The Association canadienne-française de l'Ontario (ACFO) is recognized as the principal organization representing French-Canadians in Ontario. Governments deal mainly with ACFO in all matters pertaining to Ontario's Francophone community, the largest francophone community in Canada outside Quebec. (Laporte 1991). The ACFO is opened to the whole Francophonie regardless the provenience of the people *"ACFO s'addresse à tous les francophones: qu'on vienne de Longlac, de Moncton, de Paris ou de Dakar, on a tous en commun le fait d'être de nouveaux arrivants à Toronto."* Club Mauritius belongs to the ACFO-CUT under the name of Regroupement de Mauriciens de Toronto.[46]

The Glendon Campus, the bilingual institution of York University is a space where many Mauritians converge. There are Mauritian students, who want to take the advantage of an English education in a French environment, there are Mauritians who thanks to their perfect knowledge of French and English work inside the university, mainly in the administration. Glendon is somehow the cultural core of the Francophone community of Toronto. Here the Semaine *Internationale de la Francophonie* is held annually and many seminaries are organized on various aspects of the Canadian "Francophonie". In August 1998 the Seminaire d' été sur la francophonie canadienne [Summer seminar on the French speaking Canada] took place at Glendon. In the course of the seminar, issues of how to

[45] Some concerns were expressed from the components of the multicultural Fancophonie in relation to the overrepresentation of Franco-Ontarians, like for examples in the college "des Grand Lacs" the majority of the teachers are Franco-Ontarians and the students are 80% Africans.

constitute a true multicultural French speaking community were considered. At the discussion there were invited four representatives: French man, a Quebecois, a woman from Maghreb and another woman from Mauritius (L'Express 11-17 août [1998). This year at Glendon was also organized the party for the fourteenth of July celebration with the French consulate.

The weekly "l'Express" offers a voice to the Francophone community in Toronto. It was found in 1976 and in its first issue was pointed out its multicultural character was pointed out:

> *"Journal canadien d'informations politiques et culturelles pour les francophones de toutes origines."*
>
> [Canadian weekly of political and cultural information for the French speakers of all origins].

Besides an international and national section, the weekly offers insights into the different dimensions of the French Toronto. In looking at the last two year's issues, in particular in the month of March, I did not find any mentions of Mauritian celebrations of its Independence Day - 1998 was the thirtieth anniversary of Independence - or any other activities organized by the association. Very often there are articles or announcements of meeting of other 'multicultural'[47] associations such as the Congo association, the Association of Cameroon or the Pan-Africa center.

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[46] The francophone associations linked to ACFO are among others: Association multiculturelle francophone de l'Ontario Association Canadienne des Francophones de l'Afrique, Dialogue Canada, Alliance Haïtienne.

[47] Multicultural in the way it is used in the weekly "L'Express" or in the discourses of ACFO-UC means not Franco-Ontarian.

The program "Pot-Pourri" broadcast from the radio of University of Toronto by a Mauritian, is "the weekly event" for Mauritians who on Sunday morning listen to the music, the events and the news from the French speaking world. Eric Cader started the program in 1988 offering different types of music expression, with a particular emphasis to "la musique d'exil." There was an urge to give a voice to the French speaking community in the city. Cader often underlines how Toronto is still too much anglophone. The program is broadcast in collaboration with Radio France International, Department of French Studies of University of Toronto and the Alliance Française. Pot-Pourri has the format of a showcase of news, music and guests aiming to give to the multicultural francophone community of Toronto a meeting point. The impression you have in listening to the program is finding yourself faraway from Canada. Quebec is not much an issue. This is in fact the voice of the multicultural Francophonie. Eric Cader explores Torontonian French "subculture" providing information to the scattered French speaking population. Eric Cader mentions often l'*Île Maurice* and explores as well the "musique créole" from other islands. The program is about music but also politics, rights, culture. Many informants mentioned to me this program as a small Mauritian space in Toronto.

V.7. THE CHINESE DIMENSION

In a work place where French is required a Mauritian woman I interviewed said laughing "Mauritius is very multiethnic but here we are seven Mauritians, all Chinese!" The Chinese background opened new questions in my research showing the multilayered identities embedded in the concept of *Mauricianité*. Chinese Mauritians are mostly Hakka people, a group of Chinese whose language and traditions differ from both Cantonese and

Mandarin. Hakka means guest people[48]and this status has created over time a complex of inferiority/exclusion in relation to other hegemonic Chinese groups. Unlike other Chinese, such as Cantonese, Chaozhou and Shangaineses, whose identities and languages correspond to the name of their place of origin, the Hakka, whose place of origin is a topic of debate, generally accept the label Hakka (Constable 1996).

We should notice that there is a worldwide Hakka resurgence movement at a moment when their identity is endangered, as Hakka language isn't spoken anymore by the new generations. In the 1990s overseas Chinese explore his ancestral roots, an exploration made possible by renewed political relations between China and southeast Asia, by advances in communications technology, and by Hakka revival movement of greater China. The resurgence movement is both on the level of people spread all over the world and in the academia. In the last couple of years many conferences on Hakkaology have been held.[49] Sino-Mauritians, although only the elders still speak Hakka, are aware of their Hakka origin and they are proud of stressing the traditional freedom of Hakka women. They describe themselves as poor and hardworking farmers. This image relates more to the perceptions that they have of themselves as Hakka, and their past, than to present reality. "Hakka women have never had bound feet and worked very hard in the fields with the men". In contrast to the stereotype of Chinese women as delicate and frail, the reputation of Hakka women was

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[48] The name Hakka is a Cantonese pronunciation of the Mandarin word k'o-chia ("guest people").

[49] The first International Conference on Hakkaology was held in Hong Kong at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, September 24-26, 1992. The third International Conference on Hakkaology was held in November, 1996 in Singapore. It seems that there is as well once per year a world-wide Hakka meeting and in the 13th meeting a Mauritian delegate participated. This information was given to me by an informant but I was not able to find any further proof.

one of exceptional strength, both mental and physical – they were known to be sure-footed, hardworking and proud.

It seems that Sino-Mauritians start to be interested in this revalorization of Hakka culture. They watch carefully the discussion about Hakka identities through the Hakka Global Network.[50] The HGN is a community literally embedded in a transnational network, with its own diasporic cultural forms (Clifford 1994) that are used by activists to promote Hakka identity.[51] I explored the HGN few times and it happened to find few discussions about Hakka Mauritians. There is a great interest from Hakka people to discover that in Mauritius there is such a big group of Hakka (90% of Sino-Mauritians are Hakka). In Toronto there are three Hakka associations:[52] relations between Sino-Mauritians and these associations have still to be explored. In my fieldwork I have no evidence of this contact. There are informal social relations among university students between Hakka Chinese from

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[50] The Hakka Global Network (HGN) is a "manually run Internet mailing list" for subscribers who are interested in Hakka culture. It was started in 1995 by Jonathan Teoh Eng, and is still maintained by him. HGN provides a forum for a lively, transnational discourse on Hakka culture and Hakka social experiences. It also announces information on Hakka cultural events in countries throughout the world, the activities of Hakka organizations, and listings of where to obtain Hakka-related material.

[51] Often in the HGN there are lists of famous people of Hakka origin to instill some pride in being Hakka. .This is an example: "The founders of the Republic of China and the People's Republic of China were Hakkas Dr Sun Yat-sen and Mao Tse-tung. The founder of the Republic of Singapore is a Hakka: Lee Kuan-yew. The present president of Taiwan is a Hakka: Lee Teng-hui. The present Prime Minister of Singapore is a Hakka although he does not speak Hakka: Mr Goh. When the People's Republic of China was born about one-third of the generals in the armed forces were Hakka. Deng Xiao-ping was a Hakka. Kuala Lumpur was founded by a Hakka: Yap Ah-loy.

[52] The Hakka associations in Toronto are: The "Fui Toong On Society," 102 D'arcy Street, Toronto; The "Tsung Tsin Association," 3880 Midland Ave; The "Caribbean Chinese Association."

Calcutta[53] and Sino-Mauritian peers. I was told that in Mississauga a suburb city of Toronto, there is an association of Hakka Calcutta elders, in which there is also a small presence of Hakka Mauritians. It is an interesting point out that Mauritian elders are the only ones as in the Sino-Mauritian community who can still speak the Hakka language, perfectly allowing them to build connections with other Hakka.

However, Sino-Mauritians show more interest in the discovery of other aspects of Chineseness and in learning Mandarin or Cantonese. A reason could be that although they identify as Hakka, they do not speak the Hakka language. Mandarin and not Hakka language schools are becoming popular among upper middle class families. This trend is common among the whole communities of the Chinese diaspora. Veronique, a student of design in Montreal is planing to take a course of Mandarin when she returns to Mauritius. Another aspect to identify many Sino-Mauritians as Hakka is their last name: it is usually composed by three parts, such for example TSANG MANG KIN (a Sino-Mauritian poet and current Minister of Arts and Culture) Tsang is the original family/clan name, Mang is the generation name, Kin is the personal name. The family name is very important to Chinese because it is through the family name that he can fix his/her identity. The bond of kinship ties is so strong that even today, traditionally, people with the same surname are forbidden to intermarry as they are supposed to have come from the same ancestor. It is considered mildly incestuous for a couple sharing the same surname to marry.

Sino-Mauritians have Christian names, as most of them are Catholics, but privately live according to Chinese customs. The Chinese New Year is the most important festivity that

[53] Oxfeld, (1993) has written a book on the Calcutta Hakka community and its relation with the overseas community in Toronto.

marks their Chineseness. However the celebrations in Canada are not much like to those in Mauritius where it is a holiday the day before and the day after. In occasion of the *Fête du Printemps*, [Spring Festival] this year the Sino-Mauritians of Toronto organized on Sunday a mass in a French Catholic Church Saint Louis de France in Scarborough. As far as religion is concerned it is not unusual to find different members of a same family practicing different religions. Even being Buddhist and Catholic at the same time is not seen as a problem. Vanessa describes the funeral of her grandmother. "I am not much in religion. My family is very traditional we had a big funeral for the death of my grandmother. It was like a marriage. We are Buddhist and Catholic and the funeral was a real mixture!" Yet, when it comes to their position as visible minorities within the Canadian ethnic mosaic Sino-Mauritians are constantly struggling to differentiate themselves from their stereotypically imposed identity as Asians. It is interesting to notice the similar racist problematics of Chinese Americans well expressed by Hong Kingston:

> We mustn't call ourselves Chinese among those who are ready to send us back to where they think we come from. But Chinese-American takes too long. Nobody says or hears past the first part. We need to take the hyphen out. Chinese American. American the noun and Chinese the adjective (1989: 319).

The smallness of their home country makes the situation harder. A Sino-Mauritian told me once that when she first went to Chinatown in Toronto, a salesman asked her where she came from. She answered Mauritius and he asked her again: "In which part of China is Mauritius?" Identity is an every day dialectical construction that is imposed by the outside as well posed.

> *I have hard time to define my identity. I am Asiatic. I mean my features are, but I feel more European than North American, but I mean I think globally.*

Besides the knowledge of their mythical ancestral place in China, Sino-Mauritians feel Mauritians, they speak Kreol - a French based patois, they celebrate the Mauritian Independence Day and they dance *sega* music - a music introduced by African slaves in Mauritius. They give a lot of importance to French sending their children to French classes. The Sino-Mauritians in Toronto have established such a strong network, based on kin and they know each other very well. This has put me many times in uneasy situations, as they feared that the other Mauritians would know what they were telling me. In a party in Montreal I was sitting in a table with about other 15 Sino-Mauritians, my friend introduced me to them saying: "they are all my cousins!" I did not have enough time to investigate if they were fictive or blood kin relatives. Kinship relations and extra family networking play an important role among the Sino-Mauritian community in Toronto and Montreal. Through guanxi[54] (networking) - I use guanxi in a broader sense, not confined to the business sphere - people establish an extension of familial support beyond the domestic family living in Mauritius, in Canada and elsewhere. Although somewhat modified, the focus on family as an important component of Chineseness is still much alive both in Mauritius and in Canada.

In the Chinese tradition the family was a basic unit of agricultural productive activities. Each individual's family was his chief source of economic sustenance, security, education, social contact and recreation and even his main religious focus, through ancestor-worship. China's

[54] Guanxi as an aspect of Chinese business practice, whereby individuals are able to establish complex networks of assistance. Perhaps, it has been the focus on business behavior that has encouraged the suggestion that guanxi refers to "connections," with the implication that it is a mechanism by which individuals are able to achieve personal, family or business objectives through the formation of instrumental associations with appropriately positioned others.

whole ethical system tended to be family-centered not oriented toward God or the State The great patrilineal household was conceived as the ideal household where all the living generations reside in a great household. Under this the fast flowing of inhabitants and other financial and social factors have tremendously affected either the ideal or the practice of the multi-generation household today. In Mauritius is still a practice that the married children live in the same house also if often constituting two different households.[55] Among my informants, there are many cases of household consisting of nuclear family: father, mother and children and grandparents of either the wife or the husband side. An interesting phenomenon occurs seasonally, adding transnational members to the Sino-Mauritian family in Toronto. It is a common practice for aged parents who do not want to leave Mauritius for good - as they would never be able to adapt themselves to the Canadian environment- to visit for a couple of months every year their "children" in Canada. This visit reinforces the transnational identity. Bruno affirms (case studies):

> *Almost every year my parents come to visit us from May to August. They help us at home, they look after the children and in this way they pass on the next generation Mauritian and Chinese values. It is also an occasion for them to check their health, as the health system in Canada is better.*

V.7. 1. STUDENTS

Many are the Sino-Mauritian students who choose for their education Canada also because they have already some relatives here who smooth the transition to this society.

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[55] An informant told me that to the house often is attached another "dépendance" where the new couple settles as an autonomous family, thus making the ideal patrilineal household still possible.

I came to Canada in Sept 95 alone, leaving by plane in Mauritius by myself and coming to this unknown place, have never seen how it looks like and I got my relatives here to pick me up at the airport. Well, I chose to study in Canada as I've relatives here and I'm now living with them.

Education plays a very important role in the Chinese community: It is a path to mobility to open new possibilities to the family as a whole. The Chinese have a reputation for hard work and a keen desire for higher education. In the scholarship places allocated in one year by European universities to Mauritian students all six places were won by Chinese. The percentage of educated men and women is higher among the Chinese than in any other Asian community on the island (Mannick: 1979: 63).

Going to a university abroad is not only a practice of upper class Chinese, but even the middle class puts a lot of effort into giving at least at one son or daughter the possibility to study. In a way is a strategy to transform economic capital into an investment in educational-cultural-social capital (Bourdieu 1984, 1986). "We are the first Chinese to go to university," Veronique and Mario say proudly with a sense of responsibility to their family. "When our grandparents came to Mauritius they had just their sewing shoes nothing else." Veronique plans to return to Mauritius as soon as she finishes her degree in design. She will work in textiles, a leading sector in Mauritius. Mario is not yet sure, he thinks he will stay in Canada for a while he is in computer science and he has just got his landed immigrant paper. Sending an adult son for education overseas is a gendered and classed strategy that achieves several goals associated with transnational repositioning. Mario emphasizes the importance of having two citizenships, which can protect him for some sudden economical or social change in Mauritius. "Why should a person who can walk on either two roads cut himself

off from one and leave only one? - is the question posed by a Chinese Malaysian with Australian and Malaysian citizenships to Nonini (1997: 211). This status of "flexible citizenship" (Ong 1993), one of the characteristics of transnationalism, puts into question the old paradigm of loyalty solely to one nation-state. "Transnational practices of modern Chinese persons cannot be understood separately from the cultural politics of identities inscribed on them by such regimes in the spaces they traverse and reside in. Yet, through their strategic mobilities fueled by imaginaries of power and desire, they themselves seek to transcend these regimes, while working through these regimes to discipline others" (Nonini 1997: 203).

V.8. THE MAURITIAN INDEPENDENCE DAY

The communalities well entrenched in Mauritian society are exported as well to Canadian society. There are however certain occasions in which attempts are made to overcome them indicating the emergence of a national Mauritian identity. One of these occasions is the celebration of Mauritian independence (12 March 1968). Independence Day is the only national day that is really close to the heart of all Mauritians irrespective of ethnic background whether they are abroad or back home. According to Eriksen (1993:553) this celebration is perceived more intensely by Mauritians abroad than by those living in Mauritius to whom the general feeling is that it is just one extra day of holiday. Of different advice is a Mauritian living in Toronto, Jean (see case -studies):

> *It may be perceived that the celebration of the Independence Day is more important for Mauritians living abroad. But it's actually not so. It's definitely more important back in Mauritius where you*

can feel the excitement and sense of pride among the people. There are more activities and events that are organized back in Mauritius to mark that occasion and it's more festive. Similar to what happens here on July 1st.

In Mauritius in occasion of the Independence Day there are large-scale public events in sport stadiums and there is a parade in the *Champ de Mars* in the capital, Port Louis. Attendance at state organized events is poor. In the evening there are various parties which have no patriotic or national overtones. Does the situation of "exile," of living overseas give to this celebration a nationalist meaning?

The feelings of isolation and nostalgia experienced by Mauritians abroad, is well delineated by the expressed desire, officially once a year to turn their thoughts to the motherland and to gather with other Mauritians, irrespective of divisions based on ethnicity and religion.

Over here in Toronto, the celebration of the Independence Day is an occasion to remind ourselves where we are from and to let the next generation who is born here know more about the country of birth of their parents. It's also an occasion to get-together [sic] with fellow Mauritians and talk about the old days and reconnect with the home we all left years ago. It is important that we keep celebrating the Independence Day to remind all Mauritians abroad of their country of origin and to help the new generation to understand more about the old generation.

My informant underlines the importance of this celebration especially for the young generation whose historical memory of the island would otherwise slowly disappear. Last year marked the thirtieth year of independence and it was an important celebration for the Mauritians as a whole. *The Mauritius News* - the official organ of the Mauritians in United Kingdom - published a special edition to commemorate the thirtieth Anniversary of

Independence. This edition circulated among Mauritians abroad and was read by many of my informants. In trying to grasp the importance of this celebration I asked my informants questions such as: Why is it important to celebrate? What do you celebrate? What does independence mean for you? The reactions were various. The general feeling among students was that they had never paid much attention to this holiday before coming to Canada. Actually many have not even participated in the celebration in Port Louis, although they watched it on television. In school they were instructed on the importance of this day for the history of Mauritius. I did not hear any specific response in relation to the importance of the independence and the decolonization of Mauritius. This reinforces the point that there was not a dramatic change in politics before and after independence. Nonetheless it remains a day to celebrate being Mauritian and to show "Mauritian pride." The expression Mauritian pride[56] was almost a constant in the discussions I had with my informants on Independence celebrations. I attended two celebrations of the Mauritian national day: in March 1998 and in March 1999, the first in Montreal, the other in Toronto. At both parties the majority was Chinese. Afterwards other no Chinese Mauritians in course of my fieldwork told me that they went once or twice to the Independence Parties organized by the association in Toronto but then they decided instead to celebrate this day in a different way: staying with few Mauritian friends at home and cooking some typical Mauritian meal; going out with one's own wife or going to dance.

The party in Montreal, - "*A Tropical nite*" - was organized by a student association in order to give support to the Mauritian students and as well promote Mauritius abroad. It was

[56] Pride is very often utilized as a political term which underlines or aims at a strong group indentification i.e. gay/lesbian pride or nation (nationalism).

held in the student bar of the university. I recognized many of the students I had interviewed some months before and they introduced me to their friends. Few were non-Chinese and I noticed that the Indian Mauritians were sitting with some Sino-Mauritians that I knew had arrived in Canada that year. The party was centered on dance and drinking. Late in the evening there was a performance of *sega* music by a group composed of a large number of Sino-Mauritians. The Mauritian flag was displayed and champagne was offered. Around the tables, people were interacting, shifting very easily from English to French to Kreol, depending to the spoken to. Being in English speaking university and being the party also open to other students, English was used extensively. In groups were there was at least one non-Mauritian, English was chosen as medium of communication. When among themselves Sino-Mauritians spoke French, using some Kreol words, especially in joke telling. That evening I happened to talk extensively with an Indian Mauritian, one of the rare non Sino-Mauritian students I had met. Replying to my remark that he was one of the first Indian Mauritian I met, he said: "you know here in Canada Chinese are the majority, but in Mauritius it is different."

Of a different tone was the party held in Toronto. Club Mauritius - the Toronto association of Toronto - organized a big gala to celebrate the event. The association in Toronto has been celebrating Independence Day for the past eleven years by holding a dinner/dance party every year on the Saturday closest to March 12. It's an occasion for all Mauritians in the Great Toronto Area and southern Ontario to come out and meet their old friends from back home and to make new ones. For some it's often the only occasion they get to meet their old friends. In this celebration, all different components of Mauritian society are represented through cultural shows and arts and crafts exhibition. A Chorus sang

a varied repertoire from Kreol, English and French songs, children performed Chinese dance, there were as well performances of *sega* music, an informal Mauritian national symbol which is widely spread in the whole segment of the society like the Kreol language. A few years ago for a party of the Independence celebration, a scenario was built with a pagoda, a mosque, a Hindu temple and a Church. Underlying the different religious and cultural traditions of Mauritius it was thought to encourage "unity and diversity." The event was sponsored by Air Mauritius, which offered the Grand Prize a return ticket to Mauritius from Europe. Every year special guests are invited to attend to the party. These guests for one reason or other have a link to Mauritius. Last year a high-ranking member of the Greater Toronto police force was invited to attend the party. He was born in colonial Mauritius of English parents, and has never forgotten the island. A Calcutta Hakka student who participated to last year's party mentioned the presence of some Chinese personalities who made a speech:

> *I went to a Mauritian club Independence Day party here last year and I noticed 99 percent of the club to be Hakka, but no one spoke it, instead there were a couple of presentations done in Mandarin which most of them didn't understand either.*

Besides people from Mauritius, there were also many members of the Torontonian Francophonie. An organizer of this party told me that this party is as well an important occasion to promote Mauritius in Canadian society. "It's our small way to let others, especially members of the Francophone community, know more about Mauritius." The air of the party was filled by many languages. The program and the presentation were partially in English and French. Kreol was spoken in the animated discussions among friends or it was

intercalated with the French or English sentences. Few old people spoke Chinese, probably Hakka. The celebration of Mauritian independence organized by the club of Toronto is a space for civil society to work together with the Mauritian state ideology in the formation of a national identity. Although the participants were almost entirely Chinese - composed mainly of families - there was an attempt to reproduce and showcase other components of Mauritian society. In Montreal the party was youth centered, it was promoted by Mauritian students as a meeting point for Mauritian students.

V.9. CASE-STUDIES

In this section I want to present a few experiences of Mauritians in Canada. Their experiences are unique and at the same time shared by many other migrants: difficulties in fitting into the new society, job seeking, language, weather, nostalgia, depression, solitude, marginalization but opportunities: education, job, health care. Mauritius, the island remains like a scar "l'île cicatrice" (Maunick 1970:14) even on the bodies of those who left Mauritius as children. Identities are formed, reinforced, renegotiated. False dichotomies are worked through being Mauritian, being Chinese. It is in looking at an old copy of the National Geographic, it is in sitting for hours in front of a computer to chat with someone who is Mauritian who can understand your jokes, a Mauritian abroad can still feel "at home."

V.9. 1. GENEVIEVE

Genevieve is a twenty-year-old student who came to Canada with her family in 1994. The family had some relatives here and the main reason for their migration was to provide to one of her brothers with better health treatment and to provide their children with a better

education. Previously, her parents had come to Canada three times to cure the sickness of the son. Genevieve is the oldest sister and she recalls the immigration as a traumatic experience: Losing friends, losing her schoolmates. First, they went to Montreal where she started to go to school. The French environment reassured her but unfortunately the situation did not last long. Her parents could not find a job at all. In Mauritius, the father was a schoolteacher, near retirement. Then, they moved to Toronto. For the first month they stayed at relatives' place. Then, they moved to Mississauga. It was so hard for her to get used to Canada. She was alone, without friends and studied at three schools in less than one year. She did not even want to have friends because it would have meant to her somehow betraying her old friends. She was so terribly homesick that her father was forced to let her return to Mauritius for the summer. On her return to Canada things did not get any better. She started to go to a Catholic school and she started to be harassed by the youth of the area. The situation went so far that the best thing to do was to leave the house and move out of the neighborhood. Another house, another school, everything to be restarted. Among all these difficulties, the pregnancy of her mother was to be added. After a long thought their parents decided to keep the baby.

Genevieve comes from a very traditional family: her mother is Cantonese and her father Hakka. For her parents it is important to raise the children "in the Mauritian way," which means that girls study hard, stay close to the family and do not go outside. However, it was hard to compromise with the Canadian society and she, -being the oldest - has to fight for almost everything to gain some independence. She is dreaming of living by herself but she knows that it would mean a direct confrontation with her parents. She would like to go outside, going to clubs. It is very hard cope with a family who thinks that clubs are places

where you get AIDS injections. She still keeps contacts with Mauritius and she participates in a Mauritian chat line on the Internet. She is Catholic and she goes regularly to Church to French mass. "Going to Church in Canada is different; the speech is always empty as the church in itself. In Mauritius it was different there was a feeling of community, and everybody knew each other." Dating is always problematic. The parents encouraged her to go out with a Chinese from Hong Kong when they knew she was dating a "Canadian" the situation was hard to manage. She is wondering who she is and she is quoting her Canadian's boyfriend description: "I am a BANANA: yellow outside and white-French inside."

V.9. 2. MURAD

He arrived in Canada in 1982 and he has since returned just once to Mauritius. He is Muslim and lives in Scarborough. According to him, there are around 200 Muslim Mauritians and are all connected through kinship. The first to arrive in Canada in his family, was his uncle in the 1960s. Murad arrived in Canada when he was eight years old. As teenager he become interested in knowing more about Mauritius and he started to buy books, to read articles, to collect old numbers of the National Geographic. 'When there is a documentary on Mauritius on the French channel all the family gets together." At home he speaks Kreol and his French is not that good anymore because in Toronto he has not so many opportunities to practice it.

His identity is deeply linked to the Muslim religion. He follows the rules of not eating pork of eating only *halal* meat and he fasts during Ramadan. He goes to the mosque and he knows some Arabic in order to be able to read the Koran. Being Muslim and being Mauritian at the same time and living in Canada is a little bit complicated; there are not enough Muslim Mauritians to create an "autonomous community." Mauritian Muslims have

contacts with other Muslims, in particular Pakistanis, with whom they share their ancestral origin. Differences emerge often between Mauritian and Pakistani Muslims as their culture is not the same. Murad mentioned that a growing number of Mauritians is trying to marry Pakistani girls and he as well was engaged with one but after one year and half they 'split.' "The differences were too big, we are not so traditionalist!" He is not yet sure where to look for a bride; many return for the summer in Mauritius and then they find a Muslim wife over there, "I have still to be healed from my last experience but I will see." His friends are not 'Canadians' (not Canadians mean not white), and he does not know many Mauritians outside his family. He likes hanging out in Gerrard east "Little India" because it recalls the atmosphere and the perfume of Mauritius. He is quite interested to know more Mauritians and he participated few times to some gatherings, mostly sporting games with Chinese Mauritians.

V.9. 3. JEAN

Jean came to Canada to study at the beginning of 1980s and then he decided to stay. Successively he managed to bring his family: mother, father and brother in Canada. In Canada he was confronted for the first time with his Chinese origin and it is here that he started to learn Mandarin and Cantonese. Before he knew some Hakka because this was the language spoken at home between his parents and grandparents, but he has never been able to speak it fluently. He also started to follow Buddhism more seriously, although the majority of his family is Catholic. He is actively promoting the Mauritian culture abroad even though he points out that it is hard to put two feet in one boot and he gives all his loyalty to

Canada which he considers his country. He is one of the founders of the Mauritian association in Toronto.

V.9. 4. RAJI

At the end of February, this year I received a phone call from Raji. His voice was agitated. He started to tell me that he had just finished talking with his brother in Mauritius and he wanted to inform me some riots had spread all over the island because a creole singer was found killed in jail. "Nothing like that has happened since independence. I am worried. They [Creoles of African descents] are destroying Indian shops." The portrayed image of economically and democratically successful island was for the first time questioned. Raji, an Indian Mauritian, arrived in Canada last year, coming from England where he earned a university degree in engineering. Married, he is working in a gas station hoping to find something better in the near future. After having lived in UK and Canada, he was questioning that material success was a not a reason enough to live abroad. He was seriously thinking that it would be better for him to return to Mauritius. New in Toronto he does not know other Mauritians and he misses England because "there are plenty of Mauritians and there are always some Mauritian events around in London such as *sega* parties and music and dances from other cultures which make it such a nice evening or day."

V.9. 5. BRUNO

He is a father who is trying to keep the link between his father's generation and his children's generation. He arrived in Toronto with his family in 1988 where his sister lived since 1966. He feels Mauritian and he does not forget his Chinese origin. This is what he is trying to teach to his children: to be a Mauritian and to be loyal to the Chinese values. He remarks that it is hard in Canada to succeed in this effort because everything in Western

culture emphasizes individualism instead of *communauté*. Important Asian values are the collective group, the strong families, loyalty to elders, discipline, frugality, and work ethic.

His first impact with Canada was a little bit stressful: coping with a different culture, the cold weather, the English language in which he was not fluent. Finding a job was hard and he experienced racism in many occasions. He works now in a bilingual environment where he continuously switches between English and French. He is more conscious on how to actively fight racism, since he has taken a course on "race and empowerment" in a city college. When he thinks of home, he thinks of Mauritius. He is planing however to go to China at least once to see the place where his parents come from. He is Hakka. He laughs in underlining the "immigrating instinct of Chinese people." He calls them "Asian Gypsies." In depicting the Chinese immigrants, Ong points out: "Their subjectivity is at once deterritorialized in relation to a particular country, though highly localized in relation to family (Ong 1993: 771-772). Bruno's father came to Mauritius when he was young, Bruno moved to Canada, followed by his children: what will their children do next? He realizes that his children, although born in Mauritius, are losing their affection to that place and if for him Mauritius is home, the place to return after retirement, for his children is just the place to go for vacation. In looking at Mauritius he underlines how the Indian group is very conservative and does not mingle with others. He refers to arranged marriages and remembers that when he was young and used to go dancing, he never saw Indian Mauritians at the disco. However, he feels comfortable with all different kind of Mauritians and he is constantly in contact with his relatives in Mauritius and he reads regularly the news from Mauritius.

V.10. MAURITIAN VIRTUAL COMMUNITY

The Mauritian transnational space is constituted of the multiplural interactions of migration to Great Britain, Australia, France, Canada, and the interpolarity of migration. Interpolarity includes not only ties maintained by the conventional contemporary migrations with the country of origin Mauritius but also those existing between the various poles of migration. Island Mauritians and Mauritians living abroad have multiplural and interpolar contacts. Mauritians abroad stay in contact through publications, brochure that circulate in the worldwide migrant network. An example of this contact is the circulation of Mauritian News, a monthly publication tabloid of the Mauritian community in the United Kingdom. Mauritius News was founded in November 1983. It is available outside Great Britain in France, Belgium, Switzerland, Australia and Canada. At the university level, a well-organized network keeps Mauritian students in contact enabling them to have information about universities in various states. This has been kept possible also thanks to the recent rapid and impressive developments in technology, in transportation, and in telecommunications. Informatization is rapidly loosening the paradigm-centralized the geographically bounded, centralized nation-state and increasingly deterritorializing its physical boundaries (Basch et al. 1994). The Internet especially constitutes the privileged space of such "deterritorialization" in that it allows us to speak of a Mauritian virtual community where Mauritians living abroad and Mauritians living in the mother country meet and interact, forging relations of solidarity and new configurations of collective identity. Rhinegold defines virtual communities as "social aggregations that emerge from the net to form webs of personal relationships in

cyberspace" (1993: 5). In this site ethnoscape and technoscape blend together (Appadurai: 1991).

The Mauritian state is an active actor in this "hyperspace communication." It is taking its chance to foster this link implementing Internet connections and establishing more or less directly sites where Mauritius is promoted widely. Internet forums have become the meeting point where Mauritians living in the island and Mauritians living abroad discuss their respective positions in relation to a common national identity. This constant dialectical relation is an important component of the everyday construction of a national identity which is not bounded by the state's geophysical boundaries and, to some extent it has never been. Benedict Anderson (1983) has clearly pointed out that although we may trace the origins of nationalism to European political philosophy, many of the early nationalists were exiles, members of diaspora and creoles. In cultivating the contact with its migrants, the Mauritian state shows an interesting dynamic. On one side, Mauritians overseas are seen as the best ambassadors of their home country, they are potential investors and they choose Mauritius for their holidays. The Mauritius Government Tourist Office (MGTO), itself, in its early days urged Mauritians to come to Mauritius for their holidays. "There's no place like home - on holiday," was the MGTO's appeal to overseas Mauritians. The Mauritian visitors take home substantial sums of spending money, presents for relatives and friends, rent bungalows and hire cars. Their contribution to the economy of Mauritius over the years has been immense, and even the national airline, Air Mauritius, as their favorite carrier has greatly benefited. On the other side, a possible return "en masse" by the migrants is perceived negatively by many sectors of Mauritian society, as it would jeopardize jobs. This ambivalent feeling is well expressed by a nationality law that does not allow two citizenships, therefore

many Mauritians abroad have lost their Mauritian citizenship. The nationality law has been changed over time but it has no retroactive effect and people who have lost their citizenship and who were overseas at the time that the law was changed cannot return to reside in Mauritius.

In writing in a commemorative issue of the 30 anniversary of Mauritian independence published in the magazine of the Mauritians living in Great Britain, the president of Mauritius Cassam Uteem, addressed the Mauritians abroad in the following ways: "emigrants," "non-resident Mauritians," and "compatriots"(16th December, 1997). The interest in promoting a constant relation with Mauritians living abroad is not only a Mauritian peculiarity. Migrants abroad can invest in their homeland, can be influential in forging some economic/political relations with the country where they reside. Caribbean states could be taken as example of an extremely interesting diasporic experimentation, with Mexico, Colombia, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and other states attempting to cultivate and institutionalize relations with what one Mexican official called their "global nations." Immigrant populations are as well exposed to manipulation by politicians from their home state with nationalistic, patriotic, nostalgic appeals. Thus Aristide referred to the Haitian immigrants in the United States as "the Tenth Department" (Haiti being divided into nine geographical units known as departments) (Basch et al 1994). The same appeal to immigrants is an important component of the nationalist politics of the Croatian state (Winland 1995: 1998).

V.10. 1. INTERNET FORUM

This list[57] contains over 1,100 people who are on the e-mail directory. The Forum has received more than 17,000 messages since its inception. Over 200 messages are posted in a week. The Forum is available in six languages: English, French, Italian, German, Portuguese, and Spanish. The people who participate in the forum are mainly Mauritians and Mauritians living abroad, tourists that want to receive information about the island, tour-operators[58] who try to expand their horizons and of course anthropologists who are interested in this area. The gender of the participant is hard to guess as anonymity and nicknames are used. I think that probably the majority are men, judging by the language, which is very often quite sexist and offensive. But this is a big assumption. Because for a certain period of time (December 1998-January 1999) many messages continued very offensive attacks on the various ethnic groups, but on the Muslim group in particular. A "Forum Cleaner" has been installed for more than a month in order to remove any messages containing 'foul' words.

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[57] The web address is www.Ile-maurice.com/forum

[58] This is an interesting message published in the Forum by a tour operator. Tourism and commodification of the exotic other are underlined.
I am a tourist operator and I am looking for new businesses. I have organized several trips to Malaysia and to the Philippines for tourists who are keen on circumcision ceremonies in those areas.
I was wondering, do you have circumcision and initiation ceremonies in Mauritius? Is it celebrated at a precise time during the year? Mr. Amdeck,
One of the responses: I am working as a doctor in Mauritius and I will answer your question. I am afraid you find your interest in here. I do not see it as a folkloric SHOW for tourists. Circumcision is mainly practiced among the Muslims here. Ritual circumcision in Mauritian Muslim families is a PRIVATE business and I don't think tourists will be appreciated as spectators. This is done when the child is between 3-9 years old, depending on the family. Beside religious ritual circumcision, this practice is also widely done in modern surgery in our clinics and hospitals, by a doctor.

The Forum abuses have been reported also in the Mauritian newspaper The Forum was mentioned in *Le Mauricien* on 31 March 1999.

Discussion about who is a true Mauritian is a common topic in the Internet forum where the Mauritian virtual community meets, becoming often a bone of contention between Mauritians living in Mauritius and those living abroad. The language of communication constantly switches between English, French and Kreol. Few are the messages written completely in Kreol because of the difficulties of its transcription. Old and new migrants confront experience of their "exile." The old migrants are often depicted as the paranoid old timers of this forum. It has to be pointed out that there are many differences between the first Mauritian immigrants and the later ones. Their experience has to be framed in the particular historical, social political situation. In the 1960s, many Mauritians that left to Great Britain were young males with a good education and with no money. "Mauritius gave me 55 pounds sterling to board Ferdinand de Lessep to come to United Kingdom is the angry answer of a Mauritian abroad to a comment on the Mauritian Internet forum of an islander Mauritian who dismisses the difficulties that "economic migrants" had to cope in the new environment. "We fit the lowest rank of the society doing jobs that no one wanted to do." New migrants on the other side make the point that the difficulties of coping nowadays are bigger:

> *I would like to tell you that people who immigrated recently were and some still are more frustrated than those who did 20 years back or more. Do you know why? Your globe trotting should have opened your eyes to the fact that it is an economic hard time globally. Another and perhaps more reason for their frustrations is that when they arrive in these countries, they are confronted with advanced technologies that require them to upgrade themselves before they are able to secure employment to make a decent living. This was not the case long time ago. Your old immigrants are*

very lucky. They took advantage of better opportunities in the past and have now established themselves with properties and earning a good pension that the high level ministers in Mauritius are not able to earn. Remember pension is also for the rest of their life and they do not have to worry about jobs, getting re-elected etc., except good health.

Besides messages that target directly certain sections of the society: - attacks against Muslims or against the political power of Indians, - most of the messages deal with the uncertain equilibrium of being Mauritian. Ethnic and religious communalities are perceived at the same time as a deleterious component of national unity and as the quintessential component of Mauritian identity.

When will we be just Mauritians, without any Franco before or Mauritian after?

This rhetorical question acknowledges that it is not enough to remove ethnic labels from the census, or from sports teams, to eradicate ethnicity as a commonsense social boundary. On the other side it is precisely the ethnic diversity that distinguishes Mauritians from their 'homogenized' neighbors of the Seychelles and Réunion.

Cultivating this diversity is far preferable to a meli-melo uniformity as in Seychelles or Réunion where one culture dominates and absorbs everything. It is more difficult to be Mauritian but it is worthwhile. 'Mauritian' is the prototype of the man of the future

Metissage, mixed marriages in particular, add further complexity to the discourse of being Mauritian. Although mixed marriages have increased in the last years, they are still feared as destabilizing the social boundaries and they remain a minor phenomenon. How does living abroad affect the meaning of being Mauritian? How do Mauritians abroad see their compatriots at home? The discussion between Mauritians abroad and Mauritians at home

between old and new immigrants is still in process. It shows us the conflicted nature of Mauritian identity, as well as the complex new construction of a deterritorialized national identity. Mauritians abroad judge harshly the inferiority complex toward whites that according to them is still a blatant characteristic in Mauritius. Mauritians conversely see them as economic migrants that have an outdated image of Mauritius and that vent their frustration on their home country.

> *I see more racism in everyday life in England- police-employment, social life, immigration towards Blacks and Asians than in Mauritius*

This is the comment of a Mauritian whose transnational status allows him to see on both sides. In the same way the status of living far and living in-between allows the Mauritian abroad to better grasp what Mauritius means. It is the *joie de vivre*, the community aspects, the weather, the sense of humor, the social life, the feeling that you are at home, that you have an identity.

> *I like the feeling that I feel at home with the Chinese, European, Indian and Islamic cultures that overall I am never alone even when I want to be! Mauritius is the triumph of community living, where your environment, your community, your island is more important than your own identity-*

"Is it really true that your island is more important than your own identity or is it your identity?" With this rhetorical question I want to finish my research. It is an open question, as my thesis is, which I hope will somehow contribute to issues of transnationalism and national identity. In the conclusions that follow I intend to "make sense of my findings" and open a space for discussion.

CHAPTER VI.

CONCLUSION

Anthropology has responded to the new era of "time and space compression" which requires a "new kind of ethnography," one that departs from the localizing strategies of traditional ethnography and evolves into a "transnational anthropology" (Appadurai 1991). As all manner of groups and movements are "deterritorialized," multi-sited fieldwork, which uses the cultural practice of "traveling," becomes necessary (Clifford 1992). Clifford suggests "the metaphor of travel, in order to map without going 'off earth'"(ibid.: 105). During my research I stayed in Toronto. I did not move physically except for a few visits in Montreal. However, I stayed in Toronto my fieldwork has nonetheless taken a multi-sited shape, thanks to the transnational space of the Internet and the "global" dimension of the city itself.

This research was intended to be an exploratory investigation of the ways in which Mauritian national identity is constructed in Mauritius; abroad, specifically among Mauritians living in Toronto and Montreal; and in the virtual space of the Internet. Each of these sites, which constitute the transnational community, contributes in different ways to the nation-building discourse of the Mauritian state. My analysis was framed by the conceptual scheme of civil society, in the Gramscian sense, as a political locus where hegemony and "spontaneous consent" as well as counter-hegemony are generated. By civil society I intend all those non-state movements and organizations - schools, churches, clubs, journals and parties - that contribute in molecular fashion to the formation of social and political

consciousness. Political society at the other end is composed of those public institutions - the government, courts, police, and army - that exercise "direct hegemony" and are almost synonymous with the state. The interconnectedness between civil society, the nation-state and ethnicity can be better understood if we consider the idea of civil society working on three different levels. The first level is what we may call "narrow" civil society and it is the closest to the nation-state institutional apparatus. Through a series of state-generated initiatives the Mauritian state aims to foster the consent of Mauritians abroad. The second level is the "broad" civil society. Broad civil society is composed of geographically circumscribed associations and community initiatives, which promote different interpretation of *Mauricianité* both abroad and in the island. The third level, which comprises the two, is the transnational civil society where multipolarity and interpolarity interact in the mapping of a Mauritian identity. The aim of my research was thus to understand to what degree these spheres of civil society active inside and outside Mauritius overlap and dialogue, concretizing solidarities "for the sake of family, faith, interest and ideology" (Walzer 1992: 89).

In my research, I was particularly interested in exploring if and how among Mauritians in Toronto and Montreal the "national" Mauritian identity generated at the "narrow civil society" level was perpetuated or challenged. I chose to do my fieldwork in the two cities that have the largest presence of Mauritians in Canada: Toronto and Montreal. This allowed me to explore two different realities. Montreal is characterized by a French environment more similar to the Mauritian society. The Mauritian settlement in Montreal is older and larger than the one in Toronto. It is characterized also by the presence of an Honorary Consulate. The province of Quebec, as part of the Francophonie, maintains cultural and

business relations with Mauritius. Toronto, although being the Canadian multicultural city par excellence, is pretty much an Anglophone environment. This city offers more job opportunities than Montreal and for this reason many Mauritians already established in Montreal move here. With reference to the use of language in these two cities, two opposite tendencies can be traced. If in Montreal, at least among students, an English environment is sought (university), in Toronto there is a strong need for French spaces.

The aim of this research has been to explore what it means to be Mauritian, especially the meaning to be Mauritian in Canada. Mauritius is a multi-ethnic state of fairly recent independence (1968). As a postcolonial state, Mauritius has been very active in promoting a national consciousness, expressed in the *pluriculturalisme mauricien*, which means all ethnic communities with their religions and traditions participate equally in the discursive construction of the nation. The hegemonic project of this nationalist discourse has aimed to crack the communalist core on which the colonial system was erected. Mauritian nationalism turns to be a supra-ethnic nationalism or, as Eriksen (1994) labels it, "nationalism, Mauritian style." This choice became the key of the success of Mauritian multi-ethnic society. In fact, multi-ethnicity creates a whole set of problems that exacerbate the difficulties in generating consent, consent which can be, however, found in various forms of power sharing and in the application of the principle of self-limitation of ethnicity. If ethnic identity, in Mauritius, is promoted at the individual level, it is expected to be absent from the public sphere. Of course tensions and communalist attitudes in the public sphere do not suddenly disappear. The smallness of the island, - which does not allow for separation - and the scattered 'ethnic' component, - which does not allow just one group to have the majority, - further push the people to find a way for a pacific cohabitation. The presence of many political parties, of a

strong media system and the involvement of the lay person open a space of dialectical confrontation where power is continuously renegotiated. Cultural reproduction becomes a very sensitive realm, which has to be inclusive of all the ethnic components and as well express the "whole." Unity in diversity is the Mauritian national motto. The members of the various ethnicities might adjust to the situation by developing dual loyalties. They may still have a sense of belonging to their own group, but they at the same time also enter into the new world of the market place and polity.

Multiple identities become the necessary condition of being Mauritian in the island and abroad. Socially constructed, ascribed and as well inscribed, identities are always in process. Identities, however, do not come from a vacuum. They have an historical, racial, political, ideological context and cannot be simply changed "overnight" by a national project. Ethnicity still plays an important role in understanding Mauritian society and Mauritian transnationalism. It is not easy to be Mauritian and this difficulty is exacerbated abroad where Mauritian identities are re-assorted and renegotiated. However, Mauritians living abroad are seen as an integral component of the Mauritian nation-state. They can invest in their homeland, and can be influential in forging some economic/political relations with the country where they reside.

In Canada, Mauritians are scattered and divided by the multiple identities that outside Mauritius are harder to transcend. Through interviews with 25 Mauritians, aged 19-55, who live in Toronto and Montreal, narratives of identity and renegotiation of identities were explored. Although there is a real interest in looking out for other Mauritians, especially in Toronto where the Mauritian community is still in "formation," this interest does not always materialize in a social network capable of transcending kin and ethnic membership. In the

new "Canadian environment," Mauritians are exposed to the never-ending story of imposed racialized identities and to the problematic relation with their "ancestral" brothers and sisters (Indian, Pakistani, African and Chinese). Their ascribed communalities are in fact minimal in comparison with the cultural differences which separate them.

Social interactions do not follow strict patterns, although they tend to be formed around school and work places. More than race and origin, in Canada it is "Frenchness" which act as the common denominator in the forging of friendships and social relations. There are a few examples of friendships between Muslim-Mauritians and Congolese in which language, the "African" origin, and the common Muslim religion open a space of interaction. The various degrees of marginalization experienced by Mauritians in Canada bring to the surface a distinction, present in almost all narratives, between Canadians and "the others." Canadians are portrayed as "white" and "anglophone."

All emigrants have a nostalgic link to Mauritius, which they consider their home country and many still hope to return there. Students in particular are not yet sure whether to stay in Canada or not. Many apply to become landed immigrants and/or have two citizenships. All portray Mauritius as an island where people live in harmony, and they identify themselves as Mauritians. In conversations, however after the first "breaking-the-ice-phase" they invariably add "BUT I am" Hindu, Muslim, Chinese. This small sentence reveals a still active conflict between the two souls of the Mauritian nation-state "communalism" and "nation-building." Moreover, also the image of the paradisiacal island can become gray and show ethnic tensions, as it happened for example in February 1999 when riots erupted after a Creole singer of African descent was found dead in jail.

Generally it is assumed that people abroad, exiles, and immigrants, tend to gather with their compatriots overcoming regional and ethnic difference. A particular moment to foster their "common" national identity is through parties, organized especially in occasion of national celebrations. My findings however dismissed part of these assumptions. In Toronto, Sino-Mauritians are well established and have founded a Mauritian association. Although open to "every Mauritian," this association does not attract Mauritians from other ethnic groups, not even in the celebration of Mauritian Independence Day.

The Chinese constituency of the Mauritians in Canada seems to be the majority, but I do not have any quantitative evidence. Inside Mauritius they are a minority group representing just 3% of the population. Both in Mauritius and in Canada, Sino-Mauritians tend to understate their ethnic identity conforming to the Mauritian national identity. In private life, however Chinese tradition and family values are transmitted and replicated, although their ancestral language - mainly Hakka - has been completely lost by the new generation. In the Mauritian context this strategy, used by many "capitalist pariah" minority, is a way to be less visible and to prevent any anti-Chinese movement. Economically strong, they are far more mobile - "we are the Asian Gypsies" - than other ethnic groups in Mauritius. This could be seen as an explanation of their "majority" presence in Canada. Their upward mobility is reached also through the investment in social capital, e.g. education (Bourdieu, 1984; 1986). Mauritian students in the universities in Toronto and Montreal are strongly represented by Sino-Mauritians. The Mauritian student association in Montreal was almost entirely Sino-Mauritian. Once in Canada, Sino-Mauritians present themselves as Mauritians. For example it is important for many parents to offer their children in Toronto courses in French as a way to preserve a "Mauritian value." They celebrate Chinese New

Year, Independence Day and Father Laval in September. They promote *Mauricianité* through social gatherings, where Mauritian food is served and *sega* dances are performed.

This overwhelming Chinese component of the Mauritian community brought me to further engage in the "Chinese dimension." I discovered that Sino-Mauritians are almost entirely Hakka, a Chinese sub-group which has a distinct language and tradition. Hakka means "Guest People" and this was the attitude the hegemonic Chinese groups had toward them. Sino-Mauritians' promotion of *Mauricianité* in Toronto (I have some example also in Vancouver) through association activities could also be seen as a response to their never fully achieved recognition in the bigger Chinese "family." Hakka language and Cantonese or Mandarin are not reciprocally comprehensible. At the very moment in which Hakka language has stopped to be spoken by the new generations, an interesting global movement is striving to revitalize Hakka identity. All Sino-Mauritians mentioned in their narratives their Hakka origin showing the strength of the people (poor, hard working) and the freedom their women had. In my research, however, the link of the Sino-Mauritians to this global Hakka network has been glimpsed but not entirely grasped. Among the students, there were some friendships with Hakka from Calcutta. The Mauritian association in Toronto through its newsletter also mentions a few references to Hakka history and to the existence of an Hakka forum on the Internet.

Mauritians who have lived long enough in Canada feel the necessity to construct something that goes beyond the informal network, and that could bring "a little bit of Mauritius" here. This need is especially felt in relation the new generation of Canadian born children. This is the effort of the Mauritian association in Toronto. Everyone agrees that being Mauritian means speaking Kreol, giving importance to French language and culture.

Mauritians in Toronto feel a little bit isolated from the French environment, although the luckiest are able to find job thanks to their French competence. Being Mauritian also means *sega* music, food and celebrating the Independence Day. The latter is a day in which the need of community is felt dramatically.

My conclusion ends with a hypothesis whose validity might be proved only through further studies, in which issues of class and race could be analyzed thoroughly. Both in Mauritius and among Mauritians abroad, civil society is expressed in its multiple spaces, which extend beyond the governmental, administrative and juridical apparatuses and take the form of associations, forum, and media. In these loci the peculiar characteristics of what Mauritianness means e.g. the multi-ethnic-linguistic cultural aspects variously interconnected are promoted. But under this common core of a relatively homogeneous narrative of national and ethnic identity, different agendas arise which conceal issues of class, race and power. It is precisely the strategic concealment of these issues which seems to keep many Mauritians from participating to the activities of Toronto's Mauritian club. The racial, political history of Mauritius is filtered abroad by its migrants in form of boundary drawing and boundary maintaining. Stereotypes, which were seen as a necessary means to stabilize interethnic relations during colonialism (Barth 1969), are still affecting social relations among Mauritians, deeply jeopardizing the nationalist ideological project. Stereotyped clusters characterize one single identity excluding tout court multiplicity. Amongst the reasons given to me by Mauritians for not attending the celebrations organized by the association were: "they eat a different food"; looking at their race and number "they are not true Mauritian," "they are a closed group." On the other side Sino-Mauritians as well stereotype the others:

"In disco, when I was young I have never met any Indians. They never intermingle with others."

My findings in Toronto - where I did extensive fieldwork - show that at least in the case of this association there is an opposite outcome to the general trend which sees Mauritians abroad overcoming ethnic boundaries and clinging together to foster a national supra-ethnic identity. Probably Toronto's situation is peculiar because of the high presence of one ethnic community over others, of the quite recent immigration and because of the expansion of the city.

Mauritians, who for one reason or other are dissatisfied or do not find a community in town, turn to the Francophone multicultural community or/and turn to the virtual Mauritian community. The Mauritian transnational community in Canada has activated different spaces where civil society is expressed. The most formal and structured channel is the association, although it is not necessarily the most frequent or even the most significant means of building up a network of social contacts. Individual, intellectuals can however promote *Mauricianité* through other channels than ethnic clusters or associations. This is precisely the situation of many Mauritians in Toronto, who work in a sphere which although not strictly connected to Mauritian identification, are open to interesting "contaminations" where nationalist, supra-ethnic, imagined communities, intermingle with "musique de l'exil," art, literature and Frenchness. In this space the "cultural diasporas," (Cohen 1997) find new solidarities and experiment new hybridization. It is worth pointing out that different kind and degrees of communities coexist and interact among Mauritians. Sherry Ortner challenges us to rethink the very concept of community. The concept, she believes, is "worth keeping" only so long as we do not identify it "with harmony and cohesion, nor to imagine that the

sole form of community is a group of people in one place" (1997: 63-64). So at the very end I feel comfortable in speaking of a Mauritian community both in Toronto and Montreal.

In the framework of deterritorialization of the nation-state, Mauritians feel the need to dialogue with each other: one of these sites - thanks to the technological compression of time-space - is the virtual community. Debates about "Mauritianness" spill out of organizational offices, public meetings and public celebrations into the apparently less informal public sphere on the Internet forum. In the Internet forum I have surveyed, Mauritians are able to interact with each other, sharing experiences defining what it means to be Mauritian, and as well often exchanging reciprocal accusations (old and new migrants, Mauritian migrant and Islander Mauritian, Muslim against Indian etc.). When the forum in which I participated started to become a locus of fervent debate containing in some cases racist and sexist remarks, it was thought necessary to monitor the messages and filter them. Although certain messages were indeed offensive, they generated a lot of positive discussion about serious and irresolvable issues, such as communalism, stereotyping, colonial mentality, and "malaise creole."

These reciprocal accusations are part of the tensions embedded in the situation of postcoloniality. Globalization allows us to construct deterritorialized identities. However, we have to keep in mind that globalization brings inequality because not all actors have the same access to the Internet and to immigration: which means physical and virtual mobility. Class and race issues need further examination. In Mauritius these come sharply into focus when we look at the situation of Creoles of African and Malagasy descent. Their marginalization within the Mauritian state makes them passive victims rather than active entrepreneurs in the

globalization project. It is not by chance that among Mauritians in Canada I only met just one Creole of African descent.

It is through such diverse networks and the multiplicity of peoples' activities that state power can maintain or lose its hegemony because as Walzer (1992: 105) reminds us, a democratic civil society is not only controlled by its members through a single process of self-determination but also through a large number of different and uncoordinated processes.

APPENDIX

1996 CENSUS - STATISTICS CANADA

Immigrant Population by Place of Birth and Sex

Place of Birth: MAURITIUS

- CANADA

PERIOD OF IMMIGRATION	TOTAL - SEX	MALE	FEMALE
Total - Period of immigration	6, 395	3, 190	3, 205
BEFORE 1961	80	45	35
1961-1970	450	245	205
1971-1980	1, 925	1, 000	920
1981-1990	2, 805	1, 345	1, 460
1991-1996	1, 130	545	585

MONTREAL

PERIOD OF IMMIGRATION	TOTAL - SEX	MALE	FEMALE
Total - Period of immigration	2, 640	1, 305	1, 305
BEFORE 1961	25	15	10
1961-1970	115	65	45
1971-1980	805	425	380
1981-1990	1, 165	545	615
1991-1996	540	255	290

TORONTO

PERIOD OF IMMIGRATION	TOTAL - SEX	MALE	FEMALE
Total - Period of immigration	2, 305	1, 140	1, 170
BEFORE 1961	10	0	10
1961-1970	150	85	65
1971-1980	600	285	315
1981-1990	1, 130	560	570
1991-1996	415	200	210

VANCOUVER

PERIOD OF IMMIGRATION	TOTAL - SEX	MALE	FEMALE
Total - Period of immigration	385	215	170
BEFORE 1961	15	15	0
1961-1970	65	30	30
1971-1980	145	90	55
1981-1990	100	50	50
1991-1996	60	25	35

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